

Cross-national Media Coverage of Rape and Rape Culture: Community Structure Theory and “Buffered” Female Privilege

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Introduction

- One in five women will experience attempted or completed rape in their lives, occurring primarily between the ages of 15-45 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020)
- This study focused on cross-national media coverage of rape and rape culture employing the concept of “framing”.
- A lit review on coverage of rape and rape culture yielded few communication studies and women and gender studies results.

Community Structure Theory

- Connecting community demographics to content analysis of variations in media coverage of critical issues, the theory assumes that society sets media agendas (Pollock, 2007, 2013, 2015).

Research Questions

1. How much cross-national variation exists in coverage of rape and rape culture?
2. How closely connected is that coverage variation with differences in national demographics?

Hypotheses

- *Buffer*: Privileged communities are linked to coverage supporting government responsibility.
- *Vulnerability*: Vulnerable populations are associated with media supporting government responsibility.
- *Stakeholder*: Greater proportions of stakeholders can be linked to more media support for government responsibility.

Methodology

- 28 major newspapers, 245 total relevant articles coded
- Sample period: June 5th, 2008 – February 24th, 2020. **Start**: Joseph T. Brown was denied a re-trial in Georgia after being found guilty for raping an elderly woman. **End**: Harvey Weinstein was acquitted of the most serious charge against him: predatory criminal sexual act, and was sentenced to 23 years: 20 for a criminal act and 3 for 3rd degree rape
- Content direction was coded as government responsibility, society responsibility, or balanced/neutral.
- Scott's Pi Coefficient of Intercoder Reliability: 0.7808

Statistical Analysis: Introducing Pollock's Media Vector

- Media Vectors combine measures of article “prominence” and “direction” into a single composite score.
- Pearson correlations and regression analysis compare country demographics with Media Vectors.
- Female Life Expectancy accounts for 18.2% of the variance, linked to government responsibility for rape and rape culture.

Pollock, J.C. (Ed.). (2013, 2014). *Media and social inequality: Innovations in community structure research*. New York and London: Routledge.
 Pollock, J.C. (Ed.). (2015, 2016). *Journalism and human rights: How demographics drive media coverage*. New York and London: Routledge.

MAJOR FINDING:
 Female “buffered” health privilege (female life expectancy) is strongly connected to coverage emphasizing government responsibility for rape and rape culture (18% of the variance)

SECONDARY FINDING:
 Female “buffered” education privilege (female school life expectancy and percent females in secondary school) is linked to coverage emphasizing government responsibility for rape and rape culture

TERTIARY FINDING:
 Unexpectedly, percent females in the workforce and fertility rate are associated with societal responsibility (less government responsibility) for rape and rape culture

Media Vector Scores

Country	Newspaper	Media Vector
Australia	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	0.7324
Turkey	<i>Anadolu Agency</i>	0.7264
Chile	<i>El Mercurio</i>	0.7188
Argentina	<i>La Nación</i>	0.5378
China	<i>China Daily</i>	0.4519
Ethiopia	<i>The Daily Monitor</i>	0.4263
India	<i>Times of India</i>	0.4228
Namibia	<i>Namibian</i>	0.3991
Japan	<i>The Japan Times</i>	0.3705
Mexico	<i>El Universal</i>	0.3600
Germany	<i>Deutsche Press-Agentur</i>	0.3540
Pakistan	<i>The Nation</i>	0.3435
Zambia	<i>Times of Zambia</i>	0.2969
France	<i>Agence France-Presse</i>	0.2951
Malaysia	<i>The New Strait Times</i>	0.2696
Kenya	<i>Daily Nation</i>	0.1900
United States	<i>The New York Times</i>	0.1884
Rwanda	<i>The New Times</i>	0.1823
South Africa	<i>The Herald</i>	0.1388
Thailand	<i>The Nation</i>	0.1387
Nigeria	<i>This Day</i>	0.1366
Egypt	<i>Daily News of Egypt</i>	0.0831
Zimbabwe	<i>NewsDay Zimbabwe</i>	-0.0294
Canada	<i>The Toronto Star</i>	-0.0402
United Kingdom	<i>The London Times</i>	-0.0555
Russia	<i>Moscow Times</i>	-0.0617
Uganda	<i>New Vision</i>	-0.0942
Ghana	<i>Accra Mail</i>	-0.1662

Significant Pearson Correlations

Country Characteristic	Pearson Correlation	Significance	Hypothesis Category
Male Life Expectancy	0.371	0.026*	P
Female Life Expectancy	0.361	0.030*	WE
Female School Life Expectancy	0.341	0.044*	WE
Percent Females in Workforce	-0.328	0.044*	WE
Percent Females in Secondary School	0.337	0.046*	WE
Fertility Rate	-0.321	0.048*	V

Key: V = vulnerability, PI = political identification, BS = belief system, HP = health privilege

Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ² Cumulative	R ² Change	F Change	Significant F Change
Female Life Expectancy	0.427	0.182	0.182	4.904	0.037
Female Life Expectancy, Percent Females in Workforce	0.506	0.256	0.074	2.074	0.165
Female Life Expectancy, Percent Females in Workforce, Female Literacy Rate	0.533	0.284	0.028	0.786	0.386
Female Life Expectancy, Percent Females in Workforce, Female Literacy Rate, Percent Females in Secondary School	0.575	0.331	0.047	1.328	0.264

Pollock, J.C. (2007). *Tilted mirrors: Media alignment with political and social change – a community structure approach*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.