

CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACE AND CHILDHOOD IN FACEBOOK COMMENTS ON ONLINE

ARTICLES RELATING TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Declaration

I declare that this research report entitled: "Constructions of race and childhood in Facebook comments on articles relating to child sexual abuse" is my own, unaided work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. This report is being submitted for Master of Arts (Community-based Counselling Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2018.

Nicola Jenni Sumption

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Contents

Declaration.....	1
Acknowledgments.....	2
Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale	5
1.1. Introduction	5
1.2. Rationale	6
1.3. Chapter Outline.....	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review	10
2.1. Racialisation	10
2.1.1. History and development of the concept	10
2.1.2. Racism, Racialism and Racialisation.....	13
2.1.3. Race in the South African context.....	14
2.2. The Racialisation of Crime.....	22
2.2.1. Perceptions of race and crime in South Africa: the ‘Black Troublemaker’	22
2.2.2. Perceptions of race and crime globally: the Hypersexual Black Male	23
2.2.3. Criminal and racial identities	23
2.3. The Racialisation of Sexuality.....	24
2.3.1. Ruling masculinity and sexuality	25
2.3.2. Racist sexualisation and sexualised racism.....	27
2.4. Childhood: Constructions and Associations.....	29
2.4.1. Constructions of childhood.....	30
2.4.2. Infant embodiment in the media.....	32
2.4.3. Constructions of black vs white children: ‘Satanic Panic’	33
2.5. Child Sexual Abuse	35
2.5.1. Constructions of the victim and the perpetrator in child sexual abuse	36
2.6. Race in the Media	39
2.6.1. The importance of the media	39
2.6.2. Media in post-apartheid South Africa.....	39
2.7. Race Online	41
2.7.1. The global village: perks and pitfalls	41
2.7.2. South Africa and the internet	42
2.7.3. Race and racism online	43
2.8. Facebook.....	44
2.8.1. Why Facebook?.....	45
2.8.2. Facebook vs. anonymous forums	46
2.9. Child Sexual Abuse in the Media.....	48

2.9.1.	Public fascination	48
2.9.2.	Criticisms of reporting on child sexual abuse	49
2.10.	Conclusions	50
Chapter 3:	Research Design and Method	52
3.1	Research Design and Theoretical Framework	52
3.2	Sample.....	53
3.3	Procedure.....	54
3.4	Data Analysis.....	55
3.4.1	Reflexivity.....	58
3.5	Ethical considerations	59
Chapter 4:	Results and Discussion	60
4.1	The Deracialisation of Childhood	60
4.1.1	Conclusions	66
4.2	The Limits of Childhood	71
4.2.1	Defending the perpetrator.....	74
4.2.2	Victim-blaming.....	76
4.2.3	Possible Explanations.....	76
4.3	The Racialisation of Sexuality: A Culture of Rape	79
4.3.1	Paedophilia vs. Rape	79
4.3.2	Defending Invisible Whiteness.....	84
Chapter 5:	Limitations and Conclusions.....	91
5.1	Limitations.....	91
5.2	Conclusions	91
References		96
Appendix A:	List of Articles Utilised and Online Links.....	102

Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

1.1. Introduction

Race¹, childhood and sexuality are three evocative concepts that often produce strong reactions when raised as topics of discussion. In South Africa particularly, constructions of race and the characteristics associated therewith seem to frame many interactions, both inter- and intra-racially. The racialised abstractions created by colonial discourses and apartheid narratives have persisted throughout South Africa's democratisation and the end of apartheid, and continue to shape constructions of individuals in cultural and social terms today.

While racial identities often become conflated with criminal identities, so too does sexuality. The confluence of race and sexuality therefore creates an interplay of racialised constructs being projected into a space which allows for racial anxieties to be enacted symbolically under the guise of fear for safety and a need for protection.

This interplay of constructions of race and sexuality is particularly pertinent when considered in conjunction with constructions of childhood. Children are often constructed as pure, unsullied and representative of the future wellbeing and health of a nation. Transgressions against such beings are highly emotionally evocative, both in personal reactions to crimes against children, and in the manner in which transgressing a sacred object which is representative of the 'future' of a nation thereby represents the transgression of the wellbeing of the country in general. Cases of child sexual abuse (CSA)

¹ Racial categories designated during the apartheid era such as black, coloured and white are used reflexively throughout this paper. These terms are not capitalised, neither are they placed in inverted commas as this reflects the manner in which they are utilised in the data set for this report. This does not in any way indicate that I accept these categories as essentialist descriptors, and in fact this report aims to highlight the problematic nature of using such racial categorisations and their associated constructions.

therefore create a useful landscape which allows constructions of race as related to sexuality and childhood to be produced in very particular ways, and this allows for constructions of race, childhood and sexuality to be investigated both within these discourses and on a macro level in the country's race relations generally.

This report aims to gain access to this landscape and thereby generate a deeper understanding of the way that race is produced in South Africa, particularly with regards to cases of CSA. This is achieved through an investigation into online platforms which allow for comments to be posted on news items, specifically on the Facebook pages of two South African news sites – Eyewitness News and eNCA. The discourses that are produced by comments made on news items reporting on cases of CSA are analysed and thematically presented in this report to highlight three predominant themes found across the data collected: the deracialisation of childhood, the limits of childhood, and the racialisation of sexuality.

1.2. Rationale

Given South Africa's complicated history of race and racism, racial stereotypes have become deeply entrenched into our country's ways of thinking and interacting. Although this is slowly changing, the majority of the population still think in terms of race; that is the country remains deeply racialised, in cultural and social terms (Duncan, Stevens & Canham, 2014). The use of racial terms as a means of classification is a controversial topic. While it can be used to entrench stereotypes and prejudices, there are more complex considerations with regards to its use (Bowman, Seedat, Duncan & Burrows, 2006). Redress in particular highlights this problem as in order to measure redress, race must be considered a factor; however the use of racial terms can become problematic with regards to the racialised

meanings of these terms (Bowman et al., 2006). Furthermore, an investigation into these meanings could result in those terms once more becoming racialised, albeit in a different way (Bowman et al., 2006).

The strengths of examining violations of children have been highlighted previously in this report, due to children's status as pure and sacred, as well as indicators of the health and future of the nation. A consideration of how race is constructed with regards to cases reporting on violations of children therefore allows for an examination of the racial anxieties that surface in discourses surrounding these cases, and this can then be extrapolated to a greater understanding of racial anxieties and constructions in the broader social sphere of South Africa.

According to the South African Media Code of Conduct (2009), the media is entitled to freedom of speech, but also has a responsibility to the country for fair and accurate reporting, and this should be devoid of racialisation. While journalists are still human and therefore fallible, the actual articles written on CSA will not be considered objects of analysis in this report as they are undoubtedly censored due to this code of conduct. Additionally, the object of this report is not to consider constructions of race and childhood through a journalistic lens, but rather through the naturally occurring, uncensored data produced by comments sections on these articles.

The commentary section of online articles provides a largely uncensored platform from which people can air their views relatively anonymously. Goffman (1959) writes on impression management, which involves the presentation of oneself in public, and the many expectations that are placed upon a personal interaction. This includes congruence between verbal and nonverbal cues, as well as a need to be accepted and valued by the group or

person with whom one is conversing (Goffman, 1959). He also writes about the often unpleasant social consequences of sharing an opinion that is contrary to that of the group, and the importance of making a good first impression (Goffman, 1959). This analysis, however, is based around a face-to-face interaction and these social guidelines are not as relevant with online interactions, leading to those contributing in the commentary sections on online articles becoming less guarded about their impression management. This allows people to be more honest with their comments, and often to express opinions that they would not be comfortable expressing in a face-to-face setting. Online comments sections therefore allow for a greater understanding of the true views and opinions of commenters when discussing constructions of race in South Africa, although the potential limitations of this type of analysis will be discussed later in this report.

1.3. Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 provides an overview of literature relevant to this report. The development of conceptualisations of race is highlighted, and the links between race, crime, and sexuality are explored. Following this, constructions of childhood and its importance as an object of analysis are discussed, as are constructions of the victims and perpetrators of CSA. This is followed by an exploration of race in the media and online, and a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook as a platform for data capturing. Finally, the portrayal of CSA in the media is discussed.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methods utilised in the current research beginning with the research design and a discussion of the value of social constructionism as a theoretical framework for this study. The sample and data collection procedure are detailed, as is the method of data analysis, which takes the form of a discourse analysis. A reflexive

section highlights possible subjective pitfalls and the mediation thereof within this study, and finally ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis and discussion of the main discourses and themes identified through this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of three cases of the sexual abuse of three children, and the responses generated by the comments sections thereon. The second section highlights an anomalous case wherein the limits of childhood appear to influence the reactions of commenters to both the victims and perpetrator of CSA. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the ways in which paedophilia and rape are constructed with regards to race, and highlights the role that the invisibility of whiteness plays in perpetuating harmful racial constructions.

Chapter 5 concludes this report with a discussion of the limitations of the study, and highlights the salient conclusions that can be drawn from its findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Post-apartheid South Africa has a complicated relationship with race. Although apartheid was abrogated over 20 years ago, the country still deals with its effects daily and this tension leads to race remaining a very important part of how people interact. In order to assess the effects of this and develop an understanding of how salient race is in South Africa, the following literature is aimed at exploring the importance of constructions of race, particularly in the South African context, and how this may be produced online with regards to the intersections of race with childhood and sexuality, as illustrated by cases of CSA.

2.1. Racialisation

There is no consensus on a definition of racialisation, presumably due to the fact that its definition and usefulness tends to vary according to the context in which it is applied (Garner, 2010). Broadly, racialisation refers to the processes by which racial groups are defined and the set of racial meanings that are attached to a group's collective behaviour (Garner, 2010). This lack of a clear definition and the multifaceted nature of racialisation, however, have led to the term being used in many different ways throughout history.

2.1.1. History and development of the concept

The first reference to racialisation in 1899 was used in a variety of different fields, including anthropology, sociology, religious studies and political analysis (Barot & Bird, 2001). The meaning derived from the term in each of these cases, however, is quite different.

2.1.1.1. Early conceptualisations

As it emerged in the late-eighteenth century, race was considered a classificatory concept, and it had two general characteristics (Wolfe, 2002). The first was that it was a hierarchical

classification, and therefore anyone who differed from the predominant group was not simply considered to be different, but to be inferior (Wolfe, 2002). The second was that physical characteristics were linked to other characteristics, including cognitive, cultural, and moral ones (Wolfe, 2002). In this way, race as a concept came to define human beings by using their external, bodily features to define other, more intrinsic characteristics, and then place them within a socially-determined hierarchy.

One of these early conceptualisations of race originated from theories on biological essentialism in which race was considered a biological construct rather than a social one. Racialisation at this time was therefore seen to be rooted in an inborn prejudice that developed as a way to retain the purity of different races (Barot & Bird, 2001). The roots of racialisation were considered to be in intrinsic tribal prejudices and instincts designed to keep different races separate from one another. Importantly, racialisation was considered a beneficial process as progress was seen to be driven by competition, and racial purity was seen to encourage such competition (Barot & Bird, 2001). This conceptualisation, however, does not account for any social or psychological factors which may contribute to racial prejudices.

A similar conceptualisation of racialisation which was formulated during the same time period held many of the same basic tenets; particularly in viewing race as central to the formation of human groups. This theory, however, perceived racialisation as a social construct and as one that was detrimental to the progression of human society (Barot & Bird, 2001). Those who supported this construction of racialisation advocated strongly for deracialisation through democracy and a decline in nationalism, and viewed racialisation as a process which perpetuated the maintenance of racial inequalities (Barot & Bird, 2001).

2.1.1.2. Contemporary theories

More contemporary theories of race have used elements of these early conceptualisations and developed them into more comprehensive theories of racialisation. One such theory, posited by Michael Banton (1977), speculates that 'race' first came to hold meaning when Europeans began to colonise countries whose inhabitants had a different appearance to them. From this, different racial characteristics came to be symbolic, for example of superiority if white, and of inferiority if black (Barot & Bird, 2001). The biological, i.e. physical characteristics, therefore came to have certain social implications, and the biology of race – disputed and unsubstantiated – as a scientific category thus became a socially constructed category. Banton does, however, argue that the implications of certain racial characteristics are dependent on the context and racial theories at the time during which they are interpreted (Barot & Bird, 2001).

A subsequent, similar theory to Banton's refined and explored the concept more deeply. Racialisation was defined as "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics [so] as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities" (Miles, 1989, p.101). The process of racialisation is therefore viewed as a process of categorisation during which an 'other' is defined, and there is a focus on the fact that defining one group by their biological characteristics necessitates that the person must define his- or herself by the same criterion (Miles, 1989).

Finally, Franz Fanon shares many of the same views as previous theories, however his conceptualisation is important for two reasons. Firstly, he suggests the idea of resistance to racialisation. He does so by suggesting that the idea of negritude, or the inferiority of the

black race, should be replaced by a strong sense of national culture and a national identity which should separate people from the umbrella classification of race (Fanon, 1965). Secondly, he reinforces the importance of the body in the process of racialisation, and how it is actual physical characteristics that become racialised, as well as the implications of this (Fanon, 1965). In this way, Fanon highlights not only how the process of racialisation occurs, but also the damage that can be done by the process, and suggests ways to combat it.

2.1.2. Racism, Racialism and Racialisation

Discussions surrounding race are almost always complex and the subjective nature of what constitutes racism and what doesn't continues to plague not only South Africa, but the world as a whole. It is therefore important to clarify the differences between three important terms with regards to race issues: racism, racialism and racialisation.

Racism can be defined as "an ideology or discourse used to make inferences about people on the presumed notion of a hierarchy in order to maintain unequal power relations between them" (Steenveld, as cited in Berger, 2001, p.79). It is important to note the negative implications of this definition: racism implies negative consequences such as inequality, discrimination, oppression, etc. Racism is not a single act, but is in fact a process by which all members of a racialised group come to be treated as though their behaviour, thinking, and emotion are caused by their racial category as it is perceived by the racially dominant population (Gans, 2017). If this thinking is not challenged, racism is likely to become institutionalised (Gans, 2017).

Racialism, however, is considered the practice of operationalising race, and what are considered racially-linked attributes, as a functional social category (Berger, 2001). Racism occurs when this process is "used to dominate and unfairly discriminate between the groups

concerned (Berger, 2001, p.79). The issue is therefore largely one of intention: is a racial generalisation made with the intention of defining a certain group, or is it made with the intention of degrading and/or discriminating against the racial group mentioned? In South Africa this distinction is particularly murky as the legacy of apartheid has left the issue of race a very sensitive one, and discussions around race tend to be linked to issues of inequality and discrimination. It is therefore difficult to imagine racialism not leading to or being interpreted as racism.

Apart from this, a major issue with racialism is the fact that it still involves regarding certain physical characteristics associated with race as symbolic of social characteristics, and this therefore perpetuates racist ideas, and can be considered racist in itself (Berger, 2001). Race is often accepted as a category that is naturally-occurring, rather than being seen for what it is: a socially-constructed category that has emerged historically when social space has become shared (Wolfe, 2002). Racialism simply perpetuates the use of these ideological categories and therefore, by extension, risks perpetuating the negative stereotypes associated with certain racial categories.

Berger (2001) therefore suggests the use of racialisation as an analytic category. His use of racialisation involves analysing the dynamic nature of racial interactions, considering both parties and considering the historical, political and social environment of the interaction. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of race relations without the perpetuation of racist stereotypes and prejudice.

