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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA
REPRESENTATION OF THE MAZAN RAPE CASE:
PATRIARCHAL DYNAMICS IN FRENCH NEWS
MEDIA

A Master's Thesis

by
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Ankara
March 2025

To my daughter *Kiraz*
and “*all the birds who defy the odds and gods*
and sing their songs”



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MEDIA

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

İREM ÇAĞIL TÜTÜNCÜ

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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By İrem Çağıl Tütüncü

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully
adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of
Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

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Emel Özdora
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully
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ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE MAZAN RAPE CASE: PATRIARCHAL DYNAMICS IN FRENCH NEWS MEDIA

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M.A. in Media and Visual Studies

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March 2025

The thesis examines how men and women, whether as perpetrators or victims, are represented in crime news narratives. The study aims to investigate how patriarchal dynamics are being reconstructed and disseminated through the media as a cultural norm. Utilizing modern feminist theory and media analysis methods, this study critically examines the news media role in perpetuating gender inequality. A specific rape case from France has been selected as a case study to analyze how gender-based violence is represented in three different French newspapers. The findings contribute to a broader discussion on the structural causes of gender-based violence and the media's role in shaping public discourse.

Keywords: Gender Bias, Gender-Based Sexual Violence, French News Media, News Analysis, Patriarchy

ÖZET

MAZAN TOPLU TECAVÜZ DAVASI'NIN MEDYA TEMSİLİNE DAİR ELEŞTİREL BİR ANALİZ: FRANSIZ HABER MEDYASINDA PATRİYARKAL DİNAMİKLER

Tütüncü, İrem Çağıl

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Emel Özdora

Mart 2025

Bu tez, erkeklerin ve kadınların, ister fail ister kurban olsun, suç haberi biçimi olarak medya metninde temsil edilme biçimlerini incelemeye odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, patriyarkal dinamiklerin kültürel bir norm olarak medya aracılığıyla nasıl yeniden yapılandırıldığını ve haber medyası anlatılarının toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı eşitsizliklerin yeniden üretilmesine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu, haber medyasının rolünü çağdaş feminist teori ve haber medyası analiz yöntemlerini kullanarak, eleştirel bir şekilde incelemektedir. Fransa'dan belirli bir tecavüz davası, vaka çalışması olarak seçilmiş ve 3 farklı haber medyası incelenmiştir. Bulgular, cinsiyete dayalı şiddetin yapısal nedenleri ve medyanın kamusal söylemi şekillendirmedeki rolü hakkında daha geniş bir tartışmaya katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsiyet Ayrımcılığı, Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Cinsel Şiddet, Fransız Haber Medyası, Haber Analizi, Patriyarka

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Humans are narrative beings. One of the universal features of humanity is the narrativization and interpretation of reality. This is true from the broadest to the most intimate of human experiences. Cultures create common myths and stories that serve as fundamental references in the process of constructing meaning. At the same time, different social phenomena are transformed into discourses that gain a public dimension through the media. Violence is one of the subjects that humanity narrativizes and reproduces, both at the interpersonal and mediated communication levels.

Sexual violence is a widespread issue with profound social, legal, and psychological consequences. As a form of gender-based violence, it is deeply ingrained in patriarchal structures that shape societal norms and power relations. The media serve as a powerful instrument in constructing public understanding of sexual violence, influencing both legal discourse and societal attitudes toward victims and perpetrators.

This thesis investigates the media representation of gender-based violence, an issue that is receiving increasing media attention in recent years, by focusing on a widely

publicized case known as “Mazan Rapes.” This study examines how news coverage contributes to shaping public discourse on gender-based violence and what role newspapers play in the perpetuation of a social structure based on unequal power relations between genders, in which women are in a disadvantaged position.

The Mazan Rapes involves a man in southeastern France who, over a period of ten years, drugged his wife and facilitated her rape by at least 83 men while she was unconscious. The trial of the primary perpetrator and 50 other men accused of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault began in Avignon in September 2024 and concluded in December. The victim woman’s decision to waive her right to anonymity and insistence on a public trial attracted worldwide media attention. The case received media attention, highlighting issues related to drug-facilitated sexual assault and issues around consent.

The media’s textual and visual representation of this case is highly problematic in many aspects. The study demonstrates how news coverage predominantly employs the "male gaze" in interpretation of the case, reinforcing patriarchal narratives.

Through a critical analysis of media discourse, this research explores how news media functions as an ideological apparatus that sustains and reproduces gendered power dynamics.

Unquestionably, sexual violence has become more well-known recently, particularly in the media and, to a lesser extent, in crime statistics in various regions of the world (Andersson, 2019). Public perception about crime is heavily shaped by media (Weitzer & Kubrin 2004). Studies indicate that sexual violence reporting is often

gendered, portraying women as passive victims and men as active agents (Shelby & Hatch, 2014). Furthermore, media coverage of sexual violence is often sensationalized, reinforcing myths and stereotypes about rape rather than providing an accurate representation of the issue (Benedict, 1992).

The court trial has been the primary topic of discussion regarding the definition and voice of rape (Cuklanz, 1996). Through a process of conflicting and uneven discourses, the public gains an understanding of issues such as sexual violence and the needs of individuals affected (Barer, 2007). The politicization of issues is contested by various publics of relative power, from authoritative hegemonic blocs that construct the “common sense” of the day (Fraser, 1989, p.168) to expert publics “connected with institutions of knowledge production and utilization” to smaller counter-hegemonic publics offering alternative interpretations and new discourse publics (Barer, 2007, p.173). The trials “become central to the process of accommodation by which the dominant ideology shifts to cope with feminist challenges” when the majority of public discourse on rape revolves around a small number of well-reported trials. Examining the terminology used to explain these trials will show how dominant discourses have embraced, changed, appropriated, repressed, or rejected conceptions of change (Cuklanz, 1996, p.7).

Gender and language are two subjects that are often combined in research on the representations of sexual violence (Risidaneva, 2017). The situations in which and for what purposes language is used have a significant impact on it. As a result, research on language and gender has begun to concentrate on contextualized discourse. Media discourse is one genre that explores and enacts language and gender. The contentious

issue of gender representation in this genre typically pertains to how women as victims and men as perpetrators are portrayed. Both verbal and visual representations can be seen in the media (Risbaneva, 2017).

Individuals create choices, facilitate advancement, and bring about social change. When a large portion of the population is routinely the victim of sexual abuse or harassment, nations cannot advance politically, economically, or socially. In their lifetimes, 20% of women will be raped, 50% will encounter sexual violence other than rape, and 81% of women in the United States have experienced sexual harassment (CDC, 2017).

Sexual violence inflicts both immediate and enduring effects on survivors, including anxiety, despair, shame, and trauma. In addition to the psychological ramifications, there are medical expenditures, legal fees, and costs associated with mental health services. Sexual assault engenders a pervasive atmosphere of fear among society. Research has indicated that sexual assault can adversely affect survivors' careers (Loya, 2014). Policy implementation is essential; nonetheless, it is imperative to first analyze the viewpoints, attitudes, and cultural ideals related to sexual violence (Consalvo, 2010).

Media, particularly news media, are essential for the dissemination of cultural models and serve as the primary source of information for individuals to determine and interpret reality. This is due to their widespread presence. They indeed influence public opinion and the portrayal of events in society by choosing which news to include and which to exclude. This idea also holds true for the phenomenon of

gender-based violence, which is rooted in social mechanisms that are passed down through culture and are mirrored in the language used by social actors and institutions to portray it. This reproduces the conditions that give rise to this violence (Belmonte & Negri, 2021).

1.1 Mazan Rape Case

The Mazan rape case, also known as the Pélicot case, is a significant legal proceeding in France that exposed severe instances of sexual violence and sparked extensive public discourse on rape culture and victim advocacy. The case involved Gisele Pélicot, who was unknowingly drugged and raped by multiple men over nearly a decade. The assaults were orchestrated by her then-husband, Dominique Pélicot a 71-year-old man from Mazan, who admitted to drugging Gisèle Pélicot, over a ten-year period, allowing 72 men to rape her while he filmed the assaults. Pélicot recorded 200 rapes, leading to the identification of 50 perpetrators who stood trial alongside him. The case came to light when Pélicot was caught secretly filming women in a supermarket, prompting police to search his devices and uncover the crimes. Gisèle Pélicot only became aware of the abuse in 2020, realizing it was the cause of her long-term health issues (d'Adhemar, 2024).

The trial commenced on September 2, 2024, at the Judicial Court in Avignon, involving Dominique Pélicot and 50 other defendants accused of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. Gisèle Pélicot waived her right to anonymity and requested a public trial to shed light on the atrocities committed against her and to support other

victims of sexual violence. Dominique Pélicot received the maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, while his co-defendants were sentenced to terms ranging from three to 15 years (“Mazan Rapes,” 2024).

Media coverage varied in its framing, with "historical" (*Le Monde*, 2024, “Le procès des viols de Mazan, un tournant historique ?”), "horrible" (*The Week*, 2024, “The Pélicot case: A horror exposed”), "notorious" (*Sweden Herald*, 2024, “Notorious Rape Trial Postponed”), and "disturbing" (*The Washington Post*, 2024, “A disturbing French rape trial features a brave victim”). *Le Figaro* employed war metaphors, describing the case as "the war of the sexes" in an article titled "When the Mazan rape trial rekindles the war of the sexes" (*Le Figaro*, October 2, 2024). *The Telegraph* used the term "revenge" in its headline: "Wife takes public revenge on men who ‘raped her every night on husband’s orders’” (*The Telegraph*, 2024). *Le Temps* framed the case in terms of “ordinary masculinity,” while *The Times* published a headline drawing a moral divide between men: "Rape is society’s shame but thrives because good men stay silent" (*The Times*, 2024).

The case sparked national outrage, especially after the mayor of Mazan downplayed its severity by stating, "After all, no one died," prompting protests and calls for legal reform. Gisèle Pélicot’s lawyer emphasized the trial’s potential to bring societal change but noted that true progress required confronting uncomfortable truths. Pélicot herself fought to ensure the trial was public, arguing that transparency could help prevent future cases of abuse. Initially, the judge had restricted the release of evidence, citing its graphic nature, but later lifted the ban after Pélicot’s request. (Harding, 2024). His comments provoked widespread condemnation, fueling protests

and intensifying public debate over France's handling of sexual violence and the urgent need for legal reforms (*L'Humanité*, 2024).

Gisèle Pélicot's lawyer spoke to the press, emphasizing the significance of the case: "This trial has the power to change society, but for this change, we need to have the courage to face the truth" (BFMTV, 2024). Since its emergence as a news story, the Mazan rape case has garnered widespread media attention. However, rather than focusing on the perpetrators, most coverage has framed the case through the name of the victim. Many headlines referred to it as the "French Mass Rape Trial" (*Le Monde*, 2024), "Mazan Mass Rape Trial" (*France24*, 2024), or directly as "Gisèle Pélicot Rape Trial" (*The Guardian*, 2024). *Le Figaro* employed war metaphors, describing the case as "the war of the sexes" in an article titled "When the Mazan rape trial rekindles the war of the sexes" (*Le Figaro*, October 2, 2024). *The Telegraph* used the term "revenge" in its headline: "Wife takes public revenge on men who 'raped her every night on husband's orders'" (*The Telegraph*, 2024). *Le Temps* framed the case in terms of "ordinary masculinity," while *The Times* published a headline drawing a moral divide between men: "Rape is society's shame but thrives because good men stay silent" (*The Times*, 2024). The BBC took a different approach, focusing on the impact on the town, with the headline, "French village torn apart by horror of mass rape trial" (*BBC*, 2024).

The case garnered international attention, highlighting systemic issues related to sexual violence and consent. Gisèle Pélicot's courage in publicly confronting her abusers and advocating for transparency in the judicial process resonated globally. She was recognized among the BBC's 100 Women of 2024 and listed as

one of the "25 most influential women of 2024" by the Financial Times. The trial also ignited discussions on societal attitudes toward sexual violence in France, emphasizing the need for cultural and legislative reforms to better protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable. The trial underscored broader societal issues, including the normalization of sexual violence and victim-blaming. Despite violence being a leading cause of harm worldwide, patriarchal narratives often excuse male aggression while silencing survivors. This case revealed not only systemic failures in addressing sexual violence but also the need for media to shift focus from sensationalism to accountability and justice.

The case is significant not only for the sheer brutality of the crimes but also for the difficult questions it raises about public perception and the collective willingness to confront reality. Despite widespread recognition that violence—including homicide and suicide—is a leading cause of death worldwide (CDC, 2009; Dahlberg & Mercy, 2009), societal attitudes toward sexual violence remain deeply flawed. Norms that normalize predatory behavior, trivialize sexual assault, and engage in victim-blaming continue to function at all levels of public discourse. As Consalvo (2010) argues, men and violence are historically intertwined, with male-perpetrated violence often excused, ignored, or even glamorized.

1.2. Research Questions

In 2002, the World Health Organization published its first comprehensive global report focused on violence. The report helped solidify global recognition of violence as a major public health issue and highlighted that over one million individuals lose

their lives each year due to violence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, 2002). After this landmark report, Nelson Mandela who responded to the high global prevalence of violence by suggesting that “we must address the roots of violence” in his three-hour speech given on 20 April 1964 from the dock at the Rivonia Trial (Saho, 2019). Years later, Judith Butler emphasized “the first step towards nonviolence, which is surely an absolute obligation we all bear, is to begin to think critically, and ask others to do the same” in her speech given on 30 May 2013 at McGill University (McGill University, 2013).

The news media has an undeniable effect on society. According to van Dijk (1988, p.182) the news accustoms the readers to forming certain “interpretation frameworks” that implicitly shape the way the public views and perceives different events. It is crucial to conduct additional research on the news media, taking into account its potential influence.

In this thesis, I would like to follow in the footsteps of Mandela and Butler for going through the roots by doing some excavation with the help of the signifiers of the sample case and its representations in media. Media narratives play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of violence, as they often construct or reinforce certain ideas about what is violence and what kinds of violence are acceptable and expected (Anderson, A., Berkowitz, L., Donners, E. & Huesman, L.R., 2003). Regarding the issue, I want to concentrate on how the patriarchal dynamics function in media, how media narratives reproduce violence by framing stories, portraying violence, normalizing it, and sometimes perpetuating it in media sources. Therefore, my inquiries revolve around the use of language and its relationship to power.

To better understand why accurate representation about rape and sexual assault is so important, we first need to examine how power structures are involved, what rape myths and stereotypes are, and the influential role that media framing plays in shaping public discourse. I choose “Mazan Rapes” as a recent, scandalous, gender-based sexual violence case and discuss the patriarchal dynamics in the representation of the case through French media news stories.

The following research questions reflect my interest regarding the data:

1. How is the Mazan Rape case, as an example of a recent gender-based violence, represented in French news media?
2. How does French news media represent the female victims and male perpetrators of sexual violence?
3. How are the victims and perpetrators of sexual violence portrayed in the news articles?
4. How does the current patriarchal culture shape media narratives on gender-based violence cases?
5. How do French news media make the language choices in their narratives?

1.3. Structure and Organization

The Introduction chapter introduces the research topic, providing background information on the Mazan Rape Case and its significance in the context of gender-based violence and media narratives. The chapter outlines the research questions, which focus on how the case has been represented in French news media and the role

of patriarchal discourse in shaping public perception. Additionally, it explains the thesis's objectives and highlights the broader sociocultural implications of media coverage on gender-based violence.

In this study, extant literature is reviewed to contribute to this thesis. To be able to answer the five research questions this study aims to answer, Chapter 2, Theoretical Framework and Literature Review, delves into the baselines of the thesis and establishes the theoretical foundation of the study. This section key theoretical perspectives that underpin the study's approach to media discourse, power dynamics, and gendered representation, drawing upon feminist theories, media studies, and discourse analysis. Key theoretical perspectives include:

- Michael Foucault's concept of discourse and power (1976, 1980) is central to this study. His discourse theory and the role of language in shaping power relations, alongside the concept of sexuality as a social construct regulated by institutions like media, law, and medicine, are crucial to discussing gender-based sexual violence case narrativization.
- Judith Butler builds on Foucault's ideas in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) by arguing that gender is performative, which means not an inherent identity but a series of repeated actions that conform to social expectations. Butler's theory also underlines that media plays a key role in reinforcing heteronormativity and patriarchal norms through language and representation.

- Raewyn Connell's (1987, 1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity which describes how masculinity is socially constructed and hierarchical, with dominant forms of masculinity reinforcing male power and female subordination. Connell argues that media representations normalize male aggression, particularly in narratives of crime and violence; thus it's crucial to analyze how media reproduce patriarchal dynamics.
- Pierre Bourdieu (1998) argues that patriarchal structures, deeply ingrained in culture, shape media narratives and the public's perception of gender-based violence.
- Second- and third-wave feminist thinkers' perspectives related to how rape culture and media normalize male violence play an important role in literature review. Andrea Dworkin's (1981) argument that "rape is not an individual crime but a part of a system of male dominance" and Catherine MacKinnon's (1987) idea that "law and media treat sexual violence as an isolated crime rather than a structural problem" are important.

Additionally, Chapter 2 reviews previous academic research on media coverage of gender-based violence, highlighting patterns of victim-blaming, normalization of male aggression, and sensationalism in news reporting. Media and male gaze, the role of media discourse and framing choices are discussed with Brownmiller's (1975), Cuklanz's (1996) and Risdaneva's (2017) critiques in this section.

After the literature review, the study moves into Chapter 3, Methodology. This chapter explains how patriarchal discourse is embedded in news coverage of sexual violence, particularly in the Mazan Rape Case. Given that language shapes public perception, this research employs qualitative methods to analyze how victims and perpetrators are represented in French media. The study was conducted, what measures and research methods were used, and why. Here it's been outlined the research approach, data collection, analytical techniques, and limitations, providing a structured framework for examining the media representation of the Mazan Rape Case. The methodology is rooted in qualitative research, utilizing Narrative Analysis, and Framing Analysis to assess how French news media constructs narratives around gender-based violence. This chapter justifies the sample selection and provides insights such as potential biases in news reporting and constraints in data availability.

The fourth chapter is about the empirical data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of how the Mazan Rape Case is represented in three major French newspapers; *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *L'Humanite*. A total of 158 news articles published between September 2024, when the case began, and the end of October 2024 were selected for analysis based on the timeframe, primary focus, headlines, and visual elements. The media analysis was done by systematically examining news articles. I discuss my data corpus with the news headlines and visual materials used alongside each newspaper.

This chapter reveals significant ideological differences in how French newspapers represent the Mazan Rape Case. The findings demonstrate how language, framing, and visual representation of gender-based violence either reinforce or

challenge patriarchal discourse in the news media.

Finally, Chapter 5 synthesizes the key findings of the thesis, contextualizing them within the broader theoretical framework of media representation, gender-based violence, and patriarchal discourse. It also discusses the limitations of the study and proposes directions for future research.



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Historical Background

The conceptualization of rape and gender-based violence has evolved through history, shaped by cultural, legal, and political factors. The etymology of the term ‘rape’ traces back to the Latin word *rapere* (supine stem *raptum*) meaning ‘to seize or carry off’ (Saunders, 2001). Historically, the term encompassed various forms of violent taking, including abduction, rather than specifically referring to sexual violence. Over time, its meaning shifted, reflecting changes in legal and social understanding of consent, coercion, and bodily autonomy (Smith, 2004).

In ancient Rome, the term was not exclusively about sexual violence but broadly referred to the act of forcibly taking someone or something. Roman law defined *raptus* as, "the carrying off of a woman by force, with or without intercourse" (Burgess-Jackson, 1999, p.16). The term transmitted into Old French, maintaining its general sense of ‘seizing’ or ‘abducting’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). By the 13th to 15th century, Middle English borrowed the term as ‘rapen’ or ‘rappen’, which was commonly associated with kidnapping or the violent seizure of property or people (Williams, 1999). By the 19th and 20th centuries, the definition narrowed

to emphasize the non-consensual and violent aspects of sexual intercourse (Harper, 2023).

The term ‘mass rape’ refers to collective sexual assault perpetrated by groups, often in public settings, and is closely associated with wartime sexual violence. Studies indicate that three-quarters or more of rapes in wartime are classified as war rape, whereas gang rape constitutes fewer than a quarter of rapes in peacetime (Gendrot, Hough, Kerezsi, Levy & Snacken, 2014). Fabrice Virgili provides a historical perspective on war rape, noting that the military transformations of the 17th century led to the expansion of troops and the implementation of stricter discipline. However, punishment for sexual offenses primarily served to reinforce military order rather than genuinely prevent rape (Virgili, 2020). During the French Revolution, the line between civilian and military populations blurred, and sexual violence was employed as a means of terrorizing counter-revolutionary factions (Virgili, 2020). Under Napoleon, reports of “mass rape surfaced in nearly every captured city, reinforcing the use of sexual violence as a tool of war” (Virgili, 2020, p.67).

Rape has historically functioned as an instrument of domination, particularly in colonial and wartime contexts (Sharpe, 1991; Scully, 1995; Saha, 2010; Bryder, 1998). Virgili argues that “colonial ideologies frequently framed conquered territories as feminized landscapes, ripe for control and exploitation” (Virgili, 2020, p.70). For instance French colonial rule, rape was systematically used to assert power over indigenous populations and reinforce the colonial hierarchy (Virgili, 2020). The Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) witnessed widespread instances of mass rape, yet France largely omitted these atrocities from its historical narratives (El Atti,

2022).

The gendered dimensions of language further illustrate patriarchal perceptions of women. The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, the authoritative dictionary of the French language, initially defined "woman" (*la femme*) as "the female of man" (Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, 1694). This definition persisted through multiple editions until it was revised in 1835 to "the female, the companion of man," and later in 1935 to "female human being, companion of man." This progression reflects a slow recognition of women as autonomous individuals, yet the definition continues to underscore dependence on men (Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, 1935).

Legally, rape is currently defined in most jurisdictions as "sexual intercourse, or other forms of sexual penetration, committed by a perpetrator against a victim without their consent" (Smith, 2004, p.166). However, definitions of rape have varied across historical periods and cultural contexts. Historically, rape laws were designed to protect a father's property—his daughter's virginity—rather than to safeguard women's autonomy (Sanders, 2012; Yllö & Torres, 2016). A woman's rape is considered an offense against her father's or husband's ownership rights rather than a violation of her bodily integrity. Marital rape was not legally recognized since a wife was considered her husband's property (Yllö & Torres, 2016; Carline & Eastal, 2014). Many legal systems also failed to recognize rape if it occurred between individuals of certain social categories, such as slaves, prostitutes, or racial minorities, thereby reinforcing systemic inequalities (Amnesty International, 2013).

Until the 1960s, legal definitions of rape typically required that the victim and perpetrator be unmarried and that the crime be perpetrated by a man against a woman (Gendrot, 2014). In the latter half of the 20th century, legal reforms expanded the definition to include marital rape and broadened the scope of sexual assault to include acts beyond vaginal penetration. These reforms also sought to redefine consent and coercion, shifting away from outdated legal interpretations that prioritized physical resistance over affirmative consent (Gendrot, 2014).

Despite these advancements, definitions of rape and gender-based violence remain inconsistent across legal, medical, and law enforcement frameworks (Smith, 2004; Maier, 2008). However, scholars agree that the absence of consent is the key factor in all definitions of rape (Tchen, 1983). Kulick (2003) notes that consent is complicated by legal, linguistic, and cultural factors, particularly in contexts where men misinterpret women's behavior as sexually inviting. Studies indicate that men consistently perceive women's actions as more sexual than intended (*Feminist Perspective on Rape*, 2017). Additionally, verbal refusals of consent may be ignored or misconstrued, reinforcing rape myths that downplay victimization.

The historical evolution of rape laws, language, and legal interpretations underscores the entrenchment of patriarchal power structures in defining sexual violence. While modern legal frameworks have expanded the recognition of consent and coercion, societal norms and cultural narratives continue to shape perceptions of rape, often privileging male perspectives and reinforcing gendered power imbalances. This section establishes the foundation for understanding how gender-based violence is conceptualized and represented in media discourse, as explored in subsequent sections.

2.2. Contemporary Perspectives on Politics of Sexuality

The politics of sexuality and feminism have played a central role in shaping contemporary understandings of gender, power, and sexual violence. This section explores key perspectives on sexuality, particularly in relation to sexual violence, consent, and the legal system.

Michel Foucault's concept of power and discourse (1976, 1980) is central to understanding how media narratives construct gendered representation of violence. Foucault argued that power works not by repressing but by producing categories and norms about what is considered "normal" or "deviant" and argues that the notion that every individual has a sexuality is a relatively recent development in Western societies (Foucault, 1976). He shifted the understanding of power away from the idea of a centralized force that simply represses or controls individuals and saw power as decentralized, flowing through relationships, institutions, and discourses, and, in addition to that, Foucault In The History of Sexuality, Foucault provides a historical analysis of how the modern individual perceives him/herself as a sexual object (Foucault, 1980). Foucault stated that in order to understand how power has been and still is invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by even more general mechanisms and forms of global domination, "one must instead perform an ascending analysis of power", beginning with its smallest mechanisms, each of which has its own history, trajectory, and tactics. It's not that this worldwide dominance has a wide range of consequences that reach all the way down (Foucault, 1980, p.99). Foucault's research on ascension illustrates how micro-

level power mechanisms have integrated into prevailing power relations (Sawicki, 1986).

Foucault saw sexual categories as social constructs that emerged at specific historical moments rather than natural or essential qualities, which then allowed a challenge to the notion of fixed sexual identities. His work shifted the focus from seeing sexual politics as merely about emancipation from repression to examining the ways in which sexual norms are constructed, enforced, and resisted. (Butler, 1990). Butler underlines that Foucault's contribution to the "sexual is political is that through understanding of power not only as what prohibits and restricts, but as what produces the very possibilities of the subject. In other words, power is formative; it shapes and forms the very person who is subject to it" (1997, p.14).

Foucault also introduced the concept of "bio-power" to describe the ways in which modern states exert power over life itself -particularly through the regulation of the populations and according to him, sexuality is one of the key arenas for this regulation, with norms about sexual behavior, health, and family being enforced as a way to control and optimize populations (Foucault, 1998). Foucault asserts that social institutions, including governments, laws, religion, politics, social administration, monetary systems, and military organizations, cannot maintain the same stringent practices and procedures with claims to independent knowledge as the human and 'hard' sciences, such as mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, physics, genetics, and biology (Lang, 1998).

Foucault perceives these variations in approaches merely as "behavior control technologies" and modern biopower as a series of interconnected webs and networks permeating the society structure (Foucault, 2024). According to him, the discourse around sexuality also became a way to categorize, monitor, and manage people, shaping societal norms and individual behavior. Foucault's contribution by emphasizing the role of language, power, and knowledge challenged the essentialist view of gender and sexuality, suggesting that these categories are socially and historically contingent (Butler, 1990). Butler stated that, according to Foucault, the category of sex serves as both a regulatory ideal and a category whose realization is forced by a number of strictly regulated behaviors. In this way, the regulatory standards that create and undermine that category are what establish the materiality of sex. (1993, p.1-2).

Whether writing of the prison, the asylum, or sexuality, Foucault was interested in the interplay of power and the subject. To speak of power is meaningful only where subjects have some degree of freedom, agency, and choice (McKinley, 2010). In the key source on Foucault's later reflections on the nature of power, 'The Subject and Power', he makes this point explicitly as "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions, and diverse comportments may be realized (Foucault, 1982, p.221).

Foucault's concept of discourse is central to his work on power, knowledge, and social practices. For Foucault, discourse is not just a language or text but a way of organizing knowledge, shaping reality, and constructing subjects and societies

(Mills, 2003). According to Jager and Maier, Foucault's discourse theory centers on the following questions:

- What is valid knowledge at a particular place and time?
- How does this knowledge arise, and how is it passed on?
- What functions does it have for constituting subjects?
- What consequences does it have for the shaping of society? (Jager & Maier, 2016, p.110)

Foucault's focus on the body, discourse, and power dynamics informed feminist critiques of how female sexuality is regulated by patriarchal norms so that the link between personal experience and power relations intrinsic to sexuality and sexual violence is made possible. As a consequence, Western feminists opened debates in the 1960s about a range of practical issues to do with sex and gender, ranging from sexual expression to economic inequalities, police violence to rape (Messerschmidt, 2018; Connell, 1987).

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Feminist scholars argue that sexuality is not simply a private matter but a profoundly political issue, embedded within historical, cultural, and legal structures that regulate women's bodies and reinforce patriarchal control (Rubin, 1984; MacKinnon, 1989). Feminist ideas and practices, along with gender studies, have historically influenced the concept of gender, with feminist ideology encouraging critical analysis of gender (Hester, 1990; Jahn et al., 2012). Alongside Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir made up the path that later led to Kate Miller by arguing that the social, not the biological, determines women's situation; that is, women are embedded socially in unequal patriarchal relations where they are compelled "to assume the status of Other" (Messerschmidt, 2018). De Beauvoir, with her well-known argument in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman" pointed out that it is not biology that determines women's destiny, "but the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself" (Beauvoir, 1949). De Beauvoir portrayed femininity as a gender in historically constituted societal structures (Kumar, 2021). Patriarchy was always a central concept in feminist theory

as the discussion and critique of the social system where men hold power, shaping laws, culture, and social expectations. However, the radical feminists of 1970s made distinctive and original contributions to the theory by challenging biological arguments invoked as the basis of “patriarchy” (Connell, 1987).

Consequently, as a result of 1960’s debates, by the mid-1970s, the feminists started to pose theoretical questions. They began to grow a theoretical language of ‘sexual politics’, ‘oppression’, ‘patriarchy’ so that “sexual politics brought to light patterns of power, interest and conflict which made little sense in terms of social class analysis, conventional economics, political science pluralism or sociological functionalism (Connell, 1987). Those debates are mostly made by radical feminists like Adrienne Rich, Andrea Dworkin, Shulamith Firestone and Kate Millet who emerged as key figures in second wave feminism. Firestone advocated to free from biological reproductive roles (1970), Dworkin (1981) argued that pornography is a form of violence against women and a tool of male dominance and ‘radicalesbians’ reflected male-defined roles and male dependency while criticizing the sexuality of the dominant feminist consciousness (Brownmiller, 1999).

Kate Millet’s (1970) contribution with her book “Sexual Politics” was important in radical feminism, since she highlighted how patriarchal systems maintain control through cultural, social, and economic means. She defines patriarchy as the social system where men hold power and dominate women, is not a natural state of human society but a cultural construct that should be dismantled, and argued that this domination by men is not enforced by naked violence, but occurs through sex-role socialization and the personal nature of gendered power in the home (Millet, 1970).

According to Millett, politics refers to power structures, and sexual politics refers to power dynamics between sexes. This approach involves a critique of how heterosexual relationships often have a built-in power imbalance favoring men. Her work also exposed how literature, media, and politics reinforced male dominance (Messerschmidt, 2018).

Radical feminists were pioneers in body politics, violence against women, and non-heteronormative sexualities. They fought for abortion rights, criticized societal expectations and norms around bodies and argued that control over our own bodies is fundamental for liberation. Domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment issues are also central issues for radical feminists. They also contributed significantly to the visibility and rights of lesbians and challenged concepts around heterosexuality (Brownmiller, 1999).

Messerschmidt points out that because radical feminists of the era, like Millet, popularized the slogan that “the personal is political,” the idea that there exists a political dimension to personal life, insofar as inequality is institutionalized throughout society, sex-role socialization occurs in all “walks of life,” but at the same time, they “failed to put into historical perspective their assumption that “male sexuality” is essentially and therefore unchangeably coercive and insatiable (Messerschmidt, 2018). Tong accompanied that idea by arguing the radical feminist position on “male sexuality” as uncontrollable and preordained with violence, whereas “female sexuality” is nurturant and serene and was consequently understood as reproducing, rather than challenging, current gender arrangements: “radical feminists are buying into the male-dictated dichotomies they are trying to avoid”

(1989, p.135). Radical feminists are mostly criticized because of gender essentialism, like assuming inherent differences between men and women, the separatism, as the idea of women-only spaces; and the sex-positive feminists who were arguing pornography could be a form of empowerment (Brownmiller, 1999).^{[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15][16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][25][26][27][28][29][30][31][32][33][34][35][36][37][38][39][40][41][42][43][44][45][46][47][48][49][50][51][52][53][54][55][56][57][58][59][60][61][62][63][64][65][66][67][68][69][70][71][72][73][74][75][76][77][78][79][80][81][82][83][84][85][86][87][88][89][90][91][92][93][94][95][96][97][98][99][100]}

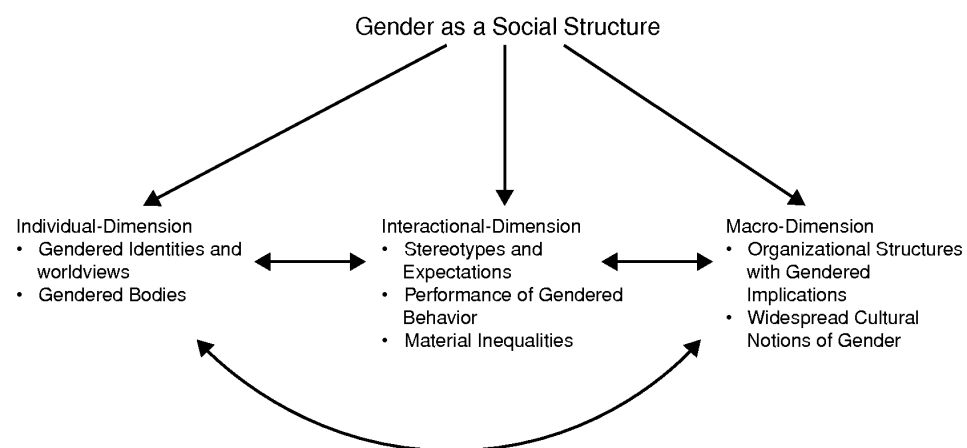
Consequently, new arguments were produced during the 1980s and 1990s, mostly through socialist feminism, even though “the sex-blind nature of Marxism” (Messerschmidt, 2018, p.18). Socialist feminists argued that liberal feminism focused too heavily on legal and political reforms, such as equal pay and the right to vote, without addressing the economic inequality and class (Barrett, 1980). Therefore, they did not put the emphasis on patriarchy as the primary source of women’s oppression but, in contrast took it as a concept intertwined with capitalism and believed that the two systems could not be separated.