2.1.3. Race in the South African context

South Africa owes a lot of its complicated relationship with race to the apartheid era and its practices. The effects of apartheid are extensive and still visible in most of the country.

Interracial interactions are no exception and in order to understand the salience of race in South Africa, one must also understand the country under apartheid, post-apartheid South Africa, and why race continues to be so important amongst its people.

2.1.3.1. Apartheid and its objectives

Apartheid was a system of racial classification that was developed based on the physical characteristics of South Africa's citizens (Seekings, 2008). True to colonial tradition, those classified as 'white' were also considered superior and were treated as such, while those considered to be of any other race, but particularly 'black', were treated as inferior. As described earlier, racial categorisation of this kind must be challenged, otherwise it is likely to become institutionalised (Gans, 2017). In the case of apartheid, unchallenged assumptions based on racial categorisation filtered into all aspects of life and very clearly designated the supposedly inferior and superior racial groups. Racism became institutionalised at the highest levels.

The apartheid government considered apartheid's classification system to be essential for three reasons: to maintain the racial purity of white blood, which led to the physical segregation of the races; to protect the economic position of the white minority, which led to better job opportunities for the white minority; and to maintain the political dominance of white people, which resulted in only white South Africans being afforded the opportunity to vote (Seekings, 2008). This system caused immense inequalities to develop and fostered a culture of violence, racism and deep-seated resentment.

2.1.3.2. Post-apartheid South Africa: The three nations

In the aftermath of apartheid, policies changed and new ones were introduced, among them that of affirmative action, or Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). South African society, previously structured as the privileged white upper class and the impoverished black working class, therefore underwent a change. A new black middle class has developed, largely through the removal of apartheid restrictions and the opportunities suddenly available to black South Africans as a result of the implementation of BEE and affirmative action (Mattes, 2015). Over the past two decades, research has found that the bottom four-fifths of the population have remained stagnant in their personal income growth, however there has been considerably more growth amongst the top fifth and this has led to a rapid expansion of the black middle class (Mattes, 2015). In fact, research conducted by Kotze, du Toit, Steenkamp, Burger and Van Der Burg (2013) found that the black middle class in South Africa had grown from 350 000 in 1993 to almost 3 million by 2012; and that the black share of the country's middle class had risen from 11% to 41% over the same timeframe.

This burgeoning black middle class may be seen to indicate a shift in South Africa's race relations as the income gap between black and white citizens decreases, however Mattes (2015) finds that in fact, the rise of the black middle-class does not foreshadow a non-racial dimension in the country, but rather that middle-class South Africans are still more likely to base their interests and views on the legacy left by apartheid as opposed to their material status. Race and class therefore remain a vital part of the way in which others are constructed by the majority of South Africans, and both play a considerable role in interactions amongst South Africans daily.

The legacy left by apartheid, as well as the developing changes to the South African middle class, have resulted in three 'nations' within South Africa: the almost entirely black poor, the mostly-black working class, and the multi-racial middle class and elite (Seekings, 2008). The challenge facing South Africa now is to bridge these three nations and overcome the prejudices associated with the past to form a strong sense of nationhood (Seekings, 2008).

2.1.3.3. The continuing salience of race

Given the history of the country, it is unsurprising that race remains such an important issue for most of its citizens. It is interesting to note, however, that post-1994, racism appears to be "becoming more salient and disconcertingly recalcitrant in contemporary South Africa" (Duncan, Stevens & Canham, 2014, p.284). This recalcitrance of race in the face of burgeoning democratic structures and processes in the country can be attributed to various different mechanisms which are still at play today.

A primary reason is linked to what Essed (as cited in Duncan et al., 2013) terms 'everyday racism'. This concept encompasses the ongoing struggles of hundreds of thousands of impoverished black South Africans who are still trying to gain access to a better standard of living than the one they became accustomed to under the apartheid system. Despite the growing black middle class discussed previously, black South Africans have much higher rates of unemployment than white South Africans, and constitute a far smaller percentage of the top income bracket (Duncan et al., 2013). These perpetuations of inequality between black and white individuals with regards to income, standard of living, and access to basic resources leave many black South Africans understandably frustrated and resentful; and this likely contributes to ongoing racial tensions and anxieties.

Apartheid also “entrenched racial identities and fostered racial division at the same time as exacerbating inequality” (Seekings, 2008, p.5). This has led to South Africans still using apartheid-era classifications when referring not only to others, but also to themselves, further entrenching racial identities and stereotypes. Cultural differences and notions of class have also come to be linked to racial identities and it is difficult therefore to find elements of one’s identity that are not linked in some way to race.

The issue of race is also perpetuated by current politics and policies regarding racial discrimination. Political parties in South Africa now often use race as part of their campaigns, and the concept of affirmative action, while designed to redress the inequalities of apartheid, is still based entirely on race (Seekings, 2008).

Additionally, the results of James Gibson’s 2001 survey showed a very low level of interracial contact amongst South Africans (as cited in Seekings, 2008). Two out of three South Africans said that they had little or no contact with members of other racial groups and Gibson found high levels of interracial suspicion (Seekings, 2008). Christopher (as cited in Seekings, 2008) found that patterns of residential segregation have changed very little since apartheid. This implies that interracial contact is very limited and this would in turn imply that members of different racial groups in South Africa may not understand one another very well, resulting in greater mistrust and the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and prejudice.

One of the biggest problems in South Africa is that race has come to take on such specific and inherent meanings that it is extremely difficult to change these perceptions. The construction of ‘whiteness’ in South Africa and its perceived and real privilege, along with the social, political and cultural advantages that accompany it, can foster resentment and anger in those of other races (Stevens, 2007).

2.1.3.4. The invisibility of whiteness

Whiteness in South Africa is both an extremely difficult and extremely important topic to address. The concept is loaded with various associations: privilege, superiority, shame, guilt, ignorance and racism to name but a few. It is perhaps for this reason that whiteness makes white people so uncomfortable, and therefore why whiteness is allowed to remain as invisible as it does in South Africa.

‘White’ is considered a taken-for-granted racial category in South Africa, meaning that unless otherwise explicitly stated, the assumption is made that the referent in a story is white. Whitehead and Lerner (2009) investigated times when this norm was not adhered to; when whiteness was overtly mentioned in in-talk interactions. The findings showed that whiteness was only referred to directly when it was being used to account for the actions or attitudes of the referent in an account; when it was being juxtaposed with another racial category; or in cases where the recipient of an account may envisage a person of a different racial category (Whitehead & Lerner, 2009).

The fact that an individual’s whiteness is very rarely referred to directly in in-talk interactions, but that members of other racial categories are identified by their race, indicates an inherent privilege in whiteness. It allows white people to escape the recognition of the role that belonging to a specific racial category, and the privileges that this brings, plays in their lives (Whitehead & Lerner, 2009). It is perhaps for this reason that many white people participate in discourses of ‘colour-blindness’ without understanding that these discourses spring from a predominantly white experience of the world wherein their race is not considered central to their identity, nor, in fact, is it considered particularly important. The invisibility of whiteness underpins many still-prevailing systems of racial privilege and

disadvantage, however it is rarely recognised as such but rather allows white people to negate the experiences of people of colour whose lives are still shaped continually by race (Whitehead & Lerner, 2009). This refusal to acknowledge the ways in which race can shape people's lives can result in systems of racial privilege being ignored while blaming racial inequalities on the deficits of individuals – hence allowing the pattern of racial privilege and disadvantage to continue unchallenged (Whitehead & Lerner, 2009).

At times when white people are confronted by their whiteness or their privilege, they often respond defensively, and this is tied into what Duncan (as cited in Straker, 2011) terms 'precocious shame'. This refers to a tendency for white South Africans to own a global sense of shame as 'white South Africans' generally, rather than allowing themselves to own the guilt that has accrued for their own personal actions and racism (Straker, 2011). Instead, many people bypass their own lack of insight and self-knowledge, resorting rather to defensive shame which protects the individual from experiencing true shame and guilt for the implications of their own complicity with apartheid (Straker, 2011).

An important distinction to make in relation to this topic is the differing levels of power and privilege felt by white South Africans. Under apartheid rule, white citizens were afforded a sense of political power which is seen to have been stripped away with the abrogation of apartheid, resulting in a sense of powerlessness. During apartheid, to be white was seen to be synonymous with having more power than black citizens, and while many white South Africans continue to retain a great deal of privilege as a result of the colour of their skins, this powerlessness is still felt by many (Straker, 2011). Privilege therefore does not necessarily translate into political power, and it is possible that some of the defensiveness

present in many white people's reactions to challenges of their privilege stems at least partially from this loss of power.

Finally, Straker (2011) discusses the concepts of fetish and disavowal to explain the process by which white people may use another object, such as a black person, to cover their own sense of lack or limitation. Bhaba (as cited in Straker, 2011) also uses this concept to explain underpinnings of racism and prejudice through the use of stereotypes. Through the projection of otherness and difference, for example violence, by dominant individuals into the disparaged group, all members of that group subsequently become violent. Through this process, 'otherness' is projected onto the group while simultaneously becoming subsumed into homogeneity within that group, and the group identified as the 'other' is therefore silenced (Straker, 2011). Fetishism and disavowal in this sense allow white people to project stereotypical traits or behaviours onto a group of black individuals, and thereby attribute that trait to their 'blackness' as a group. In this way, negative characteristics begin to be seen as intrinsic qualities associated with the race of the individual, and therefore not possessed, or possessed in different ways, by the white group.

The importance of the invisibility of whiteness cannot be ignored: the lack of recognition of white privilege and the inherent associations with one's race as a white person simply allow for racially-located injustices and inequalities to be perpetuated unchallenged, while a consistently defensive position in relation to being challenged on the invisibility of whiteness prevents important discussions from occurring. The projection of negative qualities into a group based solely on their race is both damaging to the individuals identifying with that race group, and to racial narratives as a whole as this serves to silence the voices of those associated with that group, and further protect white privilege. All of this

allows the often invisible, but ever-growing, racially-charged resentment, bitterness, anger, and frustration to grow and swell in the undercurrents of interactions both inter- and intra-racially in South Africa.

2.2. The Racialisation of Crime

It is clear from the previous discussion that racialisation in practice can become extremely problematic as it can often be viewed as derogatory and therefore racist. This is especially pertinent when considering the racialisation of crime. Crime is a significant problem in South Africa and is particularly sensitive as many crimes are violent in nature. It is therefore especially dangerous to racialise these crimes and associate them with one specific racial group, as prejudices, stereotypes and outright racism will undoubtedly follow.

2.2.1. Perceptions of race and crime in South Africa: the 'Black Troublemaker'

In South Africa, crime has come to be associated with predominantly black perpetrators for a number of reasons. One of the most important to consider with regards to this research is the construction of the 'black troublemaker' (Knepper, 2008). During apartheid, the black population was largely portrayed as unlawful, uncivilised, violent and as a race to be feared and controlled. A large portion of South Africa's population was exposed to these views, and those who weren't may have the stereotypes perpetuated by their parents and grandparents. People, particularly those of other races, may therefore find it difficult to change their view of the black race and will find it easier to believe that crime occurs with black perpetrators committing crimes against white victims, as this fits their expectations and world views (Moritz, 2008).

2.2.2. Perceptions of race and crime globally: the Hypersexual Black Male

In their 2007 paper, Patton and Snyder-Yuly explore the false accusations of an Iowa State University student who claimed that she was sexually assaulted by four black males. In exploring the rationale behind her construction of this story, and the reasons why it was so easily believed, they delve into the idea of the threatening, hypersexual, uncontrollable black male as he has been constructed since slavery (Davis, 1985, as cited in Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007).

The paper analyses the construction of black men as “dangerous, subhuman, and prone to arrest” (Benedict, 1992, as cited in Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007, p.878) and the fact that this construction causes stories wherein black men are the perpetrators of sexual crimes to be more easily believed and very rarely questioned, as they would were the perpetrator white. Similarly, Slatton and Spates (2016) comment on the predominant social construction of black men in the United States as hypersexual, “sexually well-endowed, promiscuous, and absent fathers” (p.3). These narratives serve to reinforce a similar concept to that of the black troublemaker, however in the construction of the hypersexual black male, black men are not only constructed as violent and uncivilised, but also have a sexual element added to this construction. They are therefore produced as more sexually promiscuous than white men, unable to control these sexual urges, and therefore not as civilised nor as sophisticated as white men, and far more threatening when considered in relation to the social associations with white vulnerability.

2.2.3. Criminal and racial identities

Racial identities are not passive labels given to people. They are “resisted, deflected, redefined and reconstructed” (Knepper, 2008, p.504) and it has come to pass in South Africa

that too often racial identities are becoming fused with criminal identities (Knepper, 2008). These two processes can occur from the point of view of someone outside that racial group or from someone inside it. Black South Africans whose racial identities come to be linked to a criminal identity may therefore come to associate these two identities as one and the same. This combination of perceptions can lead to crime becoming racialised in the minds of all races within the country, perpetuating the stereotype and prejudice towards 'the black criminal', both in the minds of other races and in the minds of black South Africans themselves (Dixon, Azocar & Casas, 2003).

It is surprising that in a country such as South Africa, which is plagued by associations with high crime rates, there has been very little statistical research into the racialisation of crime. There have, however, been studies conducted in the USA. One such study is that conducted by Dixon, Azocar and Casas (2003) which found that crime has indeed been racialised by the media in the United States. Their research shows that white Americans were more likely than black Americans to be portrayed as perpetrators, which was surprising as past research has shown the opposite. They also found, however, that white Americans were far more likely than black Americans to be portrayed as victims and as police officers (Dixon, Azocar & Casas, 2003). In contrast, Seedat (1999) found that in 159 of the 220 articles utilised in his research, the race of the perpetrator was not specified, but that when it was his or her race was most commonly African. He also found that just under half of the articles used provided details of the race of the victim, and when they did the majority were white (Seedat, 1999).

2.3. The Racialisation of Sexuality

While racial identities are often conflated with criminal identities, so too are sexuality and race. This has been touched on briefly in the previous section concerning the construction of

the hypersexual black male, however given the topic of this report, a more comprehensive understanding of links between race and sexuality is warranted.

2.3.1. Ruling masculinity and sexuality

In South Africa, as in many other parts of the world, the ruling masculinity is defined primarily by its assertive heterosexuality, the control of economic decisions within and outside of the home, political authority, cultural ascendancy, and the support for male promiscuity (Ratele, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity, however, does not develop in a vacuum and therefore the history of South Africa shapes the development of the concept in very particular ways.

During apartheid, the conceptualisation of masculinity was popularised by the Afrikaner nationalist government, and therefore ideas of masculinity were focused on strictness in both conduct and morality, a very strongly hierarchical social order, and the glorification of the military and Afrikaner history (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). Post-apartheid, Nelson Mandela emerged as representative of a new masculinity; one which challenged the violent and authoritarian behaviours that apartheid's white politicians had popularised (Morrell et al., 2012). Today, politicians such as Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema have sought to popularize an African masculinity, which is race-specific and founded on the notion of male superiority (Morrell et al., 2012).