Alongside the major focus on the concept of “domestic labor”, they critiqued the commodification of women’s bodies and sexuality under capitalism. Nancy Hartsock, Silvia Federici, Angela Davis, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Michele Barrett could be mentioned as the prominent thinkers of the movement (Fraser, 1997). Barter (1980) had a significant contribution to understanding the cultural and material factors in oppression since she suggested that the persistence of gender inequalities is not a failure of socialism but a failure of socialist feminists to adequately address and theorize the complex realities of women’s lives. Eisenstein underlined the links between gender, race, and economic power and said, “The personal is political but the political is also personal. Liberation is possible only if we fight together” (1981). Even though thinkers like Kimberley, Davis and Eisenstein were trying to address the complexities of multiple oppressions, Connell stated that mainstream feminism is

ignoring the experiences of women of color; key figures of socialist feminist theory are mostly criticized with questions of race, ethnicity, and other forms of identity (Connell, 1990).

According to Scott (1986), the history of gender is necessarily a history of power, whether it concerns power relations between men and women, between women, or between men. Power relations between men have long been a central theme of historical writing, but it is only in the last thirty years that they have been understood in gendered terms (Scott, 1986). Second-wave feminists highlighted how societal structures and norms reinforced male dominance over women, and this led to the exploration of gender as a social construct rather than something biologically determined (Connell, 1987).

Figure 2. Gender as a Social Structure (Trevino, 2018).



2.3. Gender Roles and Violence

In Western societies, the accepted cultural perspective on gender views women and men as naturally and unequivocally defined categories of being (Garfinkel, 1967, p.116-18) with distinctive psychological and behavioral propensities that can be predicted from their reproductive functions. Competent adult members of these societies see differences between the two as fundamental and enduring differences seemingly supported by the division of labor into women's and men's work and often elaborate differentiation of feminine and masculine attitudes and behaviors that are prominent features of social organization. It was considered that men are men and women are women -a division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, producing in turn profound psychological, behavioral, and social consequences (West, 1987). The intersectionality perspective further reveals that the individual's social location as reflected in intersecting identities must be at the forefront in any investigation of gender. Gender must be comprehended within the framework of power dynamics inherent in social identities (Collins, 1990; 2000).

Incidentally, challenging discussion started to grow up about traditional understandings of gender as a simple binary (male/female) around the end of the 1980s and aimed to explore the social, cultural, biological aspects of gender; explore how gender roles, norms, and expectations are constructed by society; and how they, alongside the power dynamics, impact on individuals' gender roles. It's argued that gender is distinct from biological sex; it's considered a spectrum rather than a binary. For example, a white cisgender woman and a Black transgender woman may both face sexism, but the way they experience it will differ due to their racial and gender

identities (Shields, 2008, Butler, 1990).

Judith Butler's "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity" had a huge impact on the gender theory (McKinlay, 2010). Butler (1988) proposes that gender is performative indicating that gender is not a fixed identity or role, but rather consists of a series of actions that can change over time. Butler opened up the theory to a wider framework by discussing the works of Sigmund Freud, Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault (Direk, 2020).

Simone de Beauvoir's statement "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," which was quoted previously in this chapter, was pointing out the difference between sex and gender. By this, Beauvoir does not mean us to believe that no one is born with reproductive organs, but that the social role of "woman" (or, for that matter "man") comes from a collection of behaviors into which we are socialized (Beauvoir, 1949). Alongside this argument and previous debates that mentioned it, Butler stated that it is formed by behavior, allowing for the construction of many genders through distinct actions (Butler, 1988).

Butler observed that feminist theory has assumed that "there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued" by arguing "politics and representation are controversial terms" (Butler, 1990).

The upheaval in sexual politics of the last twenty years has mainly been discussed as a change in the social position of women. In this manner, the distinction made in gender is crucial for understanding most feminist and “queer theory” and the variety of human identity more generally, yet it’s one that too often gets lost in popular usage of the words sex and gender. Biology does not determine gender differences, but culture does (Jones, 2018). Butler observed that the appearance of substance is “a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment that the ordinary social audience, including the actors themselves, comes to believe and perform in the mode of belief, if gender is instituted through acts that are internally discontinuous.” The potential for gender transformation lies in the arbitrary relationship between such acts, the possibility of a different kind of repeating, and the breaking or subversive repetition of that style, if the basis of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts over time rather than a seemingly seamless identity (1988, p.520).

The first concept that comes to the fore in Butler’s framework is “gender as a structure” outlined above, and the second is “performativity” (Butler, 1990).

McKinley asserted that Butler defined performativity as the manifestation and enactment of gender identity, rather than a mere reflection of an underlying bodily reality. He suggested that Butler references Foucault in multiple ways, particularly emphasizing the corporeality of individual and social existence, as well as her interest in comprehending identity as a social construct, and said that, according to Butler, identity is perpetually provisional rather than full, representing a profoundly confusing and unstable state (McKinley, 2010).

Foucault was calling ‘the rancorous will to knowledge’ is necessarily an unequal struggle with specific forms of power and is a critical part of identity politics but should never be confused with the obliteration of power per se (Foucault, 1971; Han, 2002). In this sense of resistance, McKinley states that Foucault “widely read as a dystopian miserabilist, whereas Butler is much more of a political optimist,” Butler begins where Foucault stutters to a halt (McKinley, 2010, p.177). Foucault’s point is that the regulation of modern individuals through dreary routine is such that that he wrote of the enclosure, normalization, and control of the clinic, the asylum, and the prison. Butler, by contrast, speaks of a life of possibilities outside of institutions, beyond the reach of normalization (McKinley, 2010). According to Kinley, Butler suggests the starting points for understanding possible alternative styles of living are not “to be found in the genealogies of gloomy institutional lives (McKinley, 2010).

Butler’s argument on “qualifications for being a subject” is primal stands on that “must first be met before representation” was mentioning Foucault’s perspective that “juridical systems of power produce the subject they subsequently come to represent” but she was arguing despite the predetermined domains of political and linguistic "representation," the criterion by which subjects are constituted is established (Butler, 1990). McKindley observed that Butler enormously made use of the dialogue between feminism and Foucault; as a result, she overlapped Foucault’s theoretical strategy with that of radical feminism in its determination to destabilize essentialist notions of order and gender (McKinley, 2010). Hence, central questions discussed by poststructuralist and feminist theories are re-articulated by Butler in the opening chapter of “Gender Trouble”. Butler explores the question of whether there is a pre-existing commonality among women, a specificity to their cultures, and if

there is a region of the "specifically feminine" that is distinct from the masculine and universally recognized (1990, p.6).

For Butler, identity is enacted through the 'forced reiteration of norms'. Butler's insistence on the enactment of identities in everyday life roots performativity in mundane daily experience, again really Foucault's elaboration of the deadening routines of disciplinary lives (Chambers and Carver, 2008, p.37; Meredith, 2005). It's important to underline the differentiation made between "performance" and "performativity". A performance is an act that an individual consciously engages in, like an actor on stage, whereas "performativity" refers to a process that produces an effect. In the context of gender, performativity means that gender is not something one "is" but something one "does" repeatedly. It is not a fixed attribute but rather a series of acts, behaviors and expressions that come to define what society understands as "gender". (Butler 1990, 2004). By performativity Butler refers to the fact that a statement or act has not been brought into being for the first time, nor is that utterance a single or definitive citation. Rather, they are part of a continuing process of iteration and consolidation of authority (Butler, 1993, p.12-13). Kinley argued that structural and discursive constraint for Butler, is constitutive but not exhaustive of the 'performed' nature of identity. Performativity is the materialization of norms, a process that is inherently unstable, latent with the possibility of resistance. Performativity refers both to the fragility and the stubborn consistency of identity. (McKinley, 2010). Repetition is a sign of power and powerlessness. Identity is conceived as the 'stylised repetition of acts' (Bell, 1999, p.85).

Men have been studying men for a long time, and calling it 'History', 'Sociology', or

whatever. Studying men is in itself neither new nor necessarily radical; it all depends on how this is done. (Hearn, 2004). But “critical studies on men” or “masculinity studies” is a quite recent concept that could be developed because of the diverse theoretical debates on power, dominance, and sexual politics and emerged from the background that has been explained in the previous chapter. The shift from patriarchy to gender then included the emergence of the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” alongside a theoretical conceptualization of gender relations as one of the most important theoretical projects feminists undertook in the 1980s (Messerschmidt, 2018). Messerschmidt articulated this transition as:

“Radical and socialist feminist scholars highlighted patriarchy as a way to overcome and critique androcentric social theory that proffered problematic explanations of masculine dominance or simply were gender blind. Eventually feminist scholars recognized the limitations of both of these approaches, concluding that patriarchy could not be useful analytically as a concept for feminist thought and inquiry. Feminist scholars subsequently began to move theoretically in a different direction, a route that significantly altered the discourse in feminist theory. Many feminists shifted their theoretical focus from “patriarchy” to “gender” and how gender relations are implicated in all walks of life. This was a monumental shift (...) that led to the appearance of the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” (2018, p.23).

As we discussed in previous sections, some of the most basic sources for the development of the hegemonic masculinity as a concept were radical and socialist feminist theories of patriarchy, the limitations of patriarchy as a theoretical construct, and the subsequent shift to gender in feminist theory (Messerschmidt, 2018). The

conceptual shift from "gender roles" to "gender relations" addresses a significant obstacle for a feminist revolution in sociology: namely, the uncritical simplification of gender from a fundamental principle of social organization to an individual attribute, transitioning from a core theoretical category to a mere variable (Stacey & Thorne, 1985). Perceiving gender as a relational construct allows sociologists to transcend individual identities and examine the power dynamics between men and women, as well as among males (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985).

Distinct from biological sex, masculinity is a set of socially constructed expectations for how men and boys should behave, look, experience, and express emotion (Pleck, 1981, 1995). Conformity to these norms exists on a continuum, with some men adhering more firmly to some norms versus others (Mahalik, 2003). For example, some men may prioritize sexual prowess over physical toughness, whereas other men may prioritize status and wealth. Though there is some variability, Dahl, Vescio, and Weaver (2015) describe Thompson and Pleck's three domains of masculine norms as being the universally accepted core attributes of masculinity. According to Thompson and Pleck (1986), boys and men are required to demonstrate "toughness" through immunity to pain and suffering across the physical, emotional, and mental domains. They must also reject all things feminine in their own behavior, emotions, and personality. Finally, they must behave in ways that demonstrate power, status, and dominance over others. This is particularly true in relation to women; however, men are likewise expected to establish their dominance over other men. This norm prescribing the general dominance of men over women and subordinate male social groups has been termed hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995).

Connell's (1987,1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity further explains how dominant forms of masculinity reinforce male power and female subordination. In media narratives, male perpetrators of sexual violence are often portrayed in ways that downplay their culpability, while female victims are subjected to scrutiny, and blame (Brownmiller, 1975; Cuklanz, 1996; Risdaneva, 2017).

Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice that allowed men's power over the others who are in the unequal position (Donaldson, 1993; Messerschmidt, 2018). According to Connell, masculinities are multiple, and power dynamics exist not only between genders but also among men themselves (Demetriou, 2001). Connell posits that masculinity is fundamentally relational, manifesting solely in opposition to feminine. He states that a culture that does not regard women and men as embodying polarized character types, at least in theory, lacks a concept akin to that of European/American culture" (Connell, 2005).

This relation is not a "confrontation between homogenous, undifferentiated blocs" of men and women, but between multiple masculinities and femininities (Carrigan, 1985, p.590). For Connell (2005, p.76), recognizing the plurality of masculinities is "only a first step" and the more important task is to "examine the relations between them. Drawing on Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony, she theorizes the dominant masculinity as "hegemonic masculinity": the "culturally exalted form of masculinity" (Carrigan, 1985, p.592).

The term *hegemony* comes from the Ancient Greek word *hegemonia* (ἡγεμονία), which indicates the leadership and the régime of the hegemon. In political

science, hegemony is the geopolitical dominance exercised by an empire, the *hegemon* (leader state) that rules the subordinate states of the empire by the threat of intervention, an implied means of power, rather than by threat of direct rule—military invasion, occupation, and territorial annexation. The social science it refers to the concept of “cultural hegemony” as articulated by Antonio Gramsci (“Hegemony”, 2024).

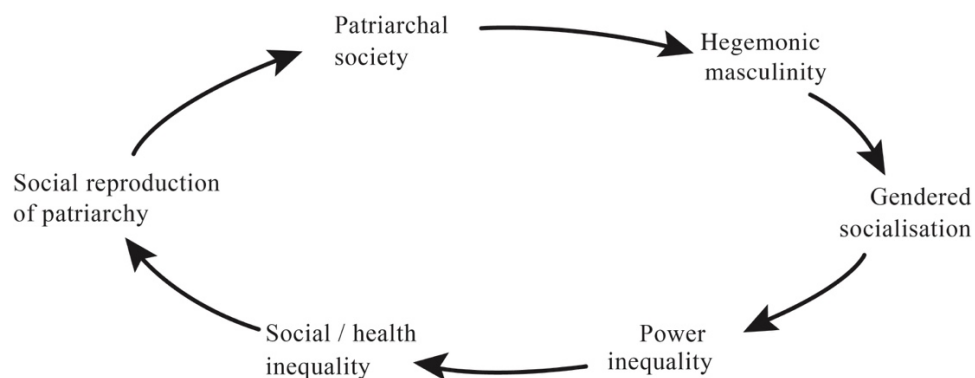
The Gramscian concept of "hegemony" was prevalent throughout efforts to comprehend the stabilization of class relations. Connell borrowed the Marxist philosopher's pivotal concept “hegemony” who used it to describe how a dominant group maintains power not only through coercion but through consent and the establishment of norms seen as “natural” or “common sense and applied this concept to gender, suggesting that a particular form of masculinity becomes “hegemonic” when it occupies the top position in a hierarchy of masculinities and sets the standard to which others are compared (Messerschmidt, 1993).

In the 1930s when Gramsci was imprisoned because of his critical analysis of fascist dictator Mussolini's discourses, he conducted cultural and historical assessments of the "natural order of societal norms" as produced by the prevailing ideology. He stated that the social structures of bourgeois cultural hegemony would allow common-sense men and women to intellectually perceive those cultures. In every aspect of life, both private and public, common sense serves as the intellectual framework through which individuals navigate and interpret their daily existence within their social class and the broader societal structure; however, the constraints of common-sense restrict an individual's intellectual awareness of labor exploitation

facilitated by cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Due to the challenge of recognizing the prevailing hierarchy of bourgeois culture (social and economic classes), the majority of individuals focus on personal issues and consequently fail to interrogate the underlying origins of their socio-economic subjugation, both individually and collectively (Hart, 1986).

The emergence of the need for masculinity studies was first stated in the collaborative article of Connell, Carrigan and Lee named “Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity” (1985). The notion of hegemonic masculinity, as articulated by Connell, was initially applied in educational research to analyze the dynamics of classroom interactions, encompassing patterns of resistance and bullying among male students. It was utilized to examine the connections between the curriculum and the challenges associated with gender-neutral pedagogy (Martino, 1995).

Figure 2. The Dynamics of Gender Inequality (Scott-Samuel, 2009).



Hegemonic masculinity also had an influence in criminology. Data indicate that males, including boys, commit a more significant proportion of conventional and serious crimes compared to women and girls. Furthermore, men possess a near-

monopoly on the perpetration of syndicated and white-collar crimes. The notion of hegemonic masculinity facilitated the theoretical exploration of the interplay between masculinities and various criminal behaviors (Messerschmidt, 1993), and was engaged in the investigation of particular offenses perpetrated by males, including rape in Switzerland, murder in Australia, football hooliganism and white-collar crime in England, and violent assaults in the United States (Newburn & Stanko, 1994).

Even though there is a large amount of evidence linking masculinity and sexual violence, it is important to reiterate the distinction between masculinity and being biologically male (Reidy, Leone, Bogen & Swahn, 2022, p.126). Although the majority of sexual violence is perpetrated by men, most men do not perpetrate sexual violence (Anderson, Silver, Ciampaglia, Vitale, & Delahanty, 2019; Breiding et al., 2014). However, socially constructed hegemonic beliefs and attitudes of what it means to be a man (i.e., masculinity) are a robust risk factor for perpetration (Tharp, 2013). Importantly, traditional masculinity often works in tandem with other well-known risk factors (e.g., alcohol and drug use, psychosocial factors) to increase the risk of sexual violence. One leading framework for sexual violence perpetration, the Confluence Mediation Model (Malamuth, 1996; Malamuth & Hald, 2017), suggests that a combination of general situational factors, antisocial tendencies, and specific characteristics, including a hostile masculinity, predisposes men to sexual violence perpetration. As defined by Malamuth (1996), hostile masculinity is a personality profile that comprises (1) a desire to be in control of women and (2) an insecure, distrustful, and defensive attitude toward women. More specifically, scholars operationalize this construct using three components: (1) hostility toward women, (2) dominance in sexual relationships, and (3) acceptance of violence against

women. Thus, the construct of hostile masculinity likely conflates masculinity with violence, limiting our understanding of whether masculinity is violence or a consequence of violence. Despite this, the relation between hostile masculinity and sexual violence has been extensively researched (Reidy, Leone, Bogen & Swahn, 2022, p.126).

The concept was utilized in examining media portrayals of men, namely the interaction between sports and combat imagery (Jansen & Sabo, 1994). The concept of hegemony revealed the diversity and selectivity of images in mass media, prompting media academics to analyze the relationships between portrayals of various masculinities (Hanke 1992). Commercial sports serve as a focal point for media portrayals of masculinity, and the emerging discipline of sports sociology has also found considerable use for the notion of hegemonic masculinity (Messner, 1992). It was utilized to comprehend the prevalence of body-contact combative sports, which serve as a perpetually updated emblem of masculinity, as well as to analyze the violence and homophobia often present in athletic environments (Messner & Sabo, 1990).

Theoretical explanations for the relationship between masculinity and aggression have focused heavily on gender role socialization, in which men and women are believed to be entrenched with society's external standards, expectations, and norms about masculine and feminine behavior (Pleck, 1995). Regardless of biological sex, gender identity develops through complex interactions with one's culture in which individuals learn appropriate gender scripts (Kimmel, 2002). In accordance with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), boys learn acceptable and unacceptable

“masculine” behavior from a host of influences, including parents, peers, teachers, and the media. These behaviors are learned through reinforcement (e.g., praise for winning) and punishment (e.g., criticism or ostracism for showing emotions) by others (Pleck, 1981, 1995).

Among adolescent males, sexual experiences are a way to demonstrate masculinity (Connell, 2005) and sexual prowess is an important and salient masculine norm (Mahalik et al., 2003). Indeed, masculine scripts call for boys to have sex early and often (Pleck, 1995). Further, sex is often treated as a game or competition where women are viewed as trophies (Korobov & Bamberg, 2004). Peers own sexual behavior and the pressure they exert are related to adolescent sexual activity and sexual risk behavior (van de Bongardt, Reitz, Sandfort, & Deković, 2014). By late adolescence, the precarious nature of masculinity becomes apparent as boys struggle to prove and demonstrate their manhood and rigidly adhere to hegemonic masculine norms (Côté & Allamar, 1996; Kimmel, 2008). Thus, by matriculation into early adulthood, boys have learned what constitutes masculine behavior through reinforcement and punishment and given the precarious nature of masculinity, take frequent steps to prove and reprove their masculinity (Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). In addition to parents, peers, and teachers, the media can play an influential role in gender socialization. Messages about acceptable “masculine” behavior are ubiquitous in the media. Research indicates that literary textbooks for first, third, and fifth grades disproportionately depict men in stereotyped roles characterized by aggressiveness, argumentativeness, and competitiveness (Evans & Davies, 2000). Conventional masculine standards regarding aggression are prevalent in video games (Dietz, 1998), magazines (Ricciardelli, Clow, & White, 2010) television (Kareithi,

2014), and sports (Edward, John, & Michael, 2008).

2.3. Studies on Sexual Violence and Media

Newspaper and television news reports are essential for identifying the significant issues of the day. This "news" is not produced in a neutral or "objective" manner. Analysts point out how ownership patterns in media industries structurally limit media reporting and how "news values," "hierarchies of credibility," "journalistic routines," and prevailing cultural presumptions all play a role (Golding & Murdock 1991; Hall et al. 1978; Schudson 1989; Tuchman 1978). Additionally, it has been noted that the news that is broadcast on television and in the press is a result of internal conflicts within media organizations as well as rivalry between various sources (Ericson et al. 1989; Schlesinger 1978; Miller et al. 1998). However, Kitzinger argues that "the gender politics of these processes are routinely ignored. Terms such as 'gender', 'feminism,' or 'women' (and indeed 'men') are absent from the indexes of many key mainstream texts about source strategies and the operations of news organizations. This has created a significant gap in our knowledge of how gender politics function in mass media processes (Kitzinger, 1999).

Historically, news reporting, films, and digital platforms have contributed to reinforcing rape myths, victim-blaming narratives, and gender stereotypes, often portraying victims as responsible for their assaults while excusing perpetrators' actions. However, in recent years, feminist activism and movements such as "#MeToo" and "Ni Una Menos" have pushed for a shift in media discourse, advocating for survivor-centered narratives and challenging dominant

representations. Studies such as those by Belmonte and Negri (2021), Pekkarinen (2016) and, Richard, Bastin and Portet (2022) have critically examined how narratives influence societal attitudes, how sexual violence is framed in the media, legal proceedings, and victim-blaming tendencies by highlighting recurring patterns in European and US news reporting. These studies highlight how news discourse can either reinforce rape myths or contribute to a more informed public understanding of sexual violence.

Richard, Bastin, and Portet (2022) introduced “GenderedNews”, an online dashboard that utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) methods to quantify gender imbalances in French online news media. This tool provides weekly measures of gender representation by analyzing the presence and distribution of men and women mentioned and quoted in news articles. The study acknowledges that traditional methods, such as qualitative and quantitative content analyses, have limitations in sampling and resource requirements. By automating the analysis, GenderedNews offers a complementary approach to monitoring gender inequalities in media representation. The analysis revealed a consistent underrepresentation of women in French online news media. Both metrics indicated that men are more frequently mentioned and quoted than women. This disparity highlights the ongoing gender biases in media coverage, where male perspectives are predominantly featured, potentially influencing public perception and policy discussions related to gender-based issues, including sexual violence (Richard, Bastin, & Portet, 2022).

In their recent study, “Analyzing Social Representation of Gender-Based Violence Throughout Media Discourse: The Case of the Italian Press,” Bemonti and Negri

(2021) analyzed how gender-based violence (GBV) is represented in the Italian press, with a particular focus on the stereotypes and biases in journalistic narratives. The study analyzes a corpus of 16,000+ news articles from 15 Italian newspapers (2017–2019) related to GBV, including crimes such as domestic violence, rape, femicide, and stalking. Pekkarinen (2016) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of six US news articles from major outlets such as *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*.

Bemonti and Negri's research uses quantitative content analysis to measure word frequency and key themes and qualitative discourse analysis to examine framing techniques, language choices, and implicit biases. The media, especially news outlets, play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions by influencing how people understand and interpret reality. However, instead of fostering awareness, media representations of gender-based violence often contribute to misunderstanding the issue. Rather than framing it as a systemic social problem, many news reports focus on individual incidents without addressing the broader cultural and structural factors that perpetuate violence (Belmonte & Negri, 2021, p. 48).

Bemonti and Negri's study examines how both victims and perpetrators are represented in media narratives, highlighting the extent to which journalistic discourse reinforces or challenges societal perceptions of male violence against women. Central to their analysis is the role of the press in perpetuating gender stereotypes and power imbalances, particularly through selective reporting, linguistic framing, and the normalization of violence as an individual rather than a systemic issue. By critically assessing these representations, the authors aim to reveal how

mainstream media contributes to shaping cultural attitudes toward gender-based violence, ultimately influencing legal, social, and institutional responses (Bemonti & Negri, 2021).

Belmonte and Negri's findings reveal a series of troubling patterns in the way Italian newspapers represent gender-based violence, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and minimizing male accountability. One of the most striking observations is the "unbalanced representation of victims and perpetrators," where media coverage overwhelmingly focuses on women as victims while often obscuring or downplaying the role of male aggressors. The study outlines that this imbalance not only erases the responsibility of perpetrators but also reinforces a narrative in which violence appears as an isolated tragedy rather than a consequence of structural gender inequalities. A major issue in media coverage of gender-based violence is the disproportionate focus on victims rather than perpetrators. In news articles, terms like "woman" and "women" appear far more frequently than words such as "man," "men," or "husband," which refer to the individuals responsible for the violence.

As a result, the media constructs a narrative that highlights the suffering of victims but often omits or downplays the role of the perpetrator. This creates what Belmonte and Negri (2021) describe as a "perpetrator-less crime," where the focus is placed entirely on the victim and the crime itself, rather than on male accountability for gender-based violence (Bemonti & Negri, 2021, p. 50). Pekkarinen also found that victims were frequently portrayed as unreliable or as having questionable backgrounds, reinforcing rape myths that discourage survivors from reporting crimes (2016).

as independent individuals with agency, female victims are frequently defined by their beauty, youth, or family roles (e.g., as mothers or wives). By emphasizing these attributes, the media reinforces traditional gender norms that associate women's value with their appearance and relationships rather than their autonomy. According to Belmonte and Negri (2021), this framing contributes to “a narrative that undermines women's subjectivity, positioning them as passive victims rather than as individuals with rights and agency” (p. 54).

In addition to selective coverage, both studies highlight a fundamental flaw in how sexual violence is framed: as isolated events rather than as part of a systemic issue. Belmonte and Negri underline the way in which gender-based violence is framed significantly impacts public understanding. They argue that most media reports present these incidents as isolated events, without addressing the broader social and cultural structures that enable such violence and by treating cases as individual tragedies rather than symptoms of systemic gender inequality, the media fails to challenge the patriarchal structures that sustain violence against women. Only a few publications, such as Italian left-wing newspaper *Il Manifesto*, take a more thematic approach, linking gender-based violence to structural inequalities, feminist movements, and power imbalances. However, this perspective remains rare, as most journalistic narratives avoid discussions of power and gender hierarchies, thereby reinforcing the status quo (Belmonte & Negri, 2021). Pekkarinen (2016) emphasizes that instead of discussing patriarchy, gender inequality, or legal failures, news reports often present cases as tragic but inevitable incidents. This prevents “public discourse from addressing root causes, leading to ineffective policy responses and continued victim-blaming” (p. 17).

Given the media's immense influence on public discourse, journalism has the potential to either perpetuate harmful stereotypes or promote greater awareness and change. However, as Belmonte and Negri (2021) conclude, most news coverage continues to reinforce cultural biases rather than challenging them. To combat this, they advocate for gender-sensitive reporting that prioritizes structural analysis over sensationalism and holds perpetrators accountable rather than obscuring their responsibility. By shifting the focus from "individual cases to broader systemic issues, the media can play a critical role in changing societal attitudes and reducing gender-based violence" (p. 58).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the methodological framework employed in this study. This study uses a qualitative research approach is utilized to investigate media representations of gender-based violence. Specifically, the study applies narrative analysis and framing analysis as a primary methods to evaluate news articles critically. Through an in-dept examination of language, discourse, and visual representation, this research seeks to uncover the underlying patriarchal structures embedded in media narratives. Furthermore, this chapter provides a detailed account of the selection criteria for news articles and the data collection procedures undertaken in this study.

This chapter begins by introducing the qualitative research paradigm and highlights its appropriateness for media analysis. It then outlines the specific analytical methods utilized, including narrative analysis, which examines the construction of news stories, and framing analysis, which investigates the linguistic and visual choices made by journalists. The final section discusses the

data collection process, sample selection criteria, and research limitations, acknowledging potential biases and constraints inherent in media reporting.

By systematically analyzing how sexual violence is framed in French news media, this study aims to contribute to broader discussions on gender representation, media ethics, and the role of journalism in reinforcing or challenging patriarchal norms.

3.2. Narrative Analysis

Narrative theory is an interdisciplinary framework for understanding how stories are structured, interpreted, and used to create meaning. Originating in literary studies, it has expanded across disciplines, including psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and film studies to explore how narratives shape both individual identity and cultural understanding. It examines not just what stories are told but how they are constructed, the impact of different structures, and the purposes they serve (Herman, Vervaeck, 2000; Lieblich, Machiach & Zilber, 1998; Boyle, 2022).

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method that examines how stories are structured and presented to audiences. It focuses on the sequence of events, the roles assigned to different actors, and the overarching themes that emerge in media texts (Riesman, 2008). In the context of sexual violence cases, narrative analysis allows researchers to investigate how media constructs victimhood, perpetration, agency, and responsibility (Ewick & Silbey, 1995).

“Humans are storytelling animals,” says Fischer (Fischer, 1987, p.12). His argument is that humans make sense of the world primarily through storytelling, emphasizing that narrative is essential to human communication. Ursula K. Le Guin adds that “narrative is the central function of language” (Le Guin, 1998, p.3). Barthes emphasizes the universality of narrative as a fundamental structure for organizing human knowledge and understanding by stating, “Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative” (Barthes, 1977, p.29). Harari discusses storytelling in relation with the evolution of human societies and suggest that is the most powerful force that has shaped human history, culture and society basing on the power of stories to unite people. Harari argues that “Numerous individuals can collaborate effectively by subscribing to shared myths.” Extensive human collaboration is founded on shared stories that reside solely in the collective imagination of individuals (Harari, 2011, p.58).

Harari's principal assertion is that Homo sapiens achieved global dominance due to their unparalleled ability to cooperate flexibly in substantial groups, a capability that stems from their distinctive ability to believe in entities that exist solely in the imagination, such as deities, nations, currency, and human rights. He argues that these convictions engender discrimination—whether it is racial, sexual, or political—and that achieving a wholly impartial society may be inherently unattainable. Harari asserts that all extensive human cooperative systems—such as religions, political structures, commerce networks, and legal institutions—are a result of Homo sapiens' unique cognitive ability for "fictional narration” (Harrari, 2011).

Some writers distinguish between narrative and story, especially in literary theory. In terms of etymology, narrative is associated with an authoritative telling of events, whereas storytelling is associated with entertaining an audience, setting up an interesting challenge for the audience as to the truthfulness or deception of the story. In the social sciences, the use of these terms is less precise. Johnstone (2001) makes the distinction between narrative as talk about a sequence of events and story as the act of storytelling, whereas Linde (1993), in contrast, sees narrative as a subunit of a person's life story.

Hence, narrative plays a crucial role in human cognition, communication, and culture. It is an essential tool for making complex ideas tangible, fostering relationships, and influencing behavior and allows us to structure information, make sense of complex experiences and connect emotionally with others (Le Guin, 1998). But the crucial point is how the realities are transformed to stories and how they are narrated since, as George Stainer stated, “Language is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is” to point how “man” uses language to narrate “the truths” (1998, p.44). Thus, Aristotle made one of the earliest definitions of narration by indicating that there is an “arrangement of the incidents,” which is the essential element of drama and epic. And he goes on to make the endearing remark that this narrative or plot element consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Aristotle claims that a beginning is an entity that does not inherently follow anything else and is naturally succeeded by another; an end is an entity that follows something else, either as a necessary or customary consequence, with nothing succeeding it; and a middle is an entity that follows one thing and is also succeeded by another (1998).

As Aristotle indicated, narrative refers to “any cohesive and coherent story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end” (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007, p.778). As Jenkins, Peters-Lazaro, and Shresthova (2020, p.3) suggest, stories can be thought of as ‘vehicles for people to pass along shared wisdom, question current actions, and direct attention to shared desires. Stories are also organized and told in particular ways, which is where the related term ‘narrative’ comes in. If a ‘story’ refers to all the events that are to be depicted, ‘narrative’ is *how* those events are depicted—the arrangement or specific ‘showing and telling’ involved (Cobley 2014, p.5). Boyle exemplifies it as “One might reasonably expect that a movie based on a novel will depict the same ‘broad’ story; however, the movie might begin with events that come towards the end of the novel, or include flashbacks, or leave out certain characters, or turn some minor characters in the novel into major characters onscreen. In other words, the *narrative* in each case might be very different” (2022, p.51).

According to Boyle, the important point about narrative is that it involves *selection* on the part of the storyteller—a point that applies equally to fiction and non-fiction. For example, the stories we see on news broadcasts or read in newspapers are also structured narratively in the sense that they depict events and people in particular ways and include some details while omitting others, all of which has important implications for how readers, listeners, and viewers make sense of a story (Boyle, 2022).