From the brief history above, it can be seen that hegemonic masculinity is not universal across time, nor across race, culture, and class; but is more fluid and dependent on the realities of a population. For this reason, Morrell (as cited in Morrell et al., 2012) proposed a model of multiple hegemonies of masculinity, which would reflect South Africa's history of racial division, and which considered the way in which this history shaped perceptions of

masculinity. This model proposed three masculinities: a white masculinity, which was represented by the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class; an African masculinity, which was focused on those living in rural areas and was represented by indigenous institutions such as chieftainships and customary law; and a black masculinity, which emerged in the urban population and, particularly, in townships (Morrell et al., 2012). In considering the way in which this plays out in relations between men specifically, hegemonic masculinity can be understood to subordinate other masculinities, which are in turn positioned in relation to the hegemonic masculinity so that they do not have any legitimacy (Morrell et al., 2012). Hegemonic masculinity therefore presents a specific version of how men should behave as a cultural ideal, and suggests to men and women that although multiple masculinities exist, one form of this is superior, and provides power and privilege to those who display it (Morrell et al., 2012).

Masculinities are fundamentally about discursive power, and this is in relation to the arrangements that both men and women have to their bodies, institutions, structures, laws and policies (Ratele, 2006). In other words, these constituent elements allow those who possess them a considerable amount of power over women, other men, and children; and for this power to be considered natural in its occurrence and implementation. This sense of power can often be exerted in dangerous ways, and sexuality represents an important site of this exertion of power.

As Ratele (2006) highlights, while some frameworks do emphasise the empowerment of women, the lack of attention paid to sexuality is worrying, particularly because prior research has shown that sexuality is implicated in politics, economics, and society as a whole. It is intolerable that crimes and violations concerning the political power of men over

women and children are ignored, despite the fact that the rights of women and sexual minorities to their bodily integrity are violated (Ratele, 2006). Understanding sexuality as a site “whereon a nation or culture fashions and reforms itself, develops or stunts the whole or parts of the whole, moves forward or regresses” (Ratele, 2006, p.59) is central to this report; as considering sexuality in relation to children, who present their own site onto which certain expectations of a nation are projected, produces highly symbolic discourses which are representative of racial anxieties and indicators of national progress and wellbeing on a macro level.

2.3.2. Racist sexualisation and sexualised racism

Apartheid, amongst its many laws, also dictated regulatory practices regarding sexual intimacy, and prohibited so-called ‘carnal intercourses’ between members of different races (Shefer & Ratele, 2011). The purpose of this was supposedly to retain racial purity, for reasons documented previously in this report, however the enforcement of this regulation also served to reinforce patriarchal authority for the dominant group of (white) men. One of the key tenets of apartheid was therefore to entrench the entitlement of white males through the regulation and control of many facets of the lives of all of South Africa’s citizens (Shefer & Ratele, 2011).

During this time, black sexuality was portrayed in stereotypical colonial fashion, with black men being painted as lustful and rapacious, and black women produced as lascivious (Posel, 2005). State institutions showed little to no interest in the worsening sexual violence occurring in black communities, and due to colonial discourses surrounding sexuality, neither did the white public (Posel, 2005). By the late 1970s, rape in the township communities had therefore become rife, and was considered a new way for young men to

assert their masculinity – leading to the perception of a ‘culture of violence’ being rooted within black culture (Posel, 2005). Essentially, the white government, police force, and public internalised colonial stereotypes of black sexuality, ignored sexual violence in black communities, and when the occurrence of sexual violence grew exponentially in townships, identified it as a problem associated with blackness: a culture of violence that was racially specific.

Following the end of apartheid, there was an eruption of public anxiety regarding sexual violence, and it is theorised that this was largely due to wider political and ideological anxieties about the changing government of South Africa, and the moral community of the country’s new democracy (Posel, 2005). This, in turn, led to a significant increase in media interest on the topic of sexual violence, and so public discussion of sexual violence and rape became much more prominent (Posel, 2005).

Apartheid, and its conclusion, thus created in South Africa a powerful intersection of racism, gender, and sexuality; and has led to the concept of apartheid sexualisation, or the way in which the oppression of black people and privilege of white people were sexualised (Shefer & Ratele, 2011). This sexualising of race, and racializing of sexuality, is perpetuated in new ways in post-apartheid South Africa

The construction of femininity and masculinity during apartheid was heavily racialised, and many of these constructs endure today. For example, the construction of white femininity as vulnerable and submissive to socially-constructed dangerous black masculinity is commonly produced in rhetoric presently (Shefer & Ratele, 2011). Tying into the previously-discussed construction of the hypersexual black male, during apartheid the black male was constructed by white South Africans as dangerous, both physically and sexually; and white

anxieties were, and continue to be, generated as a response to black men's bodies as they have come to be produced as sexual threats to white subjects (Shefer & Ratele, 2011). Even today, modern sexuality is always politicized and cannot be considered without also considering other factors such as class, race, status and generation (Posel, 2005). Sexuality is therefore often enmeshed within a wider matrix of moral anxiety, social instability, and politics (Posel, 2005).

It is striking that during apartheid, white women were constructed by the white patriarchy as vulnerable and needing protection from black men, while in reality it was black men and women that required protection from white power but instead were constructed as the threatening 'other' (Shefer & Ratele, 2011). The production of the black body, and particularly the male black body, as uninhibited, dangerous and violent during apartheid is particularly noteworthy in relation to the construction of sexuality that became associated with this. Fundamentally, "apartheid narratives suggest that it is the stereotypical big, hard, terror-inducing, marauding, raping and murderous 'other man' whom the law had in its sights" (Shefer & Ratele, 2011, p.45), and unfortunately this construction of the black male persists today.

2.4. Childhood: Constructions and Associations

While race and sexuality are both important constructs with this report, so too is the construction of childhood and children in general. The following section aims to highlight associations with the construction of childhood, the way in which children (and infants specifically) are constructed in the media, and the relative historical value placed on black and white children.

2.4.1. Constructions of childhood

There are numerous and varied associations with children and childhood in general. The common phrase 'children are our future' represents many of these constructions; the indication that there is an implicit link between children and notions of social progress, and national welfare (Burman, 2008). Children are generally abstracted as removed from culture and society – constructs such as history, gender, class, and sexuality are divorced from ideas of children, and instead childhood comes to represent a highly symbolised, singular 'child' which conforms to certain idealised norms (Burman, 2008).

This child comes to embody not only a symbol of social progress, but also a more individualised personification of the lost or authentic self for each person: a fragile being which represents longing for innocence and a state of being unsullied by associations with gender, class, culture etc. There is a sense of loss associated with children for many adults as children not only represent the longing for this state, but also the loss of it in adults (Burman, 2008). There is also an inherent link between children and potential; the notions of growth, maturity, vulnerability, innocence and rights are often evoked by conceptualisations of childhood, and therefore children come to represent the potential for future growth and development of a nation (Burman, 2008).

Children therefore carry the burden of representing not only those parts of the adult self that is devoid of associations with class, gender, and culture; but also come to embody the future products and expressions of national and cultural identities for a society (Burman, 2008). In South Africa specifically, cases of baby rape during the 1990s which were reported following the end of apartheid generated widespread discussion and concern (Posel, 2005). As Posel (2005) describes it, the sexual violation of these babies created a binary opposition

of moral good versus evil; and this moral polarity in turn became a representation of the new South African democracy and nation. In public discourse on baby rape, the sexual violation of babies therefore came to metaphorically constitute the moral violation of the new nation (Posel, 2005).

An inability to protect children from harm within a nation often results in very strong emotional responses from citizens. This strong emotional response is likely to result in fairly accurate reflections of those individuals' views and opinions as they speak from an honest place of shock, disgust, and possibly guilt that they have neglected to protect those who are most in need of protection.

In the context of this report, this indicates that children as subjects of discourse are likely to represent not only an innocent, defenceless being in need of protection, but also strike a more personal chord with readers of articles detailing the sexual abuse of children. Readers will likely identify with the representation of the child as the part of themselves that is innocent and authentic, while simultaneously viewing the sexual abuse of such a being as representative of interactions amongst South Africans on a national scale. As Burman (2008) writes:

[when considering rhetorics of childhood], notions of progress, improvement, skill and adaptation emerge, words that migrate or even flow easily between the specific and the general, or from the individual to the social allocation. This happens whether we are talking about a single child or children... or further, from a discussion of states of individual minds or bodies to evaluations of the relative status of nation states (p. 95).

The construction of the child allows one's views and opinions on transgressions against the child to slip from the individual to society as a whole, i.e. from the child to the nation (Burman, 2008), and this constructs childhood and the protection of children in a very particular way which allows for the constructions of victims and perpetrators in CSA to be extrapolated to larger social constructions of race and sexuality in South Africa.

2.4.2. Infant embodiment in the media

Children, and particularly infants, are also portrayed in the media in very specific ways. Lupton (2014) conducted research into these constructions in Australian media and found that there were four dominant discourses surrounding infants: precious, pure, uncivilised, and vulnerable.

In relation to the preciousness of children, it was found that the delicacy and helplessness of infants was often highlighted in the media, and this was linked to the idea of adults protecting and keeping infants safe from harm (Lupton, 2014). Additionally, infants are constructed as angelic - a theme which repeats itself throughout the data collected for this report – and as superior and fragile entities (Lupton, 2014). Notions of purity were similarly present, with the child being constructed as unsullied, clean and, once again, in need of protection from external influences (Lupton, 2014). This echoes previously-discussed notions of childhood as being 'wiped clean' of associations with gender, class, culture and sexuality.

While purity has certain associations with nature, the construction of infants as uncivilised represents the negative side of this association: as much as nature is wild, chaotic and uncontrolled, so too are infants (Lupton, 2014). Children often similarly challenge social

notions of acceptable behaviour in the manner in which they interact. They are inherently unregulated and unsocialised, and they therefore require surveillance and control in social spaces (Lupton, 2014). This association is often what feeds the views of adults who find children intrusive, loud, bothersome and frustrating; and this represents the inverse of general associations with children and infants. Finally, children are also constructed as vulnerable. This results in many discourses surrounding children including discussions of risk and danger due to the fragility and helplessness of children and infants (Lupton, 2014). This sense of vulnerability that accompanies children brings with it a corresponding sense of responsibility for adults, as they are seen as the protectors of these defenceless beings.

These constructions of infants by the media as precious, pure, uncivilised and vulnerable give some insight into the way that children are perceived in society, and therefore the associations with children discussed previously can be seen to be reinforced in this way. An understanding of how children are viewed by the public is vital in this report as this informs the reactions of society when processing moral transgressions against such beings.

2.4.3. Constructions of black vs white children: ‘Satanic Panic’

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, South Africa was gripped by cases of supposed Satanism. It has come to be understood that these occurrences represented a greater social fear of threats to white dominance: threats represented by discourses of evil challenges to moral values which were represented by the supposed possession of young white children by the devil. While this is interesting in and of itself, what is particularly noteworthy is the manner in which black and white children respectively were treated when supposedly suffering from the same symptoms of satanic possession.

Falkof (2012) investigated three cases of supposed satanic possession during this time period, and compared the treatment of the subjects of each. It was found that in cases where the subjects were white children, it was readily believed that they had suffered demonic possession, despite the same defence for the murder of a child by a black defendant being dismissed as 'unreasonable' previously to the white children's claims (Falkof, 2012). The notion of magic or supernatural powers was only allowed to exist in relation to white, Christian beliefs, and was therefore dismissed if associated in any way with the African occult, or "the follies of the uncivilised" (Falkof, 2012, p.10).

In two separate incidents, a group of white children and a group of black children both claimed satanic possession as an explanation for strange behaviour that occurred within the groups. In the case of the white children, their claims were accepted without any critical investigation, and in fact suggestions that they may be lying or mentally ill were dismissed vehemently and immediately (Falkof, 2012). This is theorised to be due to the discourse of infection, disease and blood purity that surrounded these children – the causes for their actions were attributed to external forces outside of their control which represented a threat to their traditional, white purity (Falkof, 2012).

In contrast, the claims of black children who had suffered similar symptoms of satanic possession were summarily medicalised and it was assumed that they were suffering the effects of a mental illness (Falkof, 2012). This constructed the victims of this incident as being ill rather than treated as victims of an external force; and therefore located the pathology of these children internally, rather than externally (Falkof, 2012). This served to perpetuate the discourses of apartheid, whereby only pure, white children were susceptible

to infection from external sources, while black children represented the infection itself: something pathological.

These constructions are significant in the context of this report as they represent an historical splitting within the construction of children. There is an indication that the constructions of the child as representative of the health and wellness of a nation; as pure, precious, uncivilised, and vulnerable; and as the authentic self which must be protected at all costs; may be reserved only for white children, while black children are seen to represent the colonially-produced stereotypes of their race. In the context of CSA, this becomes even more significant as one must grapple with definitions of objects which can be socially and morally transgressed, and those which cannot.

2.5. Child Sexual Abuse

Combining the extrapolations of children to the progress and wellness of a nation, with the constructions of children as precious, pure, uncivilised, and vulnerable; one can begin to understand why discussions surrounding the transgression of such a social object are likely to be highly emotionally charged. This socially-congruent emotional response, however, tends to be targeted towards those deemed at fault, rather than upon institutional structures which play a role on a socioeconomic level (Burman, 2008). This therefore ignores structures which allow for the perpetuation of CSA while focusing on individuals who either commit CSA or allow it to be committed; and thereby allows these structures to be reproduced unchallenged.

Constructions of children who have been sexually abused present a challenge for society: they no longer represent the ideal, pure, unsullied objects that childhood is associated with, however their inherent innocence and helplessness constructs them as 'victims' in

discourses on this topic (Burman, 2008). Additionally, the violation of the morally pure object of the child has far-reaching connotations in public discourse. Due to the child's representation of the well-being of the nation, when such a child is seen to have been hurt or violated, this implies something significant about the nature of the society to which that child belongs.

Children are viewed as requiring the protection of adults, and perhaps part of the strength of the emotional reaction that CSA generates stems from a sense of guilt that South Africans, as a collective, have allowed this to happen to the most innocent and defenceless of our citizens. This partially accounts for the outrage that is often expressed towards perpetrators of CSA; it may be that this is at least partially an attempt to appropriate blame onto someone else to prevent the experience of guilt in recognition of the fact that we, as protectors of the vulnerable, have failed. In the context of South Africa, the parallels with the aforementioned shame and guilt associated with apartheid cannot be ignored. Perhaps in South Africa specifically this type of transgression is emotionally evocative due to links with poorer, black communities that are neglected by wealthier, white communities. This serves as a reminder of the many remaining inequalities that exist as a result of apartheid, and that create the socioeconomic conditions which often allow for CSA to be perpetrated.

2.5.1. Constructions of the victim and the perpetrator in child sexual abuse

2.5.1.1. Constructing the perpetrator

The constructions of the paedophile and the child rapist have undergone many transformations and different categorisations over time, however for the purposes of this research it is most important to consider the construction of the perpetrator in the context of South Africa's history and his or her race. White paedophilia was fairly well-documented

during apartheid, with white men who were caught sexually abusing children undergoing extensive profiling in order to better understand their affliction (Bowman, 2010). In contrast, black men who were also child rapists were dismissed as portraying 'typical' characteristics of the assumed primitive, savage nature of their race, and were therefore not classified as paedophiles (Bowman, 2010). This echoes the racialisation of sexuality discussed previously in this paper (Shefer & Ratele, 2011).

As apartheid began to draw to a close, however, awareness began to grow regarding the prevalence of CSA in black communities. Although it became clear that there were black paedophiles in South Africa, they were not constructed as such, and were either mentioned briefly in reporting on cases of CSA in black communities, or called child rapists and abusers (Bowman, 2010). Only in 2004 did the black paedophile begin to emerge and come to be treated in the same way as the white paedophile (Bowman, 2010). The construction of the black male as savage, impulsive and morally lax prevented their actions from being considered equally as shocking and abnormal as when the same actions were carried out by a white man.