Not all theorists, however, define ‘story’ as the events depicted and shown in a narrative. To Barbara Czarniawska (2004), a story is a narrative with a plot, that is, causal chains of actions and events that form a meaningful structure. A list of dates

and events with some causal connections might constitute a narrative, for example, a chronicle. Yet, if a narrative is devoid of a plot, it is not a story. To become a story, a narrative has to be emplotted - provided with a plot. Thus, what Czarniawska finds of interest and importance in narrative analysis are the ways and techniques of emplotment. Also Yannis Gabriel (2000) is keen on maintaining a clear demarcation between narrative and story on the basis of the existence of a plot in the latter.

Bal emphasizes the crucial element in the narrative is “representation” by saying narrative is not an interpretive act, where the storyteller’s choices shape how events are understood: “Narrative is not a series of events but a way of recounting and representing events” (Bal, 1985). Boyle (2022) also underlines that is vital to keep in mind that “narrative is a *re*-presentation of the world, selecting and articulating some things while leaving others out” (Cobley, 2014, p.199). This is the point where the story differentiates from the narrative.

Marie-Laure Ryan summarizes these arguments in an article about ‘Narrative’, examines how the concept is described, and not only how it is defined. Referring to theoreticians like David Herman, Paul Ricoeur, Jerome Bruner, Michel Foucault and others, she explains that narrative is an essential method for structuring human experience and a mechanism for creating representations of reality; narrative is a fundamental approach for organizing human experience and a means of constructing representations of reality; it constitutes a specific way of cognition, one that pertains to the concrete and particular rather than the abstract and general; it also constructs and disseminates cultural traditions, while establishing the values and beliefs that delineate cultural identities and serves as a conduit for prevailing ideals and a tool of authority (Ryan, 2005, p.345).

In relation to the concerns related with political violence, studies on narratives have become increasingly popular among scholars (Graef, deSilva & Lemay-Hebert, 2018). A significant one is the communication scholar Walter Fisher and his 'narrative paradigm' theory.

In narrative paradigm theory, Fischer argued that humans are not rational and proposed that the narrative is the basis of communication (Fischer, 1984). Rather than viewing communication solely through a rational, logical framework -which he called "rational world paradigm-, Fischer proposed that people are "homo narrans," or storytelling beings and that narrative is a more natural and universal form of communication, "Humans are essentially storytellers. Our comprehension and actions are influenced more by narrative logic, or what people find acceptable and believable, than formal logic (Fischer, 1987, p.58). According to this viewpoint, reasoning is achieved through "all sorts of symbolic action," and individuals convey messages through the narration or observation of an engaging story rather than by presenting evidence or formulating a logical argument (Fischer, 1987).

Fisher employs the term paradigm instead of theory, indicating that a paradigm encompasses a greater scope than a theory. The paradigm asserts that all significant communication transpires through narrative or the narration of events. Humans engage as narrators and spectators of stories. This hypothesis asserts that narratives are more compelling than logical reasoning (Fischer, 1985). Essentially the narrative paradigm helps us to explain how humans are able to understand complex information through narrative. Fisher stated, "There is no genre, including technical communication, that is not an episode in the story of life." (Fischer, 1985, p.347-

367). For this reason, Fisher thought narration to be the ultimate metaphor to encompass the human experience (Graef, deSilva & Lemay-Hebert, 2018). Key points of the narrative paradigm described as “narrative as framework”, “narrative coherence and fidelity” and “evaluation of reasoning or standpoint” as it explained:

- Humans perceive the world as a collection of narratives. Each individual accepts narratives that align with their values and views, perceived as common sense.
- Despite assertions of rationality in decision-making, factors such as history, culture, and views of others are inherently subjective and not fully comprehended.
- Narrative rationality necessitates that stories be plausible, logical, and demonstrate integrity (Jameson, 2001).

Fischer argued that people experienced and comprehended life as a series of ongoing narratives. He believed we make decisions “based on the stories we hear and tell rather than purely on logic and evidence,” which corresponds to “the framework” of the narratives (Fischer, 1987). “Coherence and fidelity” are two major concepts that Fischer uses to identify the judgment and reasoning that we do with narratives. Narrative coherence corresponds to the degree to which a story makes sense and is based on how consistent and structured the story is (Griffin, 2009). Narrative faithfulness refers to the extent to which a story aligns with the observer's prior experiences and other narratives. The resonance of a narrative with previously acknowledged truths from their own experiences. Narratives with fidelity may impact their views and values (Fischer, 1987). Another important argument is that evaluation of reasoning systems is inherent to the narrative paradigm. The narrative paradigm posits that any human can evaluate a story's value as a foundation for belief

and behavior (Fischer, 1984). Narratives do not require training or expertise to evaluate. Common sense assesses narrative coherence and fidelity (Griffin, 2009). Busselle and Bilandzic separate reality from narrative logic, writing "It is amazing that awareness of viewers' or readers' inventiveness of the story does not weaken the power of narrative. Conversely, effective stories—those that most interest us—usually are fictional and unrealistic (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008).

Walter Fischer's arguments, particularly in the realms of persuasion and storytelling, challenged the traditional narrative approach, which is dated to Ancient Greece. The rational world paradigm which is based on the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, suggests that a logical argument is the most convincing kind of one. The contrast between the rational paradigm and the narrative paradigm can be seen in the side-by-side representation below ("Narrative Paradigm," 2024).

Table 1. Comparison of Narrative Paradigms (Rowland, 2024, p.204)

Rational World Paradigm	Narrative Paradigm
Humans are rational	Humans are storytellers
Decision making is based on arguments	Decision making and communication are based on "good reasons"
Arguments adhere to specific criteria for soundness and logic	Good reasons are determined by matters of history, biography, culture and character
Rationality is based on the quality of evidence and formal reasoning processes	Rationality is based in people's awareness of internal consistency and resemblance to lived experience

The world can be understood as a series of
logical relationships that are uncovered
through reasoning

We experience a world that is
filled with stories, and we
must choose among them

Aristotle, in *Rhetoric*, established the Rational Paradigm by suggesting the persuasive power of logic and structured his argument based on 3 concepts that is named “ethos”, “pathos” and “logos”. “Ethos” refers to credibility or ethical appeal since Aristotle believed that the speaker’s character and credibility significantly influence persuasion. According to Aristotle, appealing to emotions can be a powerful tool persuasion that corresponds to “pathos”. Finally “logos” as logical appeal is the use of reason, fact and logical arguments stated central to persuading according audience. (“Aristotle”, 2024). Since he stated the ideal speaker who can effectively uses logos was implicitly male by assuming that men had superior features, his framework is criticized in feminist and rhetorical studies (Smith, 1983).

Aristotle’s concept of logos as essential for making arguments, alongside his views on women as expressed in various works, is considered quite problematic (Roof, 2018). In her article “Aristotle and Women,” Horowitz asserted that a comprehensive examination of Aristotle’s conception of female human nature is necessary, as many of the prevailing Western arguments regarding the inferiority of women and their political subordination to men in both domestic and societal contexts originate from Aristotle (Horowitz, 1976). Aristotle's perspectives on women impacted subsequent Western philosophers who regarded him as an authority until the conclusion of the Middle Ages (Nicholas, 1983).

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method used to understand and interpret stories, whether in literature, interviews, news stories, or personal account. It

explores how people make sense of events, experiences, and identities (Riessman, 2008). Riessman listed methods in narrative analysis as “thematic, structural, dialogic/performative, narrative positioning, biographic/chronological, and contextual.” The purposes, process, and use of different methods are showed in the Table 2.

Table 2. Methods in Narrrative Analysis (Riesman, 2008)

Thematic	Structural	Dialogical / Performative	Content
Identifying themes or patterns within the narrative	How the story is constructed	Analyzing the interaction between storyteller and audience	Focus on the explicit content within the narrative
Coding and categorizing data to highlight recurring	Focus is on narrative elements like plot, setting, characters and sequence	How language, tone and gestures shape the narrative’s presentation and how different audiences interpret it	Codes the content into categories to identify word frequency, phrases and symbols
Psychology, sociology and cultural studies	Reveal how structure affects meaning	Performance studies, social psychology and communication studies	Media studies, cultural analysis

Narrative analysis may examine entire narratives or focus solely on specific components, such as the complicated action or the assessment and coda, which provide meaning (Lieblich, Rivka, Zilber, 1998). Researchers Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (2009) set apart examining what is being told from how it is done.

In social sciences, the first is the prevailing method; in linguistics, the second is more often used. Usually, narrative analysis focuses on the form of the language together with the content. For instance, a narrative framework can support the ideas or guide them in particular paths and conclusions (meaning) (Lieblich, Rivka, Zilber, 1998). Sociologist Cathrine Riessman (2008) categorizes narrative analysis into thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual analysis. Sveinung Sandberg (2022) created a table according Riessman, named Table 3 below is based on this division but distinguishes between dialogical and performative narrative analysis.

Table 3. Forms of Narrative Analysis, Research Questions, and Methodology

Form of Analysis	Questions	Methodology
Thematic	What	Narrative content analysis
Structural	How	Sociolinguistic, narratology
Performance	Who, when, why (concrete)	Narrative ethnography
Dialogic	Who (abstract)	Dialogical narrative analysis

As it pointed out, diverse styles of narrative analysis correspond to various research traditions that generate distinct research inquiries; contingent upon researchers' interests, stories can be analyzed and interpreted in different ways (Sandberg, 2022). Sandberg in his narrative analysis on crime stories, used 4 of those forms and explained them in detail (Sandberg, 2022).

Thematic narrative analysis revolves around the question of what the story is about, and the content of what is being told is central to the analysis, such as the meaning

and the point/coda (Sandberg, 2022). In qualitative research, thematic analysis or thematic coding more usually resembles thematic analysis or thematic coding since themed analysis seldom examines language, shape, or interaction. The primary distinction is that the analysis usually incorporates the whole stories; therefore, it is the themes from these that are postulated across the cases (Riessman, 2008; Sandberg, Tutenges, & Pedersen, 2019).

A structural analysis focuses on a story's form. How a story is structured is the question posed. Narratology and sociolinguistics serve as the foundation for structural narrative analysis. It is more focused on the story's minor details than on the larger cultural discourses, institutional restraints, power dynamics, and societal background. As a result, narrative traditions more closely linked to the social sciences frequently criticize it. At the same time, it is through details and concrete narrative techniques at the micro level that stories work and thereby gain societal significance (Sandberg, 2022).

There are significant implications since narrative form and structure are essential to our understanding of ourselves and how others see us. The ways in which sexual violence cases are narrated can significantly influence public perception. For instance, many criminal offenders who are economically or socially marginalized will find it difficult to describe themselves as anything other than "victims" of an oppressive society or "heroes" in a violent subculture. Additionally, this is usually how the general public views them, which restricts their ability to be assimilated into a more law-abiding way of life (Sandberg, 2009). Cuklanz (1996) highlights several dominant narrative patterns in media coverage of rape case:

- The "Tragic Victim" Narrative: This portrays the victim as innocent, passive, and morally pure. Stories adopting this frame often emphasize the victim's vulnerability while minimizing her agency.

The "Risk-Taking Woman" Narrative: In contrast, some narratives implicitly blame the victim by highlighting her behavior, clothing, or decisions leading up to the assault (Meyers, 1997).

- The "Monstrous Perpetrator" vs. "Ordinary Man" Narrative: Some media reports depict rapists as deranged individuals, reinforcing the idea that sexual violence is an exception rather than a systemic issue (Benedict, 1992). Others present perpetrators as respectable, normal men, subtly downplaying their accountability (Franiuk, Seefeldt & Vandello, 2008).

The role of language and symbolism in narrative construction is an important aspect.

Language choices in news reporting affect how audiences interpret events.

The passive construction of sentences (e.g., "A woman was raped" instead of "A man raped a woman") removes the perpetrator from the sentence, subtly shifting responsibility (Meyers, 1997). Additionally, metaphors and symbolic representations—such as describing rape cases as "scandals" rather than "crimes"—can trivialize the severity of sexual violence (Carlyle, Slater & Chakroff, 2008).

Narrative analysis helps identify how events are structured, who is positioned as the central figures, and what moral or ideological messages are conveyed (Riessman, 2008).

Narrative analysis of the Steubenville Rape Case (2012) is a good example of how

news outlets built different narratives, often reinforcing rape myths and shifting attention away from the survivor's experience. Several scholars (Moore, 2013; Gilmour, 2014; Berrington & Honan, 2012) analyzed how media coverage of the case influenced public perceptions of sexual violence and justice. The Steubenville Rape Case involved the sexual assault of a 16-year-old girl by two high school football players in Steubenville, Ohio, in August 2012. The case gained national attention after Anonymous, a hacker activist group, leaked images and videos of the assault, exposing a culture of impunity and victim-blaming within the community. The media's coverage of the case became a focal point for narrative analysis, revealing the ways in which language, storytelling, and framing shaped public perception of the crime (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.)

Media coverage primarily framed the perpetrators as "promising young athletes" rather than criminals, emphasizing the impact of the case on their futures rather than on the survivor's trauma (Madrigal, 2013). Many mainstream media outlets, including CNN, The New York Times, and USA Today, framed the perpetrators as talented young football players with bright futures ahead of them. Instead of emphasizing their criminal actions, reports focused on how their conviction would ruin their lives. CNN's reporting stated, "It was incredibly emotional... these two young men that had such promising futures—star football players—literally watched as they saw their lives fall apart" (CNN, 2013). The New York Times described the "powerful and prominent football culture" in Steubenville, implying that the town's loyalty to the athletes complicated the case (NYT, 2013). This narrative centered on the perpetrators rather than the survivor, humanizing the rapists while erasing the victim's experience. By portraying them as "young boys who made a

mistake", rather than criminals, the media subtly downplayed the severity of their actions. This type of narrative reflects a cultural bias toward preserving male reputations while diminishing the experiences of female victims. Coverage focusing on the perpetrators' lost potential rather than the crime itself sends a message that sexual violence is not as serious when committed by young men with promising futures (Benedict, 1992). In Steubenville case, the role of social media in regarding to traditional news media is also an important aspect. While traditional news outlets framed the case in sympathetic terms for the perpetrators, digital platforms reshaped the narrative to focus on rape culture and justice (Keller et al., 2018). *Anonymous* leaked video footage of male students joking about the rape, with one saying, "She is so raped. They raped her harder than the Duke lacrosse team." Twitter users popularized the hashtag #JusticeForJaneDoe, demanding fair representation of the victim's experience. Feminist media outlets such as *Jezebel* and *The Daily Beast* rejected the "ruined lives" narrative, calling attention to the lack of empathy for the victim. Social media enabled a counter-narrative that directly confronted rape culture, exposing how athletes were protected at the expense of survivors. The case demonstrated the power of digital activism in shaping public discourse, allowing alternative voices to challenge the mainstream media's victim-blaming tropes (Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2018).

The narrative analysis of the Steubenville Rape Case reveals how media storytelling can perpetuate gender biases, reinforce rape myths, and influence public attitudes toward justice. The dominant narratives centered on "promising young athletes" and "the silent victim" obscured the crime and minimized the harm inflicted on the survivor. However, the rise of social media activism demonstrated how

counter-narratives could challenge mainstream media's biases, pushing for greater accountability and survivor-centered storytelling in cases of sexual violence. By applying narrative analysis, scholars and journalists can critically assess how media constructs sexual violence cases, ensuring that reporting supports justice rather than reinforcing societal biases.

3.3 Framing Analysis

The idea that how information is presented or "framed" in the media can affect how viewers interpret and react to that information is known as framing theory, and it is widely employed in media analysis. It suggests that media not only provide facts but also shape public perception by highlighting certain aspects of an issue while downplaying or omitting others. This can affect the interpretation of events, behaviors, or social phenomena (Arowoto, 2017). Framing analysis, introduced by Entman (1993), examines how media selects and emphasizes certain aspects of an issue while omitting or downplaying others. Framing shapes public understanding, policy discourse, and societal attitudes towards sexual violence (Goffman, 1974).

The notion of framing was initially proposed by Gregory Bateson in 1972. He defined *psychological frames* as a "spatial and temporary bounding of a set of interactive messages" (Bateson, 1972, p.197) that operates as a form of meta-communication (Hallahan, 2008). In 1983, Robert Entman published an article in the *Journal of Communication* titled "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." In the text of his article, Entman stated the concept of framing as "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a

communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (Entman, 1983, p.34)

Entman put on the discussion the idea that people perceive the realities and, by doing so, select certain aspects of those realities to focus on. As an example, in a photograph about the protest of a trial, the viewer can focus on different aspects of it, like focusing on the text of the signs that the protestors are holding and the political message that they intended to say, or focusing on the fact that there are children among adults, or the clothing that the protestors are wearing. Depending on what we are interested in, we might focus on each of these elements to perceive the reality of the protest. Entman believes, as articulated in his conception of framing, that one of these elements can “promote a particular problem definition” or “a causal interpretation” or “a moral evaluation” or “a treatment recommendation,” and further, it can be argued all together.

Entman says that “the frames define problems,” which means that they can determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, or “diagnose causes” which points to identifying the forces creating the problem, or “make moral judgments” which refers to evaluating causal agents and their effects, or “suggest remedies” that offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects (1983). Entman suggests that framing involves choosing and emphasizing certain aspects of events or issues and establishing connections between them to advocate for a specific interpretation, assessment, and/or resolution. (Entman, 2003, p.415-432). Later, Entman defined use of framing as “words and images highly

salient in the culture, which is to say noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged” (2003). The differences between those 2 versions are that the recent one emphasizes “the process over the agents,” reduces “the emphasis on subjective elements,” selects “an issue more than defining a problem,” and changes “the moral evaluation to evaluation.” This evaluation of the term “framing” is itself a good example of how people change conceptions over time since conceptions could change, whereas definitions are difficult to change.

For the last 40 years, theorists and researchers have studied the effects of mass media, which allowed us to understand the processes behind mass media communication and public opinion (Schuefele, 2006; Entman, 2010; Goffman, 1977; McCombs & Protess, 2009; Springer, 2014; Kohring, 2008; Bing & Lombardo, 1997). Research on mass media effects centers on three primary processes of media influence: agenda-setting, priming, and framing. Framing serves as the principal theoretical framework of this study, as it addresses the substance of media coverage and how varying reporting methods of the same subject can elicit divergent responses, rather than merely focusing on the impacts of media coverage (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Framing theory’s methodology involves identifying and analyzing how media content is structured, with a focus on understanding the frames used to present issues or events. In academic research, it has been used typically to study the language, visuals, and narratives within media texts to determine how they guide the audience’s perception.

Entman delineates five prevalent methods for framing news stories to facilitate the identification of framing in the news. These are “conflict, human interest/personalization, consequence, morality, and responsibility” (Entman, 1991).

“Conflict framing” focuses on disagreement or controversies; conflict between parties can be prioritized, as opposed to the actual decision made. If there is a “human interest/personalization frame,” there we see a story presented with a human face, a personality is promoted over more important aspects with personal stories or emotional angles highlighted. “Consequence framing” addresses issues from a moral or ethical perspective and consequences can be wide-ranging and pursuing a policy may be unwise in terms of unity within a party or coalition or in terms of the status of a nation globally. While the framing is made with “morality,” media coverage can often moralize, sometimes due to the indiscretions of political actors; or alternatively, policies can be seen as morally questionable. “Responsibility frame” suggests who is to blame or who is responsible for solving a problem and attributes responsibility, either for a cause or a solution (Arowoto, 2017).

There is a difference between media frames and individual frames. Media frames are characteristics of the news, while individual frames are “cognitive schemas” (Ardevol-Abreau, 2015, p.431). Individual frames are frames in which people interpret reality and the schemas in which new information is generated. These frames can influence the attitudes and behavior of individuals. Iyengar (1996) and others specifically focus on ‘framing effects,’ which refer to how some media frames influence individual frames and attitudes. Several studies over the past 30 years have provided evidence for framing effects (Nelson, 1997; Iyengar, 1987, 1991, 1993;

Druckman, 2001; and Lewis, 2013). Iyengar classifies media frames as either generic (thematic) or specific (episodic).

Thematic framing provides a broader context for understanding an issue, focusing on trends, causes and societal factors. It looks at the ‘big picture’, encouraging audiences to think about systemic issues or long-term consequences (e.g., violence as a societal problem). Thematic framed narratives elucidate the topic within a broad or abstract perspective, serving as a background and presenting general outcomes (Iyengar, 1994).

In contrast, episodic framed pieces explain the issue in the form of a case or event, depicting it in particular instances (Iyengar, 1994). Episodic framing focuses on specific events or individual cases, often depicting issues through personal stories or isolated incidents. It makes audiences view problems as individual or short-term occurrences (e.g., a single case of rape).

However, not all frames provide identical results. Their strength is contingent upon various aspects, including the individual, the subject matter, and the substance (Lecheler and de Vreese, 2018), the ability to generate emotional arousal (Aarøe, 2011), and the socio-political context (Boukes, 2022).

Sociological perspectives on framing are frequently attributed to Erving Goffman’s (1974) concept of frames, or basic frameworks. Goffman posits that individuals are incapable of comprehensively understanding the environment and so engage in the classification and interpretation of their life experiences to comprehend their

surroundings (Goffman, 1974). An individual's reaction to new information therefore depends on interpretive schemas Goffman calls "primary frameworks" (Goffman, 1974, p.21). In particular, Goffman distinguishes between natural and societal frames similar to Heider's (1978) notion of attributions to personal or environmental factors: natural frames help to interpret events originating from natural and non-intentional causes, whereas societal frames help "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" actions and events that stem from intentional human action (Goffman, 1974, p.21).

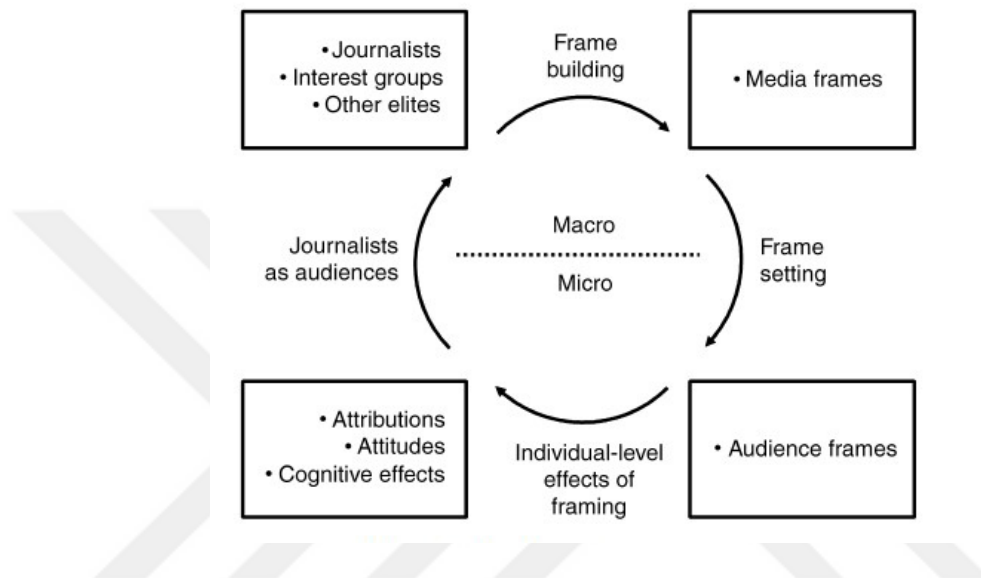
According to Goffman's concepts, journalists can represent each event in multiple ways within news coverage. The selected portrayal is contingent upon the framework utilized by the journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

The term "framing" has been utilized virtually synonymously to denote individual-level media effects, macro-level influences on news content, and other associated processes. We have discovered four interconnected processes involving framing at various analytical levels have been discovered (Fig. 4). The first of these processes is frame building. Frame building refers to the linkages between various intrinsic and extrinsic influences on news coverage and the frames used in news coverage. These influences include the personal predispositions of journalists, organizational routines and pressures, the efforts by outside groups to promote certain frames, the impact of other parallel issues or events, and the type of policy arena where decision-making or conflict might take place (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Frame setting, the second procedure, pertains to the transfer of frames from media outlets to audiences. Certain communication experts propose that the frame-setting effect is conceptually akin to the transfer of salience posited in the agenda-setting

paradigm. Recent research has demonstrated that the two processes depend on fundamentally different theoretical foundations and cognitive mechanisms (Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Fig. 4. Typology of framing process (de Vreese, 2025, p.55)



Most communication research has focused on a third process: individual-level effects of framing. These individual-level outcomes include attributions of responsibility, support for various policy proposals, or citizen competence (Druckman 2001; Iyengar 1991). Unfortunately, while making important contributions in describing the effects of media framing on behavioral, attitudinal, or cognitive outcomes, most of these studies have not provided systematic explanations as to why and how these variables are linked to one another. Price and Tewksbury's (1997) notion of applicability effects outlined earlier provides a first step in this direction.

The last process related to framing that political communication scholars have explored is the idea of journalists themselves as audiences for frames. Without directly referring to the idea of framing, Fishman (1978; 1980) suggests that, similar to “regular” audiences, journalists are indeed susceptible to frames set by news media. Fishman’s study demonstrates how news coverage of isolated crimes in a community was framed as a “crime wave against the elderly” by initially a small number of local media and how that frame was soon picked up by other journalists and spread across other news outlets and communities. Fishman labels this phenomenon a “news wave.”

Several scholars, however, have dismissed such a concept (for an overview, see Price, Tewksbury 1997; Scheufele 2000; Scheufele, Tewksbury 2007). The concept of attitude accessibility serves as the foundation for agenda setting.. Mass media possess the capacity to elevate the significance attributed to issues by audience members or facilitate the retrieval of these concerns from memory when individuals are required to make political assessments regarding political actors. Framing relies on the principle of context-dependent perception, positing that nuanced alterations in the phrasing of a situation's description can influence audience interpretation. Framing affects audience perceptions of issues not by highlighting specific characteristics, but by activating interpretive frameworks that shape the understanding of new information (Scheufele, 2000).

Several dominant frames emerge in news reporting on sexual violence, each carrying distinct ideological implications:

- The Episodic Frame vs. Thematic Frame: Episodic framing focuses on individual cases (e.g., reporting a rape as an isolated event), while thematic framing highlights structural issues (e.g., discussing rape culture and gender-based violence as societal problems) (Iyengar, 1991).
- The Victim-Blaming Frame: Some reports emphasize the victim's actions (e.g., drinking, flirting, walking alone) rather than the crime itself, reinforcing rape myths (Franiuk et al., 2008).
- The Justice Frame: Some coverage focuses on the legal aspects of sexual violence, often shifting attention away from the survivor's experience toward courtroom dynamics (Ryan, Anastario & DaCunha, 2006).
- The Male-Centered Frame: Research shows that in many cases, media narratives prioritize the perpetrator's perspective, portraying him as a family man, a respected community member, or someone whose future is at stake, rather than centering on the survivor's trauma (Benedict, 1992).

The role of visual framing in sexual violence cases is also an important factor in analysis. Beyond textual framing, visual representation significantly impacts public perception. The selection and presentation of images can shape narratives, evoke specific emotions, and either challenge or reinforce societal attitudes toward victims and perpetrators. Studies reveal that images of victims are often blurred, shadowed, or cropped, reinforcing their passivity and anonymity (Sutherland, McCormack & McGannon, 2016). Perpetrators in professional attire (e.g., suits) appear in news reports more frequently than mugshots, softening their perceived criminality (Meyers, 1997). Choice of accompanying images -such as empty streets, alcohol bottles, or provocative outfits- can subtly shift blame onto victims (Carlyle et al.,

2008). Studies found that mugshots of male perpetrators make them appear more criminal, while professional headshots (e.g., graduation photos, work images) humanize them (Moore, 2013). This phenomenon was observed in the Steubenville Rape Case, where news outlets used football team photos, reinforcing sympathy for the accused (Moore, 2013). Some media outlets use courtroom sketches or police tape images, which remove emotion from the crime, making it appear procedural rather than traumatic (Carlyle et al., 2008). In contrast, feminist media tends to use activist protest photos, framing sexual violence as a societal problem rather than an isolated crime (Hansen & Machin, 2013).

Narrative and framing analysis provide essential tools for examining how media shapes public perceptions of sexual violence. Narrative analysis helps uncover storytelling patterns, character roles, and implicit biases, while framing analysis reveals how linguistic and visual choices influence public discourse. By applying these methods, researchers can critically assess the media's role in reinforcing or challenging patriarchal power structures in crime reporting. To foster more ethical and accurate reporting, journalists must move beyond victim-blaming narratives and male-centered frames, ensuring that survivor agency, systemic factors, and legal justice are adequately represented in media coverage.

CHAPTER IV

SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Content and Selection

The dataset for this study comprises news articles sourced from three major French newspapers: *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, and *L'Humanité*. These publications were strategically selected based on their political orientation and influence on public discourse. To ensure relevance and comprehensiveness, articles were retrieved using specific keywords searches related to the Mazan Case. The selection process was conducted systematically, with a focus on articles published between September and December 2024, aligning with the trial period.

Le Figaro, established in 1826, is France's oldest continuously published daily newspaper, with a readership exceeding 300,000. Known for its conservative and right-centered stance, the newspaper is often associated with traditional values and economic liberalism (ACPM, 2024). Given its political alignment, *Le Figaro*'s coverage of gender-based violence is particularly relevant for understanding how right-leaning media frame sexual violence cases.

Le Monde, founded in 1944, is one of France's most respected and widely circulated newspapers. It is known for its center-left, liberal stance and its reputation for investigative journalism and in-depth political analysis. *Le Monde's* coverage of the Mazan Case is valuable for this study because it represents mainstream, independent journalism, offering a perspective that balances political neutrality with critical inquiry. (ACPM, 2024).

L'Humanité, originally founded in 1904 as the official newspaper of the French Communist Party, has evolved into a left-wing publication that strongly advocates for social justice and workers' rights. It frequently amplifies feminist and progressive perspectives on social issues, including gender-based violence. *L'Humanité's* coverage of the Mazan Case is particularly insightful for understanding how leftist media challenge dominant patriarchal narratives and advocate for survivors (ACPM, 2024).

The data for this study is collected on each outlet's website, covering a period of seven weeks, from the 1st of September 2024 to the 15th of October 2024. Two filtering processes were used: "Pelicot" (the surname of the primal perpetrator and victim) and "Mazan Rape" (the name of the town where the incident happened and a name mostly used in media to cover the case) are used as keywords. This time frame and those keywords give 158 new stories in total, with 46 from *L'Humanité*, 50 from *Le Monde* and 62 from *Le Figaro*. By analyzing these three newspapers, this study aims to provide a comparative perspective on how political ideology influences media narratives on sexual violence. Examining the framing of the Mazan Case across conservative, centrist, and left-wing publications will reveal how journalistic

choices, language, and imagery shape public perceptions of gender-based violence.

I primarily focus on the headlines of news stories from each newspaper, as they play a crucial role in framing and narrativizing the case. To examine how patriarchal rhetoric shapes media representations of sexual violence, I identified and categorized specific rhetorical strategies, which are detailed in Table 6, along with their definitions and abbreviations. This framework analyzed each headline was analyzed through this framework to uncover underlying power dynamics within the text.

Additionally, I examined attribution patterns in the headlines, as outlined in Table 9, to assess how subjects were positioned within the narrative. Beyond textual analysis, I also evaluated the visuals accompanying these stories, analyzing the types of images used and how framing choices reflected gender bias and victim-perpetrator dynamics.

4.2. Patriarchal Discursive Strategies in News Headlines

A key contribution of this study is the development of the “patriarchal discursive strategies framework,” which provides a structured approach to analyzing how patriarchal norms are embedded in media narratives. While previous research has examined media representations of sexual violence, this study builds upon and expands existing literature by systematically categorizing specific patriarchal discursive strategies used in French news media’s coverage of the Mazan Rape Case.

To quantify these patterns, a “patriarchy score” was developed, which evaluates the extent to which various news outlets reinforce patriarchal narratives. We identified

twelve discursive strategies through this framework, each serving distinct functions. For instance, strategies such as heroization, war-languaging, and fact-avoiding contribute to either obscuring the perpetrator's presence, normalizing sexual violence, sensationalizing the case, or reinforcing masculinized authority. Despite their different functions, these strategies collectively reinforce patriarchal dynamics within media discourse and societal perceptions. A detailed explanation of each strategy is provided in Table 4.

This framework introduces a new analytical tool for examining how media discourses reinforce gendered power structures. Unlike traditional content analysis, this methodology not only deconstructs media narratives but also provides a critical feminist perspective that exposes the ideological underpinnings of journalistic practices. This original contribution enhances scholarly discussions on media ethics, gender representation, and the intersection of power and discourse in shaping public perceptions of sexual violence.

Table 4. Patriarchal Narrative Strategies in French Media

Strategy	Definition
Emotion-assigning	Attributing emotions to inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or non-human entities, reinforcing emotional biases rather than factual accuracy.
Fact-avoiding	Ignoring or downplaying clear, relevant facts directly related to the case, leading to distorted narratives.