2.5.1.2. Constructing the victim

As the construction of the paedophile has changed, so has the notion of childhood and who constitutes a child, particularly in South Africa (Bowman, 2010). Children, for the most part, are considered to be pure, precious and innocent, and therefore transgressions against them elicit very strong reactions from the public (Falkof, 2012; Lupton, 2014). Under apartheid, however, white children were constructed in this way, while black children were constructed as possible threats to the apartheid system who needed to be monitored closely (Bowman, 2010). The public largely constructed the black race as violent and

impulsive, and perceived black children as an extension of this, and therefore these children were not ascribed the same social and moral purity as white children (Bowman, 2010). Media reporting on cases of black CSA did not refer to the incidents as abuse, but rather as an 'interference' with the child, and these children were not seen as victims, but rather as partaking in what was perceived at the time as their parents' immoral, promiscuous lifestyles (Bowman, 2010). This echoes Falkof's (2012) findings of pathology being located within black children rather than as external forces acting upon the child.

Towards the late 1980s, however, perspectives began to change, and the black child began to be viewed more as vulnerable and damaged by the apartheid system, and therefore a desire to protect them arose (Bowman, 2010). By 1997 paedophilia was understood to cross racial boundaries and sexual abuse of black children was no longer classified differently to sexual abuse of white children (Bowman, 2010).

2.5.1.3. Implications

The construction of the black perpetrator of CSA as unrestrained and savage resulted in these men not being given access to evaluation and treatment (Bowman, 2010). Additionally, the construction of the black child as not precious enough to warrant being attributed the same traits of morality and purity as white children resulted in the suffering of these children not being acknowledged, and their abuse being considered 'normal' in their environment (Bowman, 2010). The combination of these two factors led to paedophilia becoming very much a 'white' construct, and the degree of seriousness and importance elicited by CSA came to be very much reliant on the race of both the perpetrator and child. The implication of this is that the designation of someone as a perpetrator of CSA,

or as the victim of CSA in South Africa has, in the past, relied very heavily on constructions of his or her race. This research aims to determine whether this is still the case.

2.6. Race in the Media

The media is one of the most important conduits for information in almost every country of the world. The information that they report and the manner in which they report it is therefore extremely important and plays an invaluable role in influencing public opinion and shaping social landscapes. There are thus many facets of this interplay between the media and the public, particularly in a country such as South Africa where interracial interactions are already set against the backdrop of apartheid.

2.6.1. The importance of the media

Jacobs (2002) posits that the media is automatically, and often incorrectly, afforded positive valuation and is seen as a channel through which information is passed to the public without interference, as it is seen to represent the views of the people, and therefore have a democratising effect. He argues that the media is not simply a conduit for the government, political parties or citizens, but is an autonomous power in itself (Jacobs, 2002). Its role is to contribute to democracy, nation-building, provision of education and the strengthening of moral fibre within society (Zegeye & Harris, 2002). It should therefore have an obligation to fulfil this role.

2.6.2. Media in post-apartheid South Africa

The media under apartheid was strictly censored and the government controlled the information allowed to be passed into the public sphere. In post-apartheid South Africa, the media has been granted freedom of press and is not restricted in what it can publish or

report on (Jacobs, 2002). This imbues the media with a powerful role in shaping the identities and interests of different social groups within South Africa as it has become a trusted source of information (Zegeye & Harris, 2002). As Baderoon (as cited in Zegeye & Harris, 2002) states, the media influences how people map their social reality, and it aids them in determining the boundaries of which groups they belong to, and which they do not. "People use the media to determine who is the 'us' and who is the 'them'" (Baderoon, as cited in Zegeye & Harris, 2002, p.243).

In South Africa specifically, a report by Braude (1999) found that the South African media often made use of stereotypical representations of race and that representations of black people as "inferior, incompetent and criminal continue[d] to be perpetuated" (Braude, 1999, p.142). Although this report was widely contested, Durrheim, Quayle, Whitehead and Kriel (2005) considered the responses of the South African media to this report and found that the majority of the responses to the report involved widespread denial of racism by the media, bar the encouraging responses from a number of black journalists. These findings suggest not only that the media is susceptible to a showing of racialised representations of black people in their articles, but that there is an immediately defensive response by the media when accused of racism which cannot be attributed solely to an inaccurate report as the differing opinions on this report were continuously broken down along racial lines (Durrheim et al., 2005). This is significant as, given the far-reaching and important impact that the media has in South Africa (Jacobs, 2002; Zegeye & Harris, 2002), a display of racialised constructions in the media and a refusal to acknowledge and engage with these constructions by the media themselves, allows for the public to be exposed to and internalise these constructions uncritically. This has the potential to further entrench racial

stereotypes within South African society, and therefore hamper the country's future progress significantly.

In discussing the future of the country, there is an important distinction to make regarding whether the country is focused on creating a multi-racial society, that acknowledges and celebrates all races; or a non-racial society, in which race no longer plays a role – a society that is essentially 'colour-blind' (Berger, 2001). Thus far, it seems that the country is moving towards a multi-racial society, however Berger (2001) argues that the media is responsible for changing or encouraging this direction based on how race is portrayed in the media, the generalisations and insinuations made around race, and the roles assigned to members of different races in the media. The constructions of race by the media in reporting on crime could very well have an impact on the way that race is then perceived and reconstructed by those reading the articles, and therefore the role of the media must be mentioned, if not explored in this report.

2.7. Race Online

The advent of the internet has provided an entirely new public space within which relationships can be formed, identities created and information shared. With all of these advantages, however, come a set of challenges that could result in the internet negatively affecting certain people.

2.7.1. The global village: perks and pitfalls

There are two dominant views of the internet and its globalising effect. The first is that it has allowed Westernised and Eurocentric values and ideas, and the English language to dominate the space, and this has developed fundamental inequalities within the online

space (Wasserman, 2002). It is considered to serve capitalist interests and have an homogenising effect on culture and identity; essentially it is viewed as bringing the world too close together; standardising those differences which make us unique. From this viewpoint, those who do not have access to the internet or who cannot speak English will be excluded from this global nation, and will be severely disadvantaged by this.

The opposing view is that the internet also provides a platform for minority cultures and groups to offer resistance to their exclusion from the internet, and to raise awareness and perhaps educate people on their traditions and culture (Wasserman, 2002). It also allows these smaller local communities to access global resources and may serve a means of survival and dissemination of their languages and cultures (Wasserman, 2002).

2.7.2. South Africa and the internet

South Africa undoubtedly benefits from the abovementioned advantages of the internet, but it also suffers from the disadvantages. While the internet has given many South Africans the ability to interact with the wealth of information afforded by the internet, and given them a public platform to discuss opinions and have debates, many other South Africans are disadvantaged by their inability to gain access to this. In parts of the country apartheid detrimentally affected linguistic development in South Africa as for a number of black citizens, access to education was restricted and therefore proficiency in English has been under-developed (Wasserman, 2002). Since English is by far the dominant language used on the internet, this limits the amount that can be understood by a number of South Africans, and restricts them from joining in on conversations and debates (Wasserman, 2002).

While this is problematic, it is more easily rectified than the problems within South Africa related to internet access. According to the most recent General Household Survey Report

(2016), 59.3% of South African households have at least one member who has access to the internet either at home or elsewhere, however of these people less than 10% have access to the internet at home. 15.2% of households in metropolitan areas have access to the internet at home, compared to just 2% of households in rural areas (General Household Survey Report, 2016). However, cellular phones have increased access to the internet in the rural areas, with 38.3% of rural households and a total of 53.9% of South African households using mobile devices to access the internet (General Household Survey Report, 2016). This leaves slightly over 40% of the population without access to the internet, and people living rurally particularly underrepresented online.

2.7.3. Race and racism online

Despite the critical nature of race and racism in South Africa, research into constructions of race online is relatively limited. Durrheim, Greener and Whitehead (2015), however, conducted research in order to understand the ways in which racism was produced in online interactions in South Africa. Their findings indicated a number of themes, including the avoidance of explicit racism, the denial of racism, and the denial of racism on behalf of others (Durrheim et al., 2015). More specifically, their report found that the themes of race and racism were generally repressed by a collaborative audience in that racial stereotypes were used without race being explicitly mentioned, and other participants were able to use racial common sense to understand the implied message in the interaction (Durrheim et al., 2015). This implies a pre-existing understanding of racial stereotypes which are then drawn upon to make inferences, allowing the interaction itself to remain safely outside the classifications of explicit racism while drawing on racist classifications and stereotypes. When explicitly racist comments were made, they were often qualified in order to

reconstruct the racist remark as a reaction rather than an enduring prejudice (Durrheim et al., 2015). If accusations of racism persisted, they were criticised for limiting debate and academic freedom, and therefore racism was essentially denied throughout (Durrheim et al., 2015).

These findings highlight that by the avoidance of explicitly referring to race, contributors were able to deny racism, while continuing to take part in a discourse that was very clearly making use of racial suggestion, allusion, implication or innuendo (Durrheim et al., 2015). The speakers within this study were oriented to the norms against prejudice and accusations of racism, which allowed them to articulate and defend beliefs about race, while not actually acknowledging the racist nature of these beliefs. This refusal to recognise and engage with racism online could be considered collusion with and condoning of racism (Durrheim et al., 2015). This is significant as it indicates that racism in the traditional sense is not often made explicit in online interactions, however there is often a more subtle showing of racism which requires a deeper analysis and understanding of the insinuations associated with the language used in discourses online and the implications thereof. This is the undertaking of this report.

2.8. Facebook

Data collected for this report was gathered entirely from the Facebook comments sections present on online South African news sites. It is therefore important to discuss Facebook's value as a social networking site, including what motivates users to make use of the service; as well as considering its comparative value to anonymous comments sections on news sites themselves.

2.8.1. Why Facebook?

Facebook is just one of many social media platforms, and yet as of June 2017 it was the most popular social network worldwide with over 2 billion monthly users (Statista, 2017) and approximately 16 million users in South Africa (Internet World Statistics, 2017). There are many factors which have been investigated in considering why people make use of Facebook specifically, however two predominant factors have emerged: the need to belong, and the need for self-presentation. The need to belong here is defined as an intrinsic motivation for affiliation with others and a desire for social acceptance, while the need for self-presentation refers to the process of impression management (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

When considering the need to belong, it is useful to consider whether the user belongs to a collectivistic or individualistic culture. Due to the fact that in collectivistic cultures, a need for harmony within the group is a primary priority and individual gain is not considered important, users from collectivistic cultures are less likely to share private information with their Facebook friends or raise potentially controversial topics (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Members of individualistic cultures, however, are more focused on individual achievements and success, and are therefore more likely to share private information and raise controversial topics (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

The need for self-presentation does link to an inclination for users to present an idealised rather than accurate version of themselves on their profiles. Back et al.'s (2010) report, however, notes that the majority of participants in their study seem to express and communicate their real personalities rather than idealised versions. Additionally, a study by Gosling, Gaddis and Vazire (as cited in Nadkarni & Hoffman) found that impressions which

were formed from Facebook profiles were accurate for all personalities of their participants. These two studies seem to suggest that although Facebook users undoubtedly make use of impression management on social media, they also tend to be relatively congruent in the way that they portray themselves on this platform.

Within the context of this report, this indicates that a need to affiliate with others may lead some commenters to become involved in conversations within comments sections on Facebook, and if these commenters are from individualistic cultural backgrounds, they are more likely to make comments that are controversial or not in line with the majority of other comments. Additionally, those that do comment are likely to be portraying themselves in a fairly genuine way, based on the research conducted previously in the United States. This implies that Facebook will provide a relatively reliable space in which discussions around race, sexual abuse, and childhood are likely to be constructed in a manner that represents the true opinions and views of those commenting.

2.8.2. Facebook vs. anonymous forums

Although it was the initial intention for the data for this report to be drawn from anonymous comments sections on South African news sites, these forums were revoked in October 2015, and therefore were no longer available as a source of data. It is still useful to consider the relative quantity and quality of comments made on Facebook sites as opposed to anonymous platforms in order to gain a sense of the type of data one would encounter on Facebook. Although this type of research has not been conducted in South Africa specifically, Hille and Bakker's (2014) study on the same topic but based in the Netherlands provides some insight into this question.

Since comments on Facebook are linked to an individual's profile, and therefore their name, posting anonymously on Facebook is not possible. It is, of course, a possibility that an individual may create a false profile using a name that is not theirs which would allow them to post somewhat anonymously, however for the most part the assumption is that when one posts an opinion on Facebook, that opinion is explicitly linked to that individual and can be viewed by their friends, family, and anyone within their social network. This has been found to discourage abusive and offensive comments, which is likely why most news sites globally are switching to this form of commentary.

Alternatively, anonymous platforms on news sites also use various forms of moderation for their commenters, including house rules, pre-registration, pre-moderation, post-moderation, and report buttons to regulate offensive content (Hille & Bakker, 2014). This is similarly intended to discourage abusive comments, however the effort required to conduct these checks and moderating influences often results in less commentary on these platforms than on sites where users can simply post opinions with no form of moderation.

Each forum therefore has its own pros and cons. Hille and Bakker's (2014) study discovered that more comments appeared on the anonymous commentary sections of the news sites than on Facebook, and that the quality of comments on the news sites themselves was better than the quality of comments on Facebook. Across both platforms, however, it was found that comments sections on news stories generate noticeable interaction amongst commenters, including responses to other comments which spark conversation and debate (Hille & Bakker, 2014).

It therefore seems that a greater number of comments, and comments of greater quality, are generated by anonymous platforms on news sites; however it must be noted that both

Facebook and anonymous forums generate interaction, conversation, discussion, and debate; all of which are useful in conducting an analysis of discourse. Additionally, while Facebook does require pre-registration, it does not pre- or post-moderate its comments and therefore if an individual is simply not concerned by their opinions being linked to them personally, or has created a false profile for the purposes of remaining anonymous, the comments generated are likely to reflect the genuine views and opinions of the commenter. This provides perhaps a smaller data set than one would find on anonymous platforms, but a useful space in which to investigate personal constructions of race and childhood by the public nonetheless.

2.9. Child Sexual Abuse in the Media

Despite there being fairly limited research on the reporting of CSA in the media, both in South Africa and globally, in the context of this report the implications of public fascination with media reports on CSA, and the criticisms of this type of reporting must be considered.

2.9.1. Public fascination

Research into the reporting of CSA cases is limited as investigations surrounding child abuse tend to be focused more on the actual circumstances surrounding the case than on its reporting. An editorial written by Goddard (1996), however, provides some insight into the considerations and controversy surrounding such reporting. Stories about crime and criminal behaviour always attract media attention, largely because of their dramatic content and the public's fascination with depriving a person of liberty (Goddard, 1996).

The public seem to have an even greater fascination with stories reporting on crimes against children, however, and Nelson (as cited in Goddard, 1996) posits that this is due to the fact

that stories of child abuse add a further dimension of social deviance, particularly because hurting a child is so unimaginable to the majority of people. The desire for the castigation and public humiliation of the perpetrator of CSA can be understood through the discourses discussed previously in this paper, and one can imagine how a sense of outrage, repressed guilt, and fear for the future of the nation would result in such stories receiving widespread readership and commentary.