Heroization	Heroizing the victim in a way that increases the visibility of the perpetrator(s) and the collective efforts to seek justice are overshadowed.
Justification	Highlighting unrelated cause-and-effect relationships in discussions about perpetrators to create a perception of justification for their actions.
Mystification	Presenting causal relationships in an ambiguous or misleading way, detaching events from their logical cause-and-effect structure.
Obscuration	Making an event harder to comprehend by omitting key elements of causality and accountability, leading to confusion or misinformation.
Polarization	Framing differences in oppositional, hostile terms, portraying individuals or groups with differing perspectives as adversaries.
Perpetrator-victimizing	Creating a false perception of victimhood for the perpetrator by using exaggerated descriptions of their suffering or hardship.
Protection-subliming	Exalting the concept of protection in a way that obscures systemic issues of inequality and injustice, ignoring the root causes of vulnerability.
Passive voice	Using passive language to describe sexual violence, shifting focus from the perpetrator to the victim (e.g., "She was

	assaulted" instead of "He assaulted her"), reducing perpetrator accountability.
Trivialization	Minimizing an individual's responsibility for an issue by treating the matter as insignificant or irrelevant in public discourse.
War-languaging	Using war-related or combative terminology in non-war contexts, sensationalizing conflicts and reinforcing oppositional narratives.

Table 5. Abbreviations for the Patriarchal Rhetorics

Abbreviation	Used as
SE	Subject-erasing
WL	War-languaging
PCD	Property-centered defining
EA	Emotion-assigning
T	Trivialization
POL	Polarization
V	Valuation
H	Heroization
FA	Fact-avoiding
J	Justification
O	Obscuration

M	Mystification
PEV	Perpetrator victimization
PS	Protection subliming
PV	Passive voice

Table 6. Abbreviations for Attribution Subjects in Visuals of News Stories

Abbreviation	Used for
WOM	Woman
MAN	Man
VIC	Victim
PER	Perpetrator

Table 7. Abbreviations for Attribution Subjects in Headlines of News Stories

Abbreviation	Used for
V	Victim
P	Perpetrator
J	Jurisdiction
PMF	Public Male Figures
MAS	Masculinity
S	Scientific Information
TR	Mazan Town Residents
PUB	Public Opinion
PFF	Public Female Figures
SC	Society & Culture
SM	Media Sources

Table 8. Abbreviations for Attribution Subjects in Visuals of News Stories

Abbreviation	Used for
WOM	Woman
MAN	Man
VIC	Victim
PER	Perpetrator

Table 9. Abbreviations for Attribution Subjects in Visuals of News Stories

Abbreviation	Used for
PH	Photograph
ILL	Illustrations
VID	Video
TF	Thematic Framing
EF	Episodic Framing

4.3. The Analysis of *Le Figaro*'s News Stories

Le Figaro published 62 news stories about the Mazan Rape Case between September 1 and October 15, 2024. The headlines of these news stories were analyzed based on rhetorical strategies, attribution dynamics, episodic and thematic framing features, and the use of imagery based on victim/perpetrator and gender roles. The list below presents the headlines used in these news stories along with the corresponding the abbreviation of the analysis framework.

- H: The news story's complete headline, translated into English
- A: Subject of attribution
- RS: Patriarchal rhetorical strategy
- V: Attribution in visuals of the news story
- F: Framing type

Table 10. *Le Figaro*'s News Stories Headlines

H	A	RS	F
Mazan rapes: "There is rape and rape" says the lawyer of six co-accused.	P	SE, PV	EF
Mazan rape trial: "I didn't pay attention," defends one of the accused.	P	VA	EF
When the Mazan rape trial rekindles the war of the sexes.	MAS	WL	TF
Mazan rape trial: Hearing suspended until Monday.	J	-	EF
Mazan rape trial: First questions about the attackers' motivation.	P	SE, PV	EF
Mazan rapes: Victim calls for closure of support funds.	V	H	EF
There is rape and rape ": At the Mazan trial, a perilous defense strategy.	P	SE, PV	EF
"I withdraw this sentence": Pascal Praud self- corrects after a comment on the Mazan rape trial.	PMF	-	EF
Mazan trial: "There is no culture of rape, our entire society pushes for the opposite".	MAS SC	I	TF
Rapes in Mazan: Images of the silent march in support of Gisèle Pelicot.	SC	SE	EF
Mazan rape trial: Press outraged by broadcast of videos behind closed doors.	SM	WL	EF
"A collective failure of the culture of protection": Arnaud Gallais reacts to the Mazan rape case.	MAS SC	I	TF
Mazan Rapes: "Guillaume Meurice, Women Deserve Better Than Your Virtue Signal "	PMF	VA	TF

Videos of a defense lawyer cause controversy on social networks.	P SM	-	EF
"We are not born perverts, we become perverts": Dominique Pelicot's justifications at the Mazan rape trial.	P	JU	EF
Rapes of Mazan: Dominique Pelicot, between "obsessive fantasies" and "total absence of empathy".	P	T	EF
Mazan rape case, the trial of chemical submission: The news of the week.	J	SE	EF
Rapes in Mazan: A silent march organized to support Gisèle Pelicot in her village in Vaucluse.	PUB	SE	EF
"It goes beyond your borders": Foreign press fascinated by Mazan rape trial.	SM	M	EF
Mazan rape trial: Press outraged by broadcast of videos behind closed doors.	SM	WL	EF
Mazan rapes: videos of a defense lawyer cause controversy on social networks.	SM	-	EF
"It's a historic trial": tributes throughout France to the courage of Gisèle Pelicot, "an icon in spite of herself".	V	H	EF
Chemical Submission: An Extraordinary Trial -Testimony of MP Sandrine Josso.	S, V	-	EF
Chemical Submission: What is it?	S	-	TF
"His state of health remains fragile" explains Dominique Pélicot's lawyer regarding the defendant's absence from the Mazan trial.	P	PEV	EF
Béatrice Zavarro, Dominique Pelicot's only lawyer, or the one who agreed to defend the "ordinary monster".	P	I	EF
Dominique Pelicot's rapes hang over the village of Mazan.	TR	SE	EF
Chemical Submission: Demonstrations Planned This Saturday in Support of Gisèle Pelicot.	S PUB	SE	TF
"We have never seen a story like this": Christophe Delay and Dominique Rizet react to the Mazan trial.	M	M	EF
"Your hesitations saved you": the testimonies of two men who refused Dominique Pelicot's proposals.	P	-	EF

Renaud supports Gisèle Pelicot and wants to “shake up this patriarchal society”.	PMF	-	TF
Vianney's X account closed after the publication of his controversial message of support for Gisèle Pelicot.	PMF	-	EF
The dictatorship of planning, the scourge of the Pelicot trial.	J	SE	EF
Pedophilia, ambush, trafficking...: the unhealthy underbelly of Coco.gg, “a site that brings together all vices”.	M	SE	TF
After her ex-husband's testimony, Gisèle Pelicot applauded the suspension of the hearing.	V	PCD	EF
"They want to show that I lured these men": Gisèle Pelicot protests after the broadcast of intimate photos at the hearing.	V	MI	EF
"If not all men are rapists, rapists can be any man": The desperate speeches during the tribute to Gisèle Pelicot.	MAS	EA	EF
"Since he was a child, he has always manipulated those around him": Joël Pelicot's old grudges against his brother Dominique	P	EA	EF

Table 11. Framing in The News Stories of *Le Figaro*

Framing Type	Frequency
Episodic (EF)	51/62
Thematic (TF)	11/62

Table 12. Frequency of the Rhetorical Strategies in The Headlines of *Le Figaro*

Patriarchal Rhetoric Strategy	Frequency
Subject erasing	11/62
Trivialization	4/62
Mystification	4/62
War Language	3/62

Emotion asiging	3/62
Fact Avoiding	3/62
Valuation	2/62
Heroization	2/62
Property-centered defining	2/62
Passive Voice	2/62
Protection subliming	1/62
Polarization	1/62
Justification	1/62
Perpetrator victimization	1/62
Total	41/ 62

Table 13. Attribution Subjects in The Headlines of *Le Figaro*

Attribution to	Frequency
Perpetrator	27/62
Subjectification of Media Sources	7/62
Victim	5/62
Subject of Masculinity	5/62
Scientific Information	5/62
Jurisdiction	3/62
Public Male Figures	3/62
Mazan Town Residents	1/62
Public Opinion	1/62
Public Female Figures	0/62
Society / Culture	0/62

Table 14. Attribution Subjects in The Headlines of *Le Figaro*

	Women	Victim Woman	Men	Perpetrator Men
Photo	34	21	5	-
Illustration	-	-	9	9
Video	48	38	7	-
Total	82	59	21	9

One of the most significant rhetorical strategies in news reporting on sexual violence is the erasure of perpetrators in headlines. This phenomenon occurs when news outlets use passive voice, vague phrasing, or abstract constructions that remove agency from the offender, shifting focus onto the victim or the crime itself. In doing so, media narratives subtly diminish the responsibility of the perpetrator, reinforcing societal tendencies to obscure male aggression and normalize sexual violence.

Le Figaro's news coverage analysis reveals the use of patriarchal rhetorical strategies were employed in 41 out of 62 headlines. Among these, "subject erasure" emerges as the most prominent strategy. In 11 instances, the phrasing obscures the subject, particularly in cases where the perpetrator should be explicitly mentioned.

Table 12 provides examples of this strateg. The headline, *"Mazan rapes: 'There is rape and rape,' says the lawyer of six co-accused,"* structures the phrase in a way that erases the actual subjects -the men accused of rape- by making "act of rape" the grammatical subject instead. Similarly, line 11 exemplifies the same pattern: *"Student killed in the Bois de Boulogne, Mazan rape trial: This week's news."* This headline refers to evidence linking the primary perpetrator of the Mazan Rapes, Dominique Pelicot, to the death of a female student years earlier. However, the perpetrator's presence is erased, as the victim is positioned as the grammatical subject, and the verb is structured in passive voice, further obscuring accountability. Many headlines avoid naming perpetrators by highlighting external circumstances instead. Such an approach creates the impression that the crime was a result of situational factors rather than the deliberate actions of an individual. Other examples of perpetrator-free framing:

- “*Mazan rape case, the trial of chemical submission*” instead of “The trial of the men who used chemical submission for rape.”
- “*Pedophilia, ambush, trafficking....: the unhealthy underbelly of Coco.gg, “a site that brings together all vices”*” instead of “The men who accused for rape communicated through the web site Coco.gg which has been also used for pedophilia, ambush, trafficking.”

Humanizing perpetrators and shifting sympathy is another patriarchal strategy that can be observed in *Le Figaro*’s headlines. The 25th line of Table 12; “*His state of health remains fragile explains Dominique Pélicot's lawyer regarding the defendant's absence from the Mazan trial*” is a good example of the mentioned strategy. News outlets often frame perpetrators in headlines to evoke public sympathy rather than condemnation. This happens when news outlets highlight the offender’s career, family, or social status instead of focusing on the crime itself. This reverses the victim-perpetrator dynamic, making the accused appear as someone who is suffering rather than someone responsible for a crime. Studies have shown that media coverage that humanizes perpetrators leads to public sympathy for them and increased victim-blaming (Cuklanz, 1996).

Le Figaro’s use of patriarchal rhetorical strategies extends beyond subject erasure to include “war-languaging,” which is the third-most-frequent strategy observed in its coverage. This technique involves the metaphorical framing of gender-based violence as a battle or conflict, thereby misrepresenting the issue and altering public perception of the case. An example of this strategy can be found in line 3, where the headline “*When the Mazan rape trial rekindles the war of the sexes*” employs militarized language to describe the legal proceedings. Despite the fact that the case

concerns gender-based violence -a matter of justice and human rights- Le Figaro portrays it as a war between men and women rather than as an issue of legal and ethical accountability. This type of framing falsely implies that seeking justice for sexual violence is an act of aggression or hostility against men, rather than an attempt to hold perpetrators accountable. By employing war metaphors, news outlets shift the focus away from the actual crime and its consequences and instead create a polarized, combative narrative that reframes survivors and their advocates as adversaries rather than individuals seeking justice. This tactic is particularly significant because it not only diminishes the severity of the crime but also fosters the perception that gender-based violence trials are politically or ideologically motivated rather than grounded in legal principles.

Furthermore, this framing aligns with broader media trends that divert responsibility away from perpetrators by emphasizing abstract societal conflicts rather than individual acts of harm. Instead of focusing on the accused and their actions, headlines like these suggest that the real issue is the so-called "war of the sexes," reducing rape trials to mere ideological disputes rather than matters of legal and moral accountability. In doing so, this strategy contributes to public skepticism about the legitimacy of gender-based violence claims, making it more difficult for survivors to be taken seriously and for structural reforms to be implemented. Ultimately, the use of war-languaging in news coverage of sexual violence serves to undermine survivor narratives, reinforce existing gender hierarchies, and distort the realities of justice-seeking processes. Such rhetoric not only obscures the actual harm inflicted upon victims but also frames legal proceedings as combative rather than restorative, discouraging societal acknowledgment of sexual violence as a pervasive

issue requiring urgent attention.

Analysis of the attributions in the headlines shown in Table 12 as perpetrator men are attributed 27 times, while as victim woman is attributed 7 times in the text of the headlines.

Table 14 demonstrates *Le Figaro*'s visual framing of the Mazan Rape Case has a clear imbalance in representation, selectively choosing which subjects to visually emphasize and which to omit. This strategic use of imagery influences how the audience perceives culpability, victimhood, and the broader societal context of the case. Based on the data in Table 16, several key patterns emerge in *Le Figaro*'s visual framing choices. 82 visuals depict women, with 59 of those images showcasing the victim. Visual framing clearly excludes men, as evidenced by the presence of men in 21 of the visuals, 9 of whom belong to the perpetrator. One of the most striking aspects of *Le Figaro*'s visual strategy is its exclusive use of sketch illustrations for the primary perpetrator in courtroom settings, while completely omitting images of the 50 other men accused in the case. By restricting the visual focus to only one individual, the newspaper effectively reduces the case to a singular act of crime rather than a systemic issue involving multiple perpetrators. Sketch illustrations create a sense of abstraction and detachment, making the perpetrator appear less real or threatening compared to photographs, which tend to evoke stronger emotional responses from audiences.

In stark contrast to its erasure of the majority of perpetrators, *Le Figaro* extensively features portrait photographs of the victim woman. These images are not just

included but are presented in a way that visually dominates the coverage, ensuring that the audience constantly sees and identifies her as the central figure in the case.

This framing raises significant concerns:

- The problem of excessive victim exposure: While visual representation of survivors can empower their narratives, using personal photographs—especially ones where the victim is smiling—can trivialize the severity of the crime and distract from the structural issues at play.
- Emotional framing: The choice of images where the victim is smiling creates an emotional dissonance, subtly shifting the audience's perception of the crime. Instead of reinforcing the trauma and systemic failures that enabled the violence, these images can create an unintended perception that the case is not as serious or distressing.
- Potential re-victimization: The extensive use of the victim's image, while excluding the perpetrators, shifts the narrative burden onto her rather than the accused men, reinforcing a visual imbalance that could retraumatize both her and other survivors of gender-based violence.

Another key omission in *Le Figaro*'s visual framing is the complete exclusion of protest imagery and any visuals related to the larger societal response to the Mazan Rape Case. Given that public protests and feminist activism played a major role in addressing the structural failures surrounding these crimes, the deliberate absence of these images serves a strategic narrative function as depoliticizing the issue, undermining collective resistance and maintaining a status quo narrative.

4.4. Analysis of *Le Monde*'s News Stories

Le Monde published 50 news stories about the Mazan Rape Case between September 1 and October 15, 2024. The list below presents the headlines used in these news stories along with the corresponding abbreviation for the analysis framework.