2.9.2. Criticisms of reporting on child sexual abuse

The media plays a very powerful role in defining social problems, and there is therefore an abundance of criticism surrounding their reporting on cases of CSA (Goddard, 1996). One of these criticisms is that the focus in the media is predominantly on child protection and where the system has failed and could therefore be improved with regards to keeping children safe. This seems to come at the cost of actual media coverage on the issue of child abuse itself and tends to push the focus and blame onto the protective systems rather than onto the perpetrators of the crime. While this stands in opposition to previously-discussed findings that blame is usually individualised to the perpetrator, in neither of these cases is blame afforded to the socioeconomic and environmental factors that often create situations whereby cases of CSA are able to occur. This allows these large-scale institutions and structures to remain intact to perpetuate repetitive patterns of inequality and poverty, thereby increasing the likelihood that CSA will continue to occur.

Another criticism is that it tends to be the more grotesque and severe cases of child abuse that are reported on as they receive the most attention, and particularly on sexual abuse cases as these tend to be the most shocking (Goddard, 1996). Costin, Karger and Stoesz (as cited in Goddard, 1996) argue that this has transformed child abuse from a social problem

into a social spectacle and that it has taken the focus off of severe cases of child abuse where children are put into life-threatening situations, and placed the emphasis on those who are sexually abused, usually in the upper and middle classes.

Despite these criticisms, it must be noted that the media has played an important role in increasing public awareness of all forms of violence and crimes against children, and has opened the doors on conversations surrounding these issues in order to improve the living situations and safety of many children (Goddard, 1996). The focus of the media and the manner in which they report these crimes simply needs some attention and adjustment.

2.10. Conclusions

A review of the above body of literature has highlighted many salient points with regard to the intersection of race, childhood, and sexuality. Due to the history of apartheid, race in South Africa has been a central construct in the minds of its citizens for many decades; however, the fact that race remains as central as it does to many in the face of the implementation of new policies and a growing black middle class speaks to the continuing inequalities and challenges faced by many South Africans today. This can also be partially attributed to the invisibility of whiteness in our society, and the fact that whiteness can bring with it associations of superiority, shame, guilt and defensiveness which are rarely acknowledged, thereby allowing these unspoken emotions to affect interracial interactions.

While whiteness has its own set of associations, so too does blackness. Criminal and racial identities often become fused, with perceptions of the black man as dangerous, violent, and hypersexual coming to form identities in the minds of not only others, but of black males themselves. This confluence of race and sexuality is also vital in relation to this report, in that the white ruling masculinity which asserts itself as superior to black sexuality and

masculinity, perpetuates stereotypes of the black male as threatening and sexually promiscuous, while producing the black body in such a way that white racial anxieties can be projected onto it.

Children also provide a site for projection by the public as they present an asocial canvas; constructed as pure, unsullied and representative of not only the authentic, true self of the adult, but also the site onto which hopes and fears for the wellbeing of the nation can be projected. This constitutes one of the reasons why CSA is such a challenging notion for the public: transgressions of children represent not only transgressions of the child, but also a possible future for the country which incites anxiety and fear. For this reason, constructions of the perpetrator and the victim are extremely telling with regard to the associations that the public have with both victims and perpetrators of certain races. Cases of CSA, by their emotionally provocative nature, therefore present a stage upon which the intersection of views on childhood, race and sexuality can be publicly aired and explored as representative of constructions of race, childhood and sexuality which play out on a much larger scale within South Africa.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

3.1 Research Design and Theoretical Framework

This research is intended to better understand the ways in which race is constructed by South Africans, as well as how race is portrayed in relation to sexuality and childhood. Given that these are not measurable concepts, this research is a qualitative study.

The study utilises a social constructionist perspective as its theoretical framework. Social constructionism is difficult to define, however hallmarks of this framework can be generally identified. Firstly, social constructionism takes a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge (Burr, 2015). This encourages researchers to challenge the idea that conventional knowledge is based upon objective and unbiased observations, and that categories which we as human beings use to understand the world do not refer to real divisions (Burr, 2015). In the context of this paper, this applies especially to categories of race and an understanding that these categories are entirely socially constructed and entrenched. A second tenet of social constructionism is an understanding that socially-constructed categories and concepts are historically and culturally specific (Burr, 2015). This suggests that the manner in which an individual understands the world is a product of the culture and history associated with that person at that time (Burr, 2015). Importantly, this understanding insists the imposition of one set of ideas onto another culture because it is believed to be 'better' (such as in colonial processes) is therefore invalid.

Thirdly, social constructionism views knowledge as being sustained by social processes (Burr, 2015). People therefore construct their understanding of the world through interactions with other people, and in this way human knowledge is shaped and developed (Burr, 2015). It is for this reason that an investigation into the interactions of people in

Facebook comments sections is so important: this is a manner in which knowledge and understanding in South Africa is developed and changed to become 'truth'. A final tenet of social constructionism is that knowledge and social action are interlinked (Burr, 2015). This implies that the way in which an individual understands and constructs the world around them will affect the way that they then behave in that world (Burr, 2015). In the context of this research, this means that if a person understands blackness to represent violence and threat, they will react to black people in a manner that reflects this.

Utilising the social constructionist paradigm allows this research to critically examine the manner in which South Africans online construct and understand their world, while attempting to understand the cultural and historical factors that may have shaped and developed these views. Considering the interactive element of online commentary allows for an understanding of how discussions amongst those with differing constructions of the world may come to develop their constructions of race, childhood and sexuality; and this paradigm allows for an understanding of just how impactful these interactions can be, as often these constructions result in the shaping and regulating of social behaviours.

3.2 Sample

The sample of texts drawn for this study is constituted by the comments left on Facebook articles reporting on CSA, focusing on constructions of race with regards to cases of CSA, and more specifically, on the victims and perpetrators of these crimes. This allowed the researcher access to a forum where citizens can air their views in a relatively uncensored manner, which provides more accurate reflections of their opinions.

The sampling method used is purposive, as the study is qualitative in nature and is focused on a specific area of interest. In order to ensure the information-rich cases required by the

research, intensity sampling has been used to select cases that manifest racial constructions in the comments made on the article. Patton (2001, p.242) states that the strategy selected must fit “the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced.” With this in mind, purposive, intensity sampling best suits this research design.

3.3 Procedure

This study did not require instruments of any kind as data collection occurred via the internet. The sample of texts drawn for this study were sourced from Facebook.com, a social media website that, amongst various other functions, serves to provide users with access to news articles through the pages created by news sites within Facebook itself. As mentioned previously, Facebook has 2 billion monthly users (Statista, 2017) and approximately 16 million users in South Africa (Internet World Statistics, 2017), and can be accessed via web browsers and any mobile device with internet browsing capabilities.

The sample of articles used to generate the comments that are the subject of this report were drawn from the Facebook pages of two South African news sites, namely eNCA and Eyewitness News South Africa. These sites were selected as they are both South African news sites and had high numbers of comments on their articles. The Facebook pages of these two sites are considered public pages, and therefore access is not restricted to their content or the comments posted thereon.

Since commentary sections on online articles themselves were largely discontinued in 2015, the source of online comments had to be re-evaluated and Facebook was found to provide the best platform for the airing of public views on articles reporting on CSA. The articles which generated the comments used in this study were drawn from the search results page

on the individual Facebook pages themselves, using the search term “child sexual abuse”. This search then extracted articles which contained the terms “child”, “sexual” and “abuse” either in the title or the text of the article itself. The articles which appeared as a result of this search were then reviewed to determine which articles had generated the most information-rich comment sections. Articles which generated very few comments, or articles with comments sections that were populated mainly by users attempting to sell or buy services were discounted.

In total, 23 articles which generated comment sections that referenced race, victims, or perpetrators directly and which were published on the Facebook pages of eNCA and Eyewitness News South Africa were selected across a time period spanning from April 2014 to June 2017. Once this data was collected, discourse analysis was used to interpret the information gathered, and this was used to establish a clearer picture of the extent of the racialisation of perpetrators and victims of CSA in Facebook comments in South African media.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data generated by this study, discourse analysis was utilised. This allowed for a greater understanding of the manner in which people discuss race amongst one another. It also allowed for a greater understanding of the social context in which these discussions occur, and given South Africa’s history, this is very important.

In using discourse analysis, Parker’s Method was employed. This method is structured around 7 central criteria which are used to distinguish a discourse, and 14 essential steps which are generated as a result of these criteria and can be used to conduct a discourse analysis. Additionally, there are three auxiliary criteria which generate an additional 6 steps

which can be used to more thoroughly analyse and understand a discourse (Parker, 1992). Using this method allows for a more structured progression through the process of discourse analysis, including considerations of both subject and object, as well as constructions of reality and how these occur (Parker, 1992). This method also allows for a fuller understanding of the world created by the discourse, and an understanding of the fact that every discourse exists within another discourse, which has to be considered as part of the context of that being analysed (Parker, 1992). This, and the fact that Parker's method suggests a consideration of both the history and power relations against which the discourse is set, makes it particularly relevant for the analysis of texts relating to race against the backdrop of South Africa's history and existing prejudices.

The comments sections of 23 articles were captured, and each was then analysed using Parker's method. This analysis included a necessary shift in consideration of the objects of analysis, namely CSA, race, and childhood, in order to view them as socially-constructed objects within the discourse as opposed to concepts which are present in 'reality'. The discourses generated on each article were then each treated as if the text itself were an object, and the objects discussed in these discourses were then described according to the abstractions created by the speakers. In doing this, each and every object described by the speakers was treated in this manner, for example 'men', 'women', 'children', 'white men', 'black men', 'rape', 'abuse' etc. were each analysed according to the way in which those terms were used and the descriptions generated of each.

Following this, the focus was narrowed slightly to consider only the subjects described in each discourse and, following Parker's (1992) method, consideration was given to the rights of each subject to speak in that discourse. This gave rise to a consideration of the power

held by each subject in the discourse, and further, how any objections to points raised in the discourse might be treated, furthering an understanding of power relations within each discourse. Following this, Parker's (1992) steps 9 and 10 were used to consider points where speakers utilised different terms to describe similar objects or subjects, and where their manners of speaking differed from one another. These points allowed for an identification of where perspectives differed, and provided insight into the different manners in which subjects and objects such as men, black and white men, white people, black people, children, and abuse were constructed by different speakers within each discourse. This allowed for an analysis of why these subjects and objects might be constructed differently by different speakers based on the justifications or evidence supplied in the discourse itself.

Any points where the discourse reflected on itself, for example at points where speakers identified that either themselves or another speaker was being racist or using racist terms, were then identified, and considered. Much insight was gained particularly by considering how those speakers reacted to being addressed as racist, and their defence thereof. The final steps of Parker's (1992) analysis were then used to identify the historical factors that may have played a role in generating the discourse, for example considering colonial stereotypes surrounding race when certain terms or associations with race were mentioned.

The three auxiliary criteria suggested by Parker (1992) were also then utilised to identify which institutions are reinforced and which are subverted by each discourse, which categories of people might gain or lose from the discourse, and how each discourse might allow other discourses which sanction oppression to endure, or might allow a dominant group to persist in telling their narrative while preventing less popular or familiar narratives to emerge. Once each discourse generated by each of the 23 articles had been analysed in

this manner, those which seemed to best highlight dominant discourses were identified, and are described thematically in this report.

3.4.1 Reflexivity

Given that my role as a researcher directly influenced the collection, selection and interpretation of data, and that the meaning I constructed from this data was influenced greatly by my own opinions and prejudices, reflexivity is an important consideration with regards to this research (Finlay, 2002).

Given the centrality of race to this report, my own racial identification and racial assumptions must be considered. As a white female, it is possible that my own defensiveness of my whiteness may have influenced the collection and analysis of my data, and the racial associations that I have been exposed to throughout my life might have impacted on the way that I have interpreted the discourses that I have analysed. It must, however, be noted that all analysis conducted in this manner is subjective to some degree, and I believe that an awareness of my own prejudices and associations with different races, including my own, has been sufficient to mediate most bias that might have occurred in the selection and analysis of my data.

My personal and cultural views on the value and innocence of a child's life have come into play when considering the data I have analysed, and this may have influenced my judgement and interpretation. My socialisation does not allow me to view the sexual abuse of children as anything other than morally wrong and subjectively abhorrent. It is inherent in me to construct sexuality in relation to children as something that is imposed upon them, rather than as a consensual act in which they voluntarily participate, and it is possible that this construction of children as fundamentally harmed and mistreated in cases of CSA has

skewed my perceptions of the data I have analysed. This being said, I have, wherever possible, attempted to be aware of these possible subjective pitfalls, and mediate them as much as I can.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Since the media articles and comments are published in the public domain, this research does not require clearance through the HREC (Human Research Ethics Committee). This being said, as Facebook does require registration in order to gain access to its online pages, the Terms and Conditions of the site have been investigated. Facebook's (2015) Statement of Rights and Responsibilities advises its users that when they publish content or information on public pages (such as comments), they are allowing anyone, including people who are not on Facebook, to access and use that information; as well as allowing that information to be associated with that user's name and profile picture. There are therefore no ethical infringements associated with accessing and using this data for analysis, however the profile pictures and last names of the commenters have been removed from the data in this report.

There are, however, some additional ethical considerations as the findings of this research may be politically charged given the controversial nature of racial issues in South Africa and the emotionally evocative nature of childhood and CSA specifically. The outcomes of this research should not be used to further entrench stereotypes or prejudices regarding race, but should rather be viewed as a reflection on discourse surrounding constructions of race.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Analysis of the 23 selected articles revealed a number of configurations of discourse in reference to CSA. However, the following section highlights the way that discourses of race, sexual violence, and childhood were deployed in the comments in shaping the racialisation, sexualisation and possibilities of South African childhood embedded in constructions of CSA in online South African media.

4.1 The Deracialisation of Childhood

As mentioned previously in this report, research conducted into the evolution of the ‘black paedophile’ found a number of key areas of interest (Bowman, 2010). Central to understanding the shifts that are associated with this evolution is the notion of childhood and who constitutes a child. Previous research (Bowman, 2010; Falkof, 2012) has found that traditionally, white children were viewed as precious and innocent, while black children were viewed as extensions of their supposedly violent, immoral parents, or as embodying pathology. As a result, acts of sexual abuse committed against these children were not viewed as transgressions due to the fact that black children were not viewed as being as morally pure as white children, and therefore not capable of being violated (Bowman, 2010).

Although there was a later shift in this view, wherein the black child began to be viewed as more vulnerable and therefore was constructed as a victim of CSA, constructions of these children in relation to white children online have not been documented.

Analysis of the data collected during the course of this study has not found any instances wherein the race of the child became a factor in the discussion of the victim, and in fact there was only one case (which will be discussed subsequently) wherein anything other than

universal sympathy was expressed for the victims, regardless of their race. To illustrate this point, comments made on three articles written about the sexual abuse of children are presented below. Figures 1-4 reflect comments made on the same article, while figure 5 and figure 6 refer to an additional two articles.

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

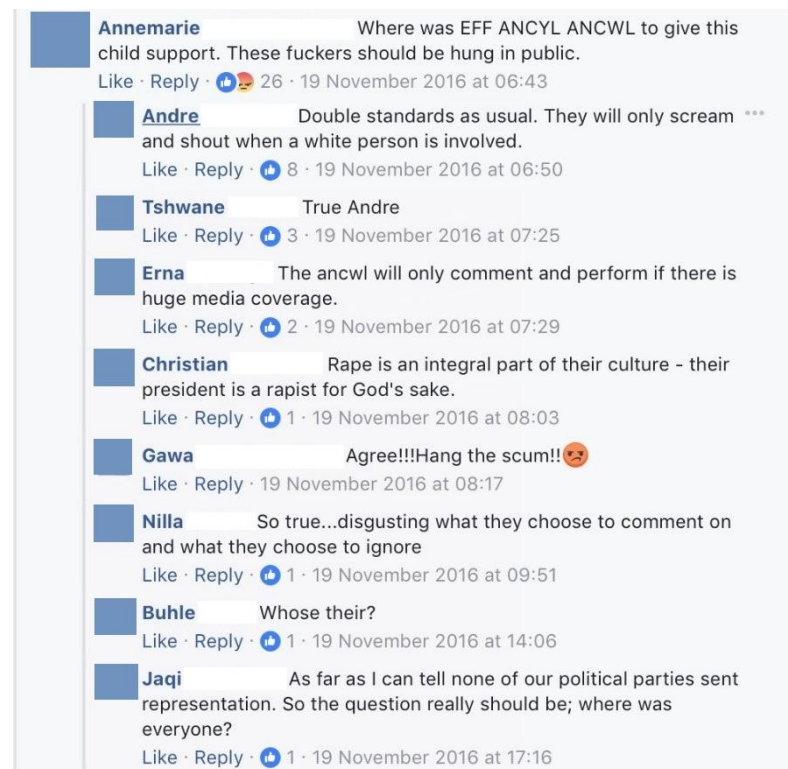


Figure 5.



Figure 6.



The comments displayed in figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 were made in response to an article on the gang rape of a thirteen year-old girl by ten men, and the perpetrators' subsequent expressions of emotion during their court case (see Appendix A, article 15). The above data reflects both sympathy for the victim, and rage expressed towards the perpetrators. Phrases such as "poor little girl" expressed by Cathy (figure 1), "I just want to hug that girl" expressed by Jerome (figure 1), and the defence of "the little girl" crying by Rika (figure 1) reflect the sympathy felt by the commenters. The victim is constructed as innocent, scared and in need of protection. Her vulnerability is made clear by the way the speakers allude to the fact that she was taken advantage of, and there is empathy expressed in that speakers such as Fransie and Louise place themselves in the shoes of the victim and attempt to imagine how she might have felt in the moment of her rape (figure 1). This indicates that they are inviting others to empathise with this child, and at no stage is the girl's race spoken about in reference to her victimhood, but rather she is simply seen as a little girl who was hurt and taken advantage of. Race is, however, raised adjacently to the topic of the rape of this child, as shown in figures 2, 3 and 4, and this will be discussed subsequently.

Figure 5 represents comments that were made on an article concerning the rape and murder of a one year-old child in Cape Town (see Appendix A, article 22). The crime was committed by the child's mother's boyfriend. Once again, no mention is made of the race of the victim. The sentiments expressed in this discourse either represent rage towards the perpetrator or sympathy for the child. The child is referred to as "the little one", "a young helpless kid", a "poor baby", and "gorgeous boy" (figure 5). This reflects previously-discussed common constructions linked to childhood such as vulnerability and preciousness (Burman, 2008; Lupton, 2014). Commenters construct the child as innocent, defenceless,

and in need of protection, and there is outrage that such a being has been violated in this way.

The data displayed in figure 6 represents comments made on an article about a man dubbed the 'Springs monster' (see Appendix A, article 14). The article reported the fact that he raped and abused his five children, and speculated about the possible involvement of his wife. Once again, sympathy for the victims and outrage at the perpetrators are expressed. The children are constructed as "innocent" and it is mentioned by Daphne (figure 6) that "to harm children is unforgiveable". Once again, children are constructed as vulnerable and in need of protection, and there is a link between children and innocence. Additionally, once again the race of the victims is not mentioned or alluded to.

4.1.1 Conclusions

Throughout all three of the above articles, the two primary themes to emerge are sympathy for the victim, and outrage at the perpetrator(s). This represents the idea that children are vulnerable and in need of protection, echoing findings of previous research (Bowman, 2010; Burman, 2008; Lupton, 2014), and implies that there is an inherent link between innocence and childhood, regardless of the race of the child.

While it could be argued that the fact that the articles themselves do not make mention of the race of victims or perpetrators in these cases could be mediating possible comments regarding race, it must be noted that the areas in which these crimes took place have historical links to certain races. This, combined with photographs included in the news stories, and possible links between the names of the victims and their races, provide a basis on which these victims could have become proxies for certain races. In spite of this, at no stage is the race of the victims raised.

This omission of race as related to the victims throughout all the data suggests that children are somewhat removed from the associations of their races, and are not sullied by stereotypical constructs that are associated with their race. They are, essentially, clean slates and this represents a certain level of power that the child possesses, regardless of the race of that child. Something about childhood itself seems to be inherently powerful with its links to vulnerability, a need for protection, and innocence (Lupton, 2014). While in the past this construct of the innocent child applied almost exclusively to the white child (Bowman, 2010; Falkof, 2012), it seems that this has shifted somewhat and commenters construct the children in the above-mentioned articles as almost 'raceless'. This represents a significant move away from previous constructions of black children as being objects onto which negative stereotypes associated with their race could be projected (Falkof, 2012). The universal sympathy expressed seems to indicate that South Africans are beginning to construct childhood outside of markers of race, rather than dividing children along the lines of their race and deciding from there who is worthy of protection or not.

The anger expressed towards the perpetrator(s) represents the outrage that the speakers feel at the fact that such a terrible societal transgression has occurred. The fact that outrage is expressed over the harming of these children, and that there is no mention of that child's race, indicates that people now feel that *any* child, regardless of their race, is considered pure and innocent, and is therefore sacred. This shift does not necessarily indicate that the negative constructs associated with blackness are no longer present, but simply that when it comes to children, those constructs do not seem to apply. These findings are significant as they indicate that constructions of children who have been sexually abused do not vary according to the race of the child – the discourse of childhood trumps racism.

It must be noted that race *is* raised in this discourse, albeit not in a manner that directly references the victim and her race. This occurs specifically in figure 1 where Anne-Marie comments “Why is this not on the front pages of the newspapers like the coffin story?” and is continued by Tshwane’s comment “This is more painful than the coffin story, but people and politicians are silent because a white person is not involved” (figure 2). This initial mention of the ‘coffin story’ sparks further discussion, particularly by Okuhle (as shown in figure 3) and a similar discussion is generated by Annemarie’s comment “Where was EFF ANCYL ANCWL to give this child support” (figure 4). Although this discussion does not influence the sympathy or reaction of the commenters towards the victim, race is still raised in this context and therefore must be discussed.

The ‘coffin story’ refers to a news report of a black South African man who was caught by two white South African farmers while allegedly traversing their land to reach his home (Chabalala, 2016). He was beaten, tied up, and placed inside a coffin where the white farmers then threatened to pour petrol on him and set him alight (Chabalala, 2016). In this discourse, this case is set in contrast to the story of the gang rape of a thirteen year-old girl by ten men. The point made in reference to this story is that despite the disturbing nature of the latter story, it has not received as much attention from the public and politicians because no white people are involved in the case. This is indicated by Tshwane’s comment “This is more painful than the coffin story, but people and politicians are silent because a white person is not involved” (figure 2) and the resounding agreement from most commenters that follow this comment. These responses indicate that white people seem to have more power to command the attention of the public and politicians by the nature of their skin colour – affording them a level of privilege that black people do not enjoy. There is

the implication that white lives are valued more than black lives, regardless of whether the white person in the report is the perpetrator or the victim.

Later, the point is made by Okhule (figure 3) that the coffin case deserves more attention and recognition because of its nature; because it was “a racial and rare” (figure 3) case, whereas we in South Africa have “come to accept” that people who rape exist and “can not be saved” (Okuhle – figure 3), indicating that rape has become normalised in South Africa. He also comments that “this coffin case was the 1st to millions of rape” (figure 3). This seems to indicate that he feels that rape is commonplace and therefore on some level can be more easily accepted, while racism is still something that can be fought against and therefore cases involving racial attacks are worthy of more attention. This highlights the importance of race within South Africa, and how strongly many people feel about racially motivated crimes. It is also highlighted by Annemarie (figure 4) that political parties have not shown an interest in this case as they did over the coffin case, and this is attributed to the fact that “they will only scream and shout when a white person is involved” (Andre, figure 4). This indicates once again the perception that white people matter more than black people: whether they are perpetrators or victims, their involvement in a case seems to merit that case as more worthy of media coverage, and more important in the eyes of the public.

The fact that a racial case is considered more worthy of attention than the gang rape of a thirteen year-old girl indicates the strength of people’s feelings on racial matters, and highlights further the perceived and real imbalance of power between white and black South Africans. This is significant in that it indicates not simply an intersection of race and CSA, but a situation in which one is deemed more important than the other; and in this case race is deemed to supersede CSA. Racial tensions are therefore brought to the forefront

without the race of the victim or perpetrators of this case being mentioned directly, but rather the assertion that because neither the victim nor the perpetrators are white, the case is not worthy of attention.

The overall discussion around the coffin story reflects a society wherein white people's lives are considered more valuable than those of black people, and where cases that involve even the most severe of societal transgressions, i.e. the gang rape of a child, are not widely recognised because no white people are involved in the case. It is especially significant to note that within this discussion, whiteness is considered more important and more worthy of attention and action by those in power than blackness, even when whiteness is represented by perpetrators and blackness by a victim of CSA. In this case, while not in reference to the *victim's* race specifically, the discourse of race seems to trump that of victimhood and childhood.

Finally, it must be noted that there are multiple points in the above figures where race, sexuality, and gender intersect. Comments such as "These men who rape girls and women are the worst part of humanity" (figure 1), "This man need to get there dicks chopped off" (figure 1), "The attitude men have towards women even young girls is disgusting" (figure 2), "some of you have posted in recent events a lot of racial comments, but now as woman you find common ground... as woman you impressed me" (figure 2), and "where was the mother?" (figure 5) represent just some of the possible examples of moments where gender is raised within these texts. Gender is central to sexuality and sexual abuse, and the fact that white and black male perpetrators are treated differently in these discourses indicates that gender and race are also intersecting in a very specific way. Although this must be acknowledged, the focus of this report is on race, childhood and CSA, and although gender

constitutes an important part of these intersections, a full analysis of the manner in which gender is constructed in the above texts would require a much more detailed analysis than this report allows for. Such an analysis could therefore possibly be an area for further research following on from this report.

4.2 The Limits of Childhood

As mentioned previously, there is only one case in which there is not universal sympathy expressed for the victims of CSA. This case involves an article written on the imprisonment of South African tennis player and coach, Bob Hewitt (see Appendix A, article 12). The article reports on the testimony of three women, and the subsequent conviction of Bob Hewitt on two charges of rape and one of sexual assault. The following figures represent part of the commentary generated by this article.

Figure 7.

Nasmie Let the man go! It is pointless. Then again this is what our criminal justice system is good for, punishing old people and petty thieves. Real killers and corrupt politicians get off free all the time.
Like · Reply · 6 · 13 September 2016 at 23:45

^ Hide 13 Replies

Salomè He ruined the lives of innocent hopeful young *** girls who saw him as a hero The family of one of the girls did not believe her and were angry with her-they have not spoken to each other for over 30 years its tragic He must be punished he still denies everything and will not apologize
Like · Reply · 5 · 14 September 2016 at 10:06 · Edited

Aloma So raping is not a criminal offence? No matter what age, jail him!
Like · Reply · 6 · 14 September 2016 at 00:25

Irma No he needs to pay just like zuma need to pay for the same crime.
Like · Reply · 5 · 14 September 2016 at 08:17

Heather The crimes he committed were horrible. This is an example to all those who think they can get away without punishment. He was a rapist of innocent children. All crime should be punished.
Like · Reply · 2 · 14 September 2016 at 09:09

Christian The real killers and corrupt politicians only escape justice because they are in control of the system.
Like · Reply · 14 September 2016 at 09:24

Svend I think you need to find some pills to make your head right. Or read about his crimes.
Like · Reply · 3 · 14 September 2016 at 09:43

Nasmie Please peoples i know what he has done. And it is wrong in every sense. I don't stand for rape or any kind of injustice! But for heavens sake he's an old fart now. The complainants should've come forward years back when it still could've made a difference! What's the point in kicking and hitting and old bag that has no more bounce? He probably has only a year or two of natural life left in him anyways.
Like · Reply · 14 September 2016 at 11:43

Figure 8.



Figure 9.

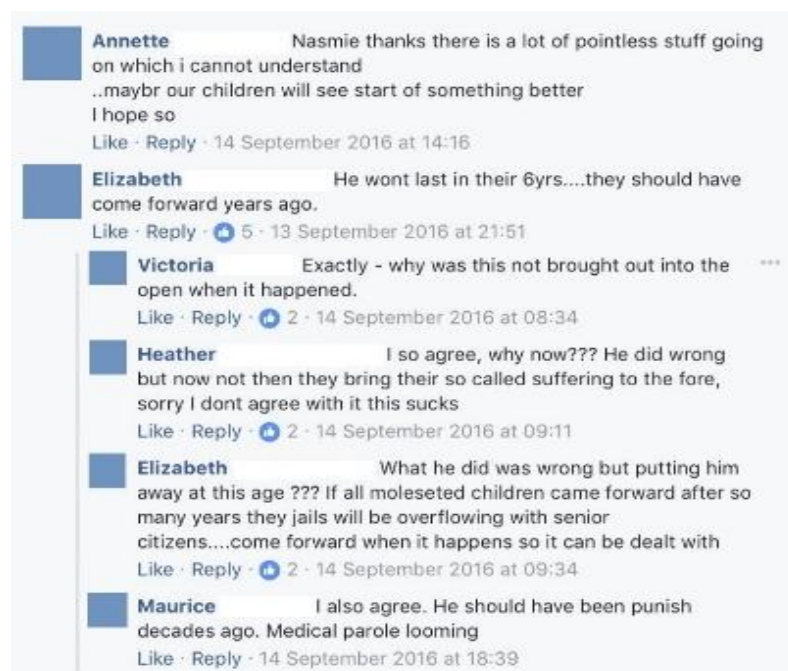


Figure 10.



This discourse deviates from themes that have emerged in previous data, and it is therefore important that it is discussed. These deviations occur in two primary ways.

4.2.1 Defending the perpetrator

There are numerous calls throughout this thread for the perpetrator of the crime to be released instead of serving time in jail. Most of these speakers claim that because he is elderly, sending him to jail is “pointless” (Nasmie, figure 7), and that since he did not commit the crimes at the age he is now, there is no reason to send him to jail – as highlighted by the comments “he did wrong but now not then they bring their so called suffering to the fore” (Heather, figure 9), and “he should have been punished decades ago” (Maurice, figure 9).

This deviates from previous discourses discussed as typically the perpetrator is verbally attacked, their character and morals questioned, and there are numerous calls for harsh forms of punishment. In Figure 7, Nasmie claims that “this is all our criminal justice system is good for, punishing old people and petty thieves”, and this is significant because by constructing the perpetrator as an “old man” and then comparing him to “petty thieves”, Nasmie equates these two crimes. This indicates that the crimes this man has committed are not considered serious, and implies that the consequences of his crimes are not severe. The comment also juxtaposes the perpetrator with “real killers and corrupt politicians” (Nasmie, figure 7) who are not punished, indicating that the crimes he has committed are not as serious as corruption. This is an anomalous statement as rape is generally considered to be more severe than corruption, however in this instance the sexual abuse of multiple young girls is viewed as less worthy of punishment than corruption. These comments regarding the protection or defence of the perpetrator indicate that the perpetrator here possesses more power within the discourse, not just in that he has exerted this power over young girls in the past in order to take advantage of them sexually, but in that others feel obligated to come to his defence.

It must also be noted that there are many contestations of these views, and numerous speakers berate those who feel that the perpetrator should not be punished and defend the rights of the victims, such as Linda in figure 8 when she comments: “Are you freaking kidding me? This is a sick, evil, twisted, useless excuse for a man”, Rhona’s comment “he raped children” in figure 8, and Deon’s comment in figure 8: “just imagine for one second how many lives he affected and maybe even ruined... he simply has to pay to show justice being done”. This indicates that there is still some power held by the victims in that they are

being defended, however it is a deviation nonetheless in that speakers are even compelled to defend the victims against comments defending the perpetrator.

4.2.2 Victim-blaming

Throughout this discourse there are moments where the victims of these cases of sexual abuse are berated or their suffering is minimised. Some of these views are reflected in comments such as “they should have come forward years ago” (Nasmie, figure 7), “come forward when it happens so it can be dealt with” (Elizabeth, figure 9), and “why was this not brought out into the open when it happened” (Victoria, figure 9). This is a strong deviation from previous data wherein victims are protected universally and sympathy is expressed for their suffering. It seems that when power is given to the perpetrator, this necessitates that it be taken away from the victim, and therefore victim-blaming occurs while the positive attributes of the perpetrator are highlighted. Although there are many speakers who do maintain their defence of the victims, it is unusual for anyone to speak of the victims in a negative way when discussing a case of CSA, and therefore the reasons behind this must be considered.

4.2.3 Possible Explanations

The deviations highlighted above serve to reposition the power in this discourse by giving the perpetrator more power, and reducing the power of the victim. This could be occurring for a number of reasons, some of which can be better understood by exploring the characteristics of both the victim and the perpetrator.

In order to better comprehend the reasons behind these anomalous constructions, three possible explanations are considered. The first is that because the crimes occurred many

years ago, people no longer view the perpetrator as needing to be punished, and instead turn to blaming the victims who are no longer considered 'children' and therefore the same level of anger and outrage is not felt as in previous cases. As discussed previously, childhood is inherently linked with constructs of innocence, vulnerability, and value (Lupton, 2014; Burman, 2008); and therefore in most cases where CSA is discussed, speakers are outraged by crimes committed against a person possessing these characteristics. In this case, however, at the time of reporting their abuse, the victims were no longer children. This seems to have a significant impact on the way that their suffering is viewed, in that because they are no longer children, they are no longer worthy of the protection that they would have been afforded had they reported the incident when it happened. This echoes findings of Rogers, Josey and Davies (2007) wherein it was found that increased ages in victims of CSA were strong predictors in a decrease in sympathy for these victims. It is as if the fact that the victims are now adults has resulted in the privileges of childhood, such as innocence, vulnerability and purity (Lupton, 2014), being stripped from them, and they therefore do not warrant the same level of outrage or sympathy that other victims of childhood sexual abuse are afforded.

The second possible explanation is that perhaps the ages of both the victims and the perpetrator affects their constructions in this discourse as elderly people are also seen to require protection and are viewed as vulnerable, much like children (Andrew, Mitnitski & Rockwood, 2008). Similarly, the victims are no longer children but are instead now adults, and are therefore not viewed as vulnerable and in need of protection. This places the victims and the perpetrator somewhat at odds with one another and therefore the discourse seems to be divided on who should be punished and who should be blamed – they each hold equal power in this discourse. Once again, this explanation views childhood

and its associated constructs as being limited – once the child becomes an adult he or she no longer possesses the innocence inherent in childhood and instead is open to blame (Rogers et al., 2007).

A third possible explanation is that the perpetrator's status as a wealthy white male who is well-known globally may influence the discourse to reflect the protection of the power of such a man. The evidence for this explanation lies in the fact that twice in this discourse, the perpetrator is compared to Jacob Zuma (Irma, figure 7; and Mcebisi, figure 8), and the point is made that there are not many calls for Zuma's crimes to be forgiven. Jacob Zuma is a wealthy and powerful black man of a similar age who was pressured to be held accountable for the rape of a woman, and the juxtaposition of these two men is quite striking. This interaction demonstrates an awareness of the power held by a white man in the public eye in that when he commits the crime of rape, there are calls for him to be let off; while when a black man of similar stature commits the same crime, he is pressured to take responsibility and be punished for his actions. This once again demonstrates a power imbalance.

Further evidence of this point lies in Fakalonke's comment that the perpetrator's actions are "unAfrican" (figure 10). Other speakers respond by insulting the man, and indicating that they find his comment ridiculous and unbelievable, as evidenced by Pulane's use of laughing emoticons (figure 10), Thembi's comment of "Unafrican?? are for real?" (figure 10) and Irma's comment of "Seriously?" followed by a meme stating "We all know someone who speaks fluent shit" (figure 10). This subtle show of racism indicates that the other speakers do not believe that rape is 'unAfrican' but seem to believe that it is in fact a behaviour closely associated with African people. The implication of this is therefore that black people are more likely to rape, and that rape is a behaviour more closely linked to black people

than to white people. These constructs and their associations with blackness echo discourses of the hypersexual black male and the violent and unrestrained black male body (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2016; Shefer & Ratele, 2011). This also foreshadows another theme found throughout the data collected: the racialisation of sexuality and the 'culture of rape'.

4.3 The Racialisation of Sexuality: A Culture of Rape

Throughout all of the data analysed, one of the most prevalent themes discovered included references to rape being part of 'black culture' and insinuations that behaviour associated with the rape of vulnerable people is something intrinsic to black people. Some evidence of this theme is presented below.

4.3.1 Paedophilia vs. Rape

The discourse presented below represents comments made on an article reporting cases of CSA that occurred within British football clubs (see Appendix A, article 16). There was no reference made to the race of either the victims or the perpetrators within the article.

Figure 11.



The way that men are spoken about in this discourse indicates that they possess power and are able to take control of anyone who may be considered vulnerable or in need of protection, as Coolcat mentions groups such as “women”, “lesbian[s]”, “babies”, and “the elderly and disabled” (figure 11). They seem to occupy a general position of holding the most power in the society created by this discourse, however the discourse then splits them into two groups - black men and white men.

Black men are constructed as having a general lack of self-control when it comes to sexual urges, and behaviours such as rape and taking advantage of those who are defenceless are considered to be part of black culture, as highlighted in Coolcat’s comments stating “black men in general lack self control over their Genitals, Black men have a culture of rape” (figure 11). This construction echoes those discussed earlier in this paper, with black men becoming

a confluence of the black troublemaker (Knepper, 2008) and the hypersexual black male (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2016; Posel, 2002; Shefer & Ratele, 2011). The associations of these narratives serve to racialise sexuality and link traits such as violence, cruelty, and inferiority with the black male figure (Shefer & Ratele, 2011). The actions of black men are described as “barbaric” by Coolcat (figure 11), and these actions seem to be associated with the general grouping of ‘blacks’, who are distinct from ‘whites’. It is significant that black men are described as raping “babies, the elderly, and the disabled” by Coolcat (figure 11) as these are all groups that are considered very vulnerable and in need of protection. The juxtaposition of these three categories of people with the construction of the impulsive, violent, immoral black man described just prior to this is significant as it highlights the stark difference between the innocence and vulnerability of childhood (Burman, 2008; Lupton, 2014) with the stereotypical construction of the black male as violent, incapable of controlling his sexual urges, and lacking emotional connection or empathy (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2016; Posel, 2002; Shefer & Ratele, 2011).

White men, in contrast, are spoken about as less threatening and the term “guys” is more often used in conjunction with discussing white men. They are seemingly not linked to the same lack of self-control and need for immediate sexual gratification that black men are, and it is indicated that they are more in control of their lives and their urges, as Coolcat comments: “black men are a mess, white guys aren’t perfect” (figure 11). The language used in this comment implies that the actions of black men are more severe, and generate more severe consequences than those of white men who are simply deemed “not perfect” (figure 11). It is especially significant that white men are linked to paedophilia rather than rape, and there is some argument around whether white or black men are more likely to engage in paedophilia. This is evidenced in Sporo’s statement that “paedophilia is a white men’s

instinct” (figure 11), and Sharon’s rebuttal of “what about all the baby rapes... and how many of them were white men raping those babies?” (figure 11), clearly indicating that she believes that many of the baby rapes which occur in South Africa are perpetrated by black men.

This part of the discourse seems to echo the findings of Bowman (2010) discussed earlier in this paper, wherein research found that black men were not considered paedophiles for many years because they were accused of raping black children who were not seen to be as precious and innocent as white children. The comment made by Sporo - “Black’s rape nd whites are paedophiles” (figure 11) - can be interpreted in two ways. One interpretation is that the comment is meant to imply that black men rape women but do not rape children, therefore excluding them from the label of ‘paedophile’, while white men do not rape women, but do molest children and therefore are considered paedophiles. The second interpretation is supported somewhat by Coolcat’s response (figure 11) “both men molest little children”. This alternative seems to indicate that while Sporo’s comment (figure 11) refers to the rape of children, there is a perceived difference between raping children, and being a paedophile. In this interpretation, it could be argued that white men are being given the label of “paedophile” because they are transgressing sacred objects such as white children, while black men are not as they are raping black children. This would therefore echo the findings of Bowman (2010).

Alternatively, it could also be argued that within this interpretation white men are branded as paedophiles because this is a term that defines a psychiatric condition (Chenier, 2012), and therefore allows for the behaviour to be somewhat more acceptable due to its medicalised roots. The person is, to a certain extent, absolved of the responsibility for their

actions because essentially, they cannot help the fact that they are mentally ill. Black men are contrasted against this as they are simply branded 'rapists' and therefore are not absolved of any responsibility because rape implies a level of decision-making and therefore the cause of the behaviour is rooted entirely within the person (Falkof, 2012). This once again links to the idea of black men being unable to control their sexual urges and therefore taking advantage of the vulnerable (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2016; Shefer & Ratele, 2011). This interpretation implies that, similarly to white paedophiles, black rapists cannot help themselves either; however the root of their supposed lack of control stems from their blackness rather than a medical condition, and their behaviour is therefore less acceptable.

This discourse seems to promote the idea that white men are less likely to rape, better able to control their sexual urges, and essentially classifies their behaviour in general as more 'acceptable'. Once unpacked, this is especially clear in the statements "black men are a mess white Guy's aren't perfect" (Coolcat, figure 11) and "black's rape nd whites are paedophiles" (Sporo, figure 11). The behaviour of white men seems to be constructed in a way that makes it more excusable, while the behaviour of black men is largely described as being "barbaric" (Coolcat, figure 11), and there are indications that this is a matter of character, an inborn 'culture of rape'. The discourse therefore generally benefits white men, while oppressing black men, echoing previous discussions (Ratele, 2006; Morrell et al., 2012) of ruling masculinity and the way in which white males assert themselves as superior to black males.

The classifications of 'black' and 'white' are also raised more broadly within this discourse, with the indication being that white people (also called "settlers" by Fakalonke – figure 11) are likely to be guilty of paedophilia, and some indication that his behaviour is almost

expected of them, e.g. “that’s settlers for you, they molest all the time” (Fakalonke, figure 11), and “white people” (Sporo, figure 11) written as a response to an article on CSA. It must be noted, however, that when the victims, i.e. children or babies, are mentioned, there is no reference to their race, and they therefore seem to be somewhat untouched by the social constructions associated with their races in this discourse, echoing the findings documented earlier in this paper that the discourse of childhood appears to supersede that of race.

The general picture painted by this discourse tends to construct white men as more self-controlled and less likely to engage in “barbaric acts” (Coolcat, figure 11), while still acknowledging that when white men do rape young children and babies, they are classified as “paedophiles” (Sporo, figure 11). In contrast, black men are constructed as more violent, unable to control their behaviour, and perceived as somewhat baser than white men. This discourse echoes those used during apartheid which constructed the black male as savage, impulsive, and lacking morality (Knepper, 2008), and echoes the findings of Shefer and Ratele (2014) and Posel (2002) regarding the sexualisation of race. Therefore this discourse, in part, serves to maintain or reinforce these very damaging narratives. Racism is also perpetuated through these constructions, and the power of the white man and his seeming moral superiority is protected, as it was during Apartheid.

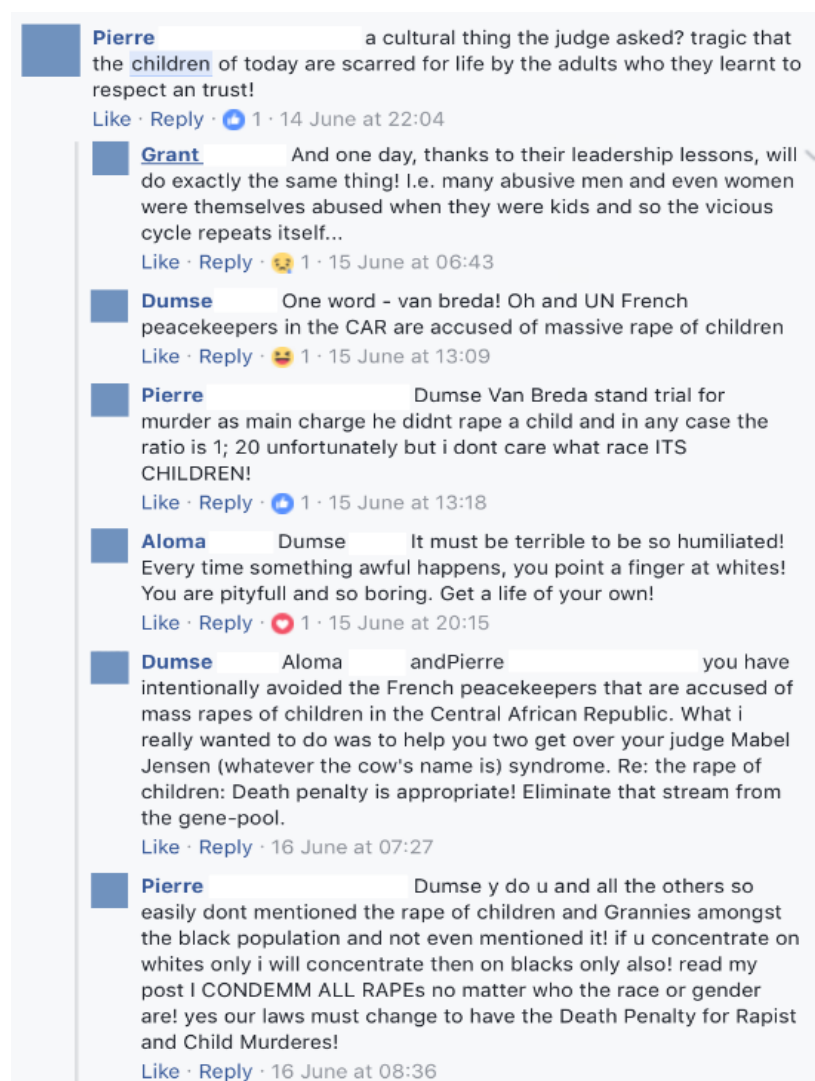
4.3.2 Defending Invisible Whiteness

The two figures below represent parts of the discourse that followed from an article reporting on cases of the kidnapping and rape of children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by militant rebel groups (Appendix A, article 21). Although there is no mention of the race of the victims or perpetrators within the article, it is clear from the discourse that the assumption is made that the perpetrators are black.

Figure 12.



Figure 13.



Rape in this discourse is discussed as being closely linked with black people, and in fact is referred to by Dumse as being “their number one religion” (figure 12). The use of the word “their” indicates a distancing of the two race groups, and once again the implication is that

black people are not in control of their sexual urges and are implicitly more likely to rape than white people are (Posel, 2002; Shefer & Ratele, 2011; Slatton & Spates, 2016). This locates the behaviour of rape within 'black people' as a whole, and generalises behaviour to an entire race, while excluding the entire population of the white race. This represents a form of fetishism and disavowal (Straker, 2011) whereby associations with a negative construct such as rape have been removed from the white race and instead come to be viewed as located internally within the black race.

This serves to empower white people as being superior and more principled while painting black people as inferior and baser. It is also important to note that the comment made by Antonella (figure 12) which sparked this part of the discourse, expresses her opinion that this does not occur anywhere else in the world, and asks what is wrong with Africa. It is clear that rape is a global problem and occurs widely outside of Africa, and therefore this comment seems to stem from ignorance or from an immediate supposition that rape occurs primarily in Africa because Africa has links to the black population, once again reinforcing the idea of rape as being embedded within African culture (Shefer & Ratele, 2011).

Within this discourse, there is also a reference made by Pierre (figure 13) to a statement made by a South African judge by the name of Mabel Jansen; a woman who published comments on Facebook that implied that rape is part of black culture, and that rape is an intrinsic behaviour for black people (Etheridge, 2016). The reference to this judge's comments suggests that because these rapes are occurring in an African country by African people, the judge's statement may have been true. Another speaker, Dumse, disagrees with this statement with his comment "One word – van bredda! Oh and UN French peacekeepers in the CAR are accused of massive rape of children" (figure 13). Dumse's comment cites

two examples of white people engaging in criminal activity: the case of Henry van Breda who was accused of murdering his family, and the UN French peacekeepers in CAR who have reportedly been raping young girls.

The response to this statement by Pierre is to ignore the wrongs of the peacekeepers in the CAR, and to point out that Henry van Breda did not rape a child with his comment “Dumse Van Breda stand trial for murder as main charge he didnt rape a child” (figure 13). This response shows a defensive stance taken in support of white people, and there is no acknowledgement that white people also participate in crime, but rather the comment that “the ratio is 1:20 unfortunately” (Pierre, figure 10). This seems to refer to the ratio of white to black crime in South Africa, and stating this shows that Pierre feels that white South Africans hold a superior position as they do not engage in as much criminal activity as black South Africans (Moritz, 2008). This statement does not acknowledge in any way the historical disadvantages that black people have faced in South Africa due to colonialism and apartheid, and there is no acknowledgement that it is perhaps because of these disadvantages that many black people are forced by their circumstances into criminal activity (Whitehead & Lerner, 2009). This reflects the invisibility of whiteness discussed earlier in this report (Straker, 2011), and the ways in which historical disadvantage is silenced or ignored without any acknowledgement of the role that whiteness and white people have played and continue to play in this dynamic.

Dumse’s comment pointing out that white people are also involved in crime (including those involving the rape of children) is also responded to with aggression and an attack on the speaker by Aloma as she states “Dumse It must be terrible to be so humiliated! Every time something awful happens, you point a finger at whites! You are pityfull and so boring”

(figure 13). The level of vehemence in this attack speaks to the defensive position that is taken by Aloma when whiteness is challenged, thereby reiterating the invisibility of whiteness and reluctance on the part of many to directly answer to accusations of crimes which are not congruent with typical constructions of whiteness, but which are more closely linked historically to constructions of blackness – in this case the rapes of multitudes of children (Posel, 2002; Shefer & Ratele, 2011).

This is echoed throughout the conversation when Dumse attempts to clarify his point by reiterating that he was simply trying to highlight that rape is not endemic to black culture, and points out that Aloma and Pierre “have intentionally avoided the French peacekeepers that are accused of mass rapes of children in the Central African Republic” (figure 13). It is important to note that he does not attempt to defend himself against the comments made by Aloma, nor does he attempt to attack her in return. This speaks to a level of powerlessness; the sense that perhaps he is not allowed to respond in that way due to his proportionate lack of power in a conversation where he is representing black people (Ratele, 2006), and this speaks to the power differential at play in this interaction, which is largely representative of the power differential at play on a macro level. The response to this statement by Pierre once again ignores the statements made by Dumse and simply targets “the rape of children and grannies amongst the black population” by stating that Dumse and “all the others” (implying other black people) do not mention these events and therefore if Dumse is going to focus only on white people, Pierre will focus only on black people (figure 13).

Two things about this exchange are especially noteworthy: firstly, that Pierre makes generalisations about the black population by implying that vulnerable people in the black

community (the elderly and children) are likely to be raped by black people. This relates once again to the idea that black men are not in control of their sexual urges and will prey on weaker, more vulnerable members of their community (Posel, 2002; Shefer & Ratele, 2011; Slatton & Spates, 2016). It also once again juxtaposes the perceived violent, unrestrained nature of the black male with the vulnerability of children and the elderly, and therefore ties together associations of blackness with hypersexuality and a threatening nature (Shefer & Ratele, 2011).

Secondly, Pierre claims that Dumse is refusing to acknowledge these events (even though they have not been raised previously in the conversation) while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge the involvement of white people in rape and crime. This indicates that Pierre feels that he does not have to admit to any wrongs on behalf of the race that he is defending (whiteness), but that Dumse is obligated to acknowledge the wrongs of black people and thereby admit that rape is an inborn, cultural behaviour for black people. The hypocrisy of this statement speaks to Pierre's sense of entitlement and the privilege that he enjoys as a representative of the white population, which protects him from having to defend himself against such statements.

Once again, this speaks to the invisibility of the power and privilege that white people possess (Straker, 2011). It also highlights the power Pierre enjoys in that he feels able to command or expect this from Dumse, simply because Dumse is representative of black people in this discourse (Ratele, 2006). This exchange indicates that on a macro level in South Africa, white people are able to benefit from the privilege of ignoring their wrongdoings due to the relative invisibility of their race, while simultaneously expecting black members of society to take responsibility and apologise for wrongdoings on the behalf

of people associated with the same race category as them. The power differential in this exchange speaks to a much larger, more systemic power differential between black and white South Africans.

It seems that this discourse benefits the established power of white people in relation to black people, and this is represented by the defensiveness that arises when comments are made that may threaten the power of white people, or the idea of their superiority. There are not, however, many objections raised when comments of this nature are made about black people, such as on Pierre's comment referring to "the rape of children and Grannies amongst the black population" (figure 13). Any objections to negative statements or generalisations about black people are dealt with either aggressively or with a quick defence of white people combined with further insults aimed at black people, as reflected in Aloma and Pierre's responses to Dumse (figure 13). Similarly, any comments which imply wrongdoing on the part of white people spark an immediately defensive stance from respondents. This dynamic reflects the need for white people to retain their power, while simultaneously attempting to maintain the age old colonial suppositions that black people are more violent, less restrained, and more dangerous than white people simply because of the colour of their skin.

Chapter 5: Limitations and Conclusions

5.1 Limitations

As this study relies on data collected from the Facebook pages of South African news sites, there is a limitation in that the data accessed does not originate from a wholly anonymous platform. Views and opinions expressed on Facebook are publicly linked to the name and profile of the commenter, and it could therefore be posited that views expressed entirely anonymously might be more radical or controversial in their expression. Additionally, Facebook requires that users register for their service before they are provided access to pages such as those utilised by news sites. This entails more effort than simply posting anonymously on news sites themselves, and this may therefore discourage users from posting comments.

This being said, previous research (as discussed in this paper) has shown that the posts of users on Facebook generally represent those users' genuine attitudes and their representation online is generally fairly congruent with their actual personas. Additionally, entirely anonymous posting is still possible on Facebook through the use of a false profile, and for this reason the analysis in this report does not make any assumptions about posters based on the information they have supplied to Facebook.

5.2 Conclusions

The analysis presented above represents a mere fraction of the possible themes that could have been selected in relation to this topic. It is clear that the topic of CSA is one that evokes very strong emotions in the public, and this is reflected in the number of comments generated by articles on this subject. This being said, the three themes presented above are

all extremely important in understanding the intersection of CSA, race, and childhood in the constructions created by South Africa's public online.

The fact that the race of the victims was not referred to in any of the data found, nor was anything other than universal sympathy expressed (with the exception of the case of Bob Hewitt), is noteworthy in that it represents a significant shift from previous constructions of black victims of CSA. The fact that all children, regardless of their race, are now considered sacred, innocent, and deserving of protection and care indicates much about the 'racelessness' of children in South Africa, and the lack of association with stereotypes generally linked to race. As mentioned previously, this finding does not indicate that negative associations with blackness are no longer occurring, but rather that the preciousness of childhood appears to challenge racialisation, and there is the possibility that this might indicate the beginning of a more tolerant South African public.

As highlighted previously in this report, children are considered representative of the future, health, and wellbeing of a country (Bowman, 2010; Burman, 2008). The desire for the public to protect these children therefore exemplifies a need to individualise 'risk' and project it in a very particular way onto the most vulnerable bodies in South African society (Burman, 2008). In South Africa, if children are considered to be at risk, this can come to exemplify the risk that the country may face, particularly in the form of the construction of the faceless, violent black male. It is therefore significant that this discourse is no longer limited only to white children to represent that purity and vulnerability, but is instead extended to allow all children, regardless of race, to represent a being that is pure, vulnerable, and representative of wellbeing. The abstractions of childhood here challenge and supersede the constructions of race.

An exploration of the limits of childhood is also enlightening in that while universal sympathy is expressed for victims who are children, regardless of their race, the same is not true of victims of historical CSA. This is evidenced most strongly in the discourse generated by Bob Hewitt's sentencing and the deviations from recurrent themes found in other data, represented by the defence of the perpetrator and blaming of the victims. This indicates that this case has created a different discursive universe to other articles. The possible reasons for this, including the age of the victims, the age of the perpetrator, and the race and power linked to the perpetrator; represent interesting intersections on views of childhood, who constitutes a child, and how much protection a wealthy, powerful, white male will be afforded in such cases.

In this discourse, the protection and privilege offered by associations with childhood do not seem to extend to those who no longer possess the stereotypical traits of childhood: vulnerability, purity and preciousness (Lupton, 2014). Associations with perpetrators of CSA are also limited, as a factor such as being elderly does not compute with general societal constructions of perpetrators of CSA. This contradiction of an elderly, vulnerable perpetrator combined with a victim who is no longer considered vulnerable creates a discourse in which victims are no longer protected, nor are perpetrators vilified. Instead, some participants come to protect the perpetrator and vilify the victims.

This discourse can also be understood in terms of racialisation. An older, powerful white male does not fit the social constructions of the threat to innocence in South Africa: the primitive, violent, sexually uninhibited black male. The power of whiteness is therefore once again demonstrated in this discourse, whereby a white man who is accused of the rape of children will still be protected, while when a black man of similar stature, such as Jacob

Zuma, is accused of the same crime, there is public outcry that he has not taken responsibility for his crimes. The invisibility of whiteness is reproduced in this discourse, and the privilege thereof.

Finally, the well-established narrative of the racialisation of sexuality and the so-called 'culture of rape' in relation to blackness must be highlighted. The juxtaposition of the abstraction of the violent, unstable, sexually unrestrained black male, with the perceived vulnerability of not only children, but the elderly and disabled as well, indicates that many stereotypes associated with black men are alive and well within the public domain. The concept of rape as an inherent, inborn behaviour within black men arises repeatedly, and this paints a very damaging picture of black men which has been perpetuated since the days of slavery in the United States and was maintained by apartheid in South Africa.

These are dangerous narratives to reproduce as they reinforce highly racialised ideas of blackness in the way that it challenges the assumed civility and superiority of whiteness. The defensive positions taken in response to challenges of these constructions of blackness and whiteness also speak to the reluctance of those representing the white race to acknowledge and make visible the privilege of their racial category, but rather to deny this privilege and dismiss its associations, while redirecting negative constructions onto black individuals as if these abstractions are substantiated fact.

As stated in the introduction of this report, the aim of this analysis was to gain insight into the unique landscape produced by the intersection of the perceived vulnerability of white bodies with the socially-constructed violence of black bodies and to discern from public reactions to this intersection the ways in which race is produced with regards to such an evocative stimulus. Extrapolating from the themes discovered during the course of this

analysis to interactions generally in South Africa, one could reach the conclusion that while the value and preciousness of childhood has managed to supersede negative constructions of race in children, the same cannot be said for other interactions in South Africa. The privilege of whiteness appears to remain largely invisible and fiercely defended against the ever-encroaching figure of supposed primitive, dangerous, and violent blackness. Until these narratives begin to shift, race will likely remain as recalcitrant as ever in South African society.

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Appendix A: List of Articles Utilised and Online Links

Article Number:	Date Published:	Site:	Link:
1	8 April 2014	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2014/04/08/OPINION-Child-abuse-SA-and-the-case-of-Delft
2	30 June 2014	eNCA	https://www.enca.com/rustenburg-mother-sentenced-life-prison
3	13 July 2014	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2014/07/13/Its-never-too-late-to-report-sexual-abuse
4	30 March 2015	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2015/03/29/First-on-EWN-10-Year-Old-Sexually-abused-In-School
5	9 August 2015	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2015/08/09/Rica-hampering-efforts-to-detect-child-pornography
6	6 January 2016	eNCA	https://www.enca.com/africa/fresh-sex-abuse-allegations-against-un-car
7	21 March 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/05/21/Audit-of-US-Catholic-church-shows-sharp-spike-in-sex-abuse-reports
8	8 May 2016	eNCA	http://www.enca.com/technology/swedish-study-tests-drugs-to-prevent-child-sex-abuse
9	30 May 2016	eNCA	https://www.enca.com/south-africa/springs-monster-trial-eldest-children-to-testify-against-father
10	2 June 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/06/02/Communities-urged-to-fight-harder-to-combat-sex-crimes-involving-children
11	11 July 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/07/11/Father-of-rape-survivor-urges-parents-to-educate-children-about-rape-and-HIV
12	13 September 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/09/13/Convicted-rapist-Bob-Hewitt-to-finally-go-to-prison
13	14 September 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/09/14/Choreographer-claims-Michael-Jackson-ran-child-abuse-operation
14	31 October 2016	eNCA	http://www.enca.com/south-africa/springs-monster-back-in-court
15	19 November 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/11/19/accused-in-nyanga-rape-case-to-remain-behind-bars
16	27 November 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/11/27/fa-to-investigate-alleged-sexual-abuse-at-football-clubs
17	2 December 2016	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2016/12/02/call-for-victims-of-abuse-within-uk-football-clubs-yields-350-alleged-claims

18	9 May 2017	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2017/05/09/khayelitsha-development-forum-concerned-by-drug-abuse-after-child-murders
19	23 May 2017	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2017/05/23/lenasia-residents-to-host-memorial-service-for-keketso-mahlakwana
20	9 June 2017	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2017/06/09/strand-community-wants-justice-for-minentle-lekatha
21	14 June 2017	eNCA	https://www.enca.com/africa/un-children-raped-in-drc-militia-violence
22	21 June 2017	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2017/06/21/rape-added-to-charges-of-man-accused-of-murdering-toddler-in-kensington
23	30 June 2017	EWN	http://ewn.co.za/2017/06/15/1-in-3-children-likely-to-be-sexually-abused-govt-probe-finds