Table 15. *Le Monde*'s News Stories Headlines

H	A	R	F
The other charges facing Dominique P., the man accused of drugging his wife to let dozens rape her.	P	PV	EF
Police 'saved my life' by uncovering husband's abuse, says wife in French multiple rape trial.	V	PCD	EF
French rape trial: 'The defense is a chemically pure sample of patriarchal violence'.	P, MAS	-	TF
Gisèle Pelicot, drugged by her husband so he and others could rape her, is a woman 'still standing'.	V	PV, PCD	EF
French mass rape suspect among 'worst sexual criminals,' says daughter.	P	-	EF
The case of Dominique Pelicot, who drugged his wife and invited others to rape her for nearly a decade.	P	-	EF
The Pelicot family's pain and shock at father's multiple rape trial: 'How could we have seen nothing?'	V	-	EF
Defense lawyers in French multiple rape trial say ID leaks threaten accused families.	P	PV	EF
Experts describe mass rape suspect as 'self-centered' manipulator'.	D	FA	TF
French mass rape trial: Experts dissect 'enigma' of defendant's 'split personality'.	D	FA	EF
French mass rape trial: Pelicot will be back in court to testify on Wednesday.	P	-	EF

French mass rape trial: Dominique Pelicot excused from hearing until Monday.	P	-	EF
With main accused still absent at French mass rape trial, hearings grind to halt.	P	SE	EF
French mass rape trial adjourned to Monday as Dominique Pelicot ill.	P	PV	EF
Thousands in France march in support of Gisèle Pelicot and protest of 'rape culture'.	PUB	-	TF
We are all Gisèle!': Feminists rally across France in response to mass rape trial.	SC	-	TF
French mass rape trial: What exactly is 'chemical submission'?	S	-	TF
Main accused in French mass rape due back in court on Tuesday.	P	SE	EF
French mass rape trial: 'It is impossible to hear the other 50 defendants without first hearing Dominique Pelicot'.	P	O	EF
I am a rapist like the others in this room', says main defendant in French mass rape trial.	P	-	EF
In first court testimony, Dominique Pelicot says 50 men he invited to rape his wife 'knew everything'.	P	-	EF
Dominique Pelicot copycat says he deserves to be punished.	P	-	EF
French mass rape victim 'humiliated' by claims of complicity.	V	PV	EF
Plaintiff comes under attack at Pelicot trial: 'I understand why rape victims don't press charges'.	V	WL	EF
French mass rape trial: 'Yes, all men are guilty, guilty of remaining indifferent'.	PUB	-	TF
French mass rape trial: 'Something was wrong,' one of 50 defendants tells court.	P	FA	EF
French mass rape trial 'shows the extent to which sexual violence is integrated in our society'.	SC	-	TF
At French mass rape trial, the silent shock of watching the first videos.	M	SE	EF
Videos will not be broadcast 'systematically' at French mass rape trial.	J	-	TF

French mayor sorry for 'no one died' comment over mass rape trial.	PMF	-	EF
Is the French mass rape trial a historic turning point?	J	-	TF
French mass rape trial as seen by the foreign press: 'Merci Gisèle'.	M	-	EF
Who are the 51 defendants in the French mass rape trial?	P	-	EF
French mass rape trial: 'No, not all women think all men are guilty!'	PUB	-	TF
French mass rape trial: Defendants claim they didn't 'intend' to rape Gisèle Pelicot.	P	-	EF
French mass rape trial also takes place outside the courtroom.	J	-	EF
Doctors face challenge of identifying chemical submission in cases of sexual violence.	D	-	TF
Main accused again absent from French mass rape trial.	P	SE	EF
At French mass rape trial, defendants' partners in denial: 'I don't understand why he's here today'.	P	SE	EF
The Pelicot case fractures our sense of reality: We do not know who to trust, we cannot be sure of anyone's identity'.	PUB	O	TF
French mass rape trial: Public and press allowed to see video evidence.	J	-	EF
At the Pelicot rape trial, a day of interrogations at breakneck speed.	J	-	EF
Philosopher Sylviane Agacinski on the Pelicot trial: 'Rape is not a result of masculinity but of its perversion'.	PFF	FA	TF
French mass rape trial: Two witnesses tell court why they rejected invitation to rape drugged woman.	J	-	EF
At the French mass rape trial, defendant Vincent C.: 'I was looking for a fuck buddy. I don't think at times like that.	P	-	EF
What the silence of French politicians over the Pelicot rape trial reveals.	POL	-	TF
Irène Théry, sociologist: 'Opportunity-based rape is at the heart of the social issue at stake in the French rape trial'.	PFF	FA, PCD	TF

A week at the Pelicot rape trial: 'It's his house, his bedroom, his bed, his wife. I trusted this man'.	P	PCD	EF
Pelicot rape trial: The victims' courage has transformed justice into an instrument of public debate.	V	H	EF

Table 16. Framing in The News Stories of *Le Monde*

Framing Type	Frequency
Episodic (EF)	36/50
Thematic (TF)	14/50

Table 17. Frequency of the Rhetorical Strategies in The Headlines of *Le Monde*

Patriarchal Rhetoric Strategy	Frequency
Subject erasing	6/50
Passive Voice	5/50
Property-centered defining	5/50
Fact Avoiding	4/50
Heroization	1/50
War-languaging	1/50
Perpetrator-victimizing	1/50
Total	23/50

Table 18. Attribution Subjects in The Headlines of *Le Monde*

Attribution to	Frequency
Perpetrator	21/50
Jurisdiction	6/50
Victim	4/50
Public Opinion	4/50
Public Female Figures	5/62
Media Sources	3/62
Public Male Figures	3/62
Mazan Town Residents	1/62
Public Opinion	1/62
Public Female Figures	0/62
Society / Culture	0/62

Table 19. Attribution Subjects in The Headlines of *Le Monde*

	Women	Victim Woman	Men	Perpetrator Men
Photo	20	15	6	2
Illustration	1	-	4	3
Video	-	-	-	-
Total	21	15	10	5

Fig. 6. Headlines of *Le Monde* on “Mazan Rape Case” together with its visuals

IN DEPTH

French mass rape trial also takes place outside the courtroom

Since the trial began on September 2, it has had an unusual atmosphere. Every day, Gisèle Pelicot enters the Assize courtroom to the applause of dozens of people. Published on September 28, 2024, at 7:00 pm (Paris) - Henri Beckel



LOVE & ID

French mass rape trial: Defendants claim they didn't intend to rape Gisèle Pelicot

None of Dominique Pelicot's 50 co-defendants have testified. They all put forward the same defense, claiming that they had been 'misinformed' and did not realize that the victim was unconscious due to the drugs her husband was secretly administering. Published on September 28, 2024, at 6:04 pm (Paris) - Henri Beckel



NEWS

French mass rape trial: You're pleading it was an accident repeated six times?

Four of Dominique Pelicot's 50 co-defendants repeatedly visited the couple's home to rape his wife. Some of them, like Dominique P., still try to deny the facts of the case. Published on October 17, 2024, at 6:59 pm (Paris) - Henri Beckel



COLUMN

Pelicot rape trial: The victims' courage has transformed justice into an instrument of public debate

Forty-six years ago, a famous trial in Aix, southern France, led to a change in the law to better define rape. The ongoing trial in Angoulême should bring about similar change, writes Le Monde's columnist Philippe Bernard. Published on October 19, 2024, at 6:30 pm (Paris) - Philippe Bernard



NEWS

At the Pelicot rape trial, a day of interrogations at breakneck speed

Seven defendants were questioned by the Vaucluse criminal court on Thursday, October 3, during an extremely busy day of hearings. Published on October 4, 2024, at 2:54 pm (Paris), updated on October 4, 2024, at 7:38 pm - Sylvain Agacinski



NEWS

French mass rape trial: Public and press allowed to see video evidence

In a decision on a case concerning a French man who committed dozens of rapes, the court has finally yielded with Judge Roger Auzan's request: a previous court decision not to show video evidence of the crimes publicly. Published on October 4, 2024, at 2:19 pm (Paris), updated on October 4, 2024, at 2:47 pm - Le Monde with AFP



OP-ED

The Pelicot case fractures our sense of reality: We do not know who to trust, we cannot be sure of anyone's identity

Like Jacky and Lydie, the defendant in the mass rape trial reveals personal split between day and night, when they break free from social norms, analyses historian Katie Elvov-Laroff. Published on October 2, 2024, at 9:20 am (Paris), updated on October 12, 2024, at 10:45 am - Katie Elvov-Laroff



NEWS

At French mass rape trial, defendants' partners in denial: 'I don't understand why he's here today'

In their depositions on Monday, the current and former partners of three co-defendants denied any wrongdoing, placing the blame squarely on Dominique Pelicot. Published on October 1, 2024, at 10:50 am (Paris), updated on October 1, 2024, at 12:43 pm - Henri Beckel



NEWS

Main accused again absent from French mass rape trial

Accused of raping and recruiting many strangers to rape his sedated wife, Dominique Pelicot was not present in court on Monday as he must undergo medical treatment, reported the presiding judge. Published on September 30, 2024, at 11:17 am (Paris), updated on September 30, 2024, at 11:21 am - Le Monde with AFP



IN DEPTH

Doctors face challenge of identifying chemical submission in cases of sexual violence

The French mass rape trial is calling into question the role of doctors. Family doctors in particular, who are poorly trained to deal with a phenomenon that is difficult to identify. Published on September 29, 2024, at 8:46 pm (Paris) - Marisa Battaglia



NEWS

French mass rape trial: Two witnesses tell court why they rejected invitation to rape drugged woman

Jeanne B. and Omyl P., who were questioned at the start of the investigation and then excused from the proceedings, explained to the Vaucluse criminal court why they refused Dominique Pelicot's proposals. Published on October 9, 2024, at 6:22 pm (Paris) - Pascale Robert-David



OP-ED

Philosopher Sylviane Agacinski on the Pelicot trial: Rape is not a result of masculinity but of its perversion

Even though sexual crimes are primarily committed by men, blaming masculinity itself misses the point, argues philosopher Sylviane Agacinski. Published on October 9, 2024, at 9:00 am (Paris), updated on October 12, 2024, at 10:45 am - Sylviane Agacinski



NEWS

At the French mass rape trial, defendants are given rare a chance to reflect on their actions and responsibility

By describing some of Dominique Pelicot's 50 co-defendants as 'manipulable subjects', psychiatrist François Auzan put the main accused back at the center of the trial. The argument about the need to individualize his co-defendants is reinforced. Published on October 29, 2024, at 12:01 pm (Paris) - Pascale Robert-David



INTERVIEW

French mass rape trial: The idea of the monster rapist has protected countless criminals in overall, ties and robes

The Pelicot trial is already a landmark in the history of feminism: confessions by husband Christian Bied, who traces the struggle that led to the systemic nature of sexual violence being revealed. Published on October 23, 2024, at 6:00 am (Paris) - Claire Legros



NEWS

Demonstrations in France praise Gisèle Pelicot's courage in harrowing mass rape trial

Since the beginning of the extraordinary trial, during which Pelicot has faced 51 of her alleged rapists, she has been applauded for her composure and decision to keep the hearings public. Published on October 20, 2024, at 1:17 am (Paris), updated on October 20, 2024, at 6:54 am - Le Monde with AP



LOVE & ID

Dominique Pelicot's second tumultuous interrogation at French mass rape trial

On Friday, October 18, the main defendant continued to accuse his 50 co-defendants in a series of questions that provoked a heated debate and underlined the common goal between him and the victim: to get everyone convicted. Published on October 18, 2024, at 6:53 pm (Paris), updated on October 19, 2024, at 8:56 pm - Henri Beckel



NEWS ANALYSIS

What the silence of French politicians over the Pelicot rape trial reveals

Although the case currently before the Angoulême criminal court has provoked little reaction from elected representatives, who are more inclined to be moved by the murder of a young student in a Paris suburb. Published on October 11, 2024, at 8:43 pm (Paris) - Jérôme LeMétre



NEWS

At the French mass rape trial, defendant Vincent C.: 'I was looking for a nice buddy. I don't think at times like that'

The 43-year-old visited the Pelicot house on two occasions. He admitted to the acts but said he did not think at the time it was rape. The videos



INTERVIEW

Lawyer Anne Bouillon: 'Opportunistic rape is much more common than you might think'

In an interview, the criminal lawyer specializing in women's rights and domestic violence explains a typology of the different types of rape, from predatory to opportunistic and is appropriately based on her own experience. Published on October 30, 2024, at 1:57 am (Paris), updated on November 8, 2024, at 4:14 pm - Claire Legros



INVESTIGATION

Almost 50 years apart, two French trials symbolize the long conceptual battle on rape

The trial of dozens of men accused of raping Gisèle Pelicot while she was drugged has shed light on the significance and relevance of ideas generated over the last 50 years by feminist thinkers and gender studies in France. Published on October 26, 2024, at 6:03 pm (Paris), updated on October 26, 2024, at 6:10 pm - Claire Legros



NEWS

Gisèle Pelicot, invincible even against 'lowest depths of the human soul'

'I'm not expressing anger or hatred, I'm expressing my determination to change this society,' the former wife of Dominique Pelicot, repeatedly seduced by her husband so he and dozens of men could rape her, told the court on Wednesday. Published on October 24, 2024, at 10:43 am (Paris), updated on October 24, 2024, at 11:50 am - Pascale Robert-David



NEWS

French mass rape trial: The shame isn't ours to feel, it's theirs, says Gisèle Pelicot

Gisèle Pelicot took the stand on Wednesday to discuss the evidence presented so far in the Vaucluse criminal court, with her ex-husband and the main accused Dominique Pelicot watching from the dock. Published on October 23, 2024, at 12:34 pm (Paris), updated on October 24, 2024, at 10:12 am - Le Monde with AP



LOVE & ID

A week at the Pelicot rape trial: It's his house, his bedroom, his bed, his wife. I trusted this man

Two retired truck drivers, an ex-machinist, a journey fitter and an IT technician, aged from 40 to 74, appeared before the criminal court on charges of aggravated rape, accused of raping Gisèle Pelicot while she was drugged by her husband. Published on October 12, 2024, at 7:45 pm (Paris), updated on October 12, 2024, at 7:50 pm - Pascale Robert-David



OP-ED

Irene Thiéry, sociologist: 'Opportunity-based rape is at the heart of the social issue at stake in the French rape trial'

The sexual crimes of the 50 co-defendants in the Pelicot



The data from Table 18 reveals that *Le Monde*'s news coverage employs patriarchal rhetorical strategies in 23 out of 50 headlines, making these strategies a defining feature of nearly half of the newspaper's reporting on the Mazan Rape Case. The most frequently used rhetorical techniques -subject erasing, passive voice, and property-centered defining- demonstrate a pattern of linguistic framing that subtly shifts focus away from male accountability and reinforces gendered biases in crime reporting.

The most commonly used rhetorical strategy in *Le Monde*'s coverage is "subject-erasing", which appears six times across the headlines. This technique involves structuring phrases in a way that makes the subject invisible, particularly in cases where the subject is the perpetrator. Examples of this strategy can be found in lines 19 and 29 of Table 18:

- The 19th headline, "*Main accused in French mass rape due back in court on Tuesday,*" selects the phrase "main accused" as its grammatical subject rather than directly naming Dominique Pelicot, the man in question. By using a vague, non-specific reference, the headline obscures the direct identification of the perpetrator, reducing his immediacy and accountability in the reader's perception.
- The 29th headline, "*At French mass rape trial, the silent shock of watching the first videos,*" is structured in a way that makes it unclear who is shocked. The subject is deliberately erased, leaving the emotional reaction detached from any specific individual or group. This abstract phrasing removes direct human

engagement with the crime, making the event seem distant or impersonal rather than a real act of gender-based violence.

By repeatedly erasing the direct presence of perpetrators, *Le Monde* subtly reduces the perceived severity of the crime, reinforcing a media tradition where male perpetrators are shielded from public scrutiny through vague, bureaucratic, or legalistic terminology.

The second-most frequently used rhetorical strategy in *Le Monde*'s headlines is passive voice, which appears multiple times in the coverage. The use of passive voice in sexual violence reporting serves to divert attention from abusers, shift focus to the victim, and weaken perceptions of male responsibility for the crime. An example of this strategy is found in line 24 of Table 18. The headline, "*French mass rape victim 'humiliated' by claims of complicity*," defines the central event as "humiliation", which frames the case as an emotional or reputational dispute rather than a pursuit of justice. Furthermore, the act itself is presented without an active subject. While the headline discusses an accusation against the victim, the perpetrators are not mentioned at all. A more accurate and direct version of this headline would be: "*Rapists of French mass rape case use verbal violence against the victim.*" This revision correctly attributes agency to the perpetrators, whereas the original phrasing places the victim at the center of the sentence, making her the primary focus rather than those responsible for the crime. By using passive constructions, *Le Monde* participates in a wider pattern of media discourse that downplays male violence by removing perpetrators from direct grammatical responsibility. This strategy is particularly dangerous in cases of gender-based violence, as it shapes public perception in ways that minimize male accountability

and increase skepticism toward survivor narratives.

A particularly problematic linguistic strategy used by *Le Monde* is property-centered defining, in which the victim is described primarily in relation to a male figure, rather than as an individual in her own right. This strategy is particularly visible in the way *Le Monde* repeatedly refers to Gisèle Pelicot as a "wife", despite the fact that she divorced Dominique Pelicot four years before the trial. Examples from Table 18 include:

- 1st headline: *"Trial opens for man accused of drugging wife and letting 51 men rape her."*
- 3rd headline: *"Police 'saved my life' by uncovering husband's abuse, says wife in French multiple rape trial."*
- 5th headline: *"Gisèle Pelicot, drugged by her husband so he and others could rape her, is a woman 'still standing.'"*

This repetitive insistence on defining the victim through her past marital status rather than as an individual has several problematic effects. Primarily, it reinforces patriarchal notions that women's identities are primarily shaped by their relationships with men, rather than their own experiences, agency, or personal history. It also subtly shifts responsibility for the crime toward an intimate relationship dynamic, rather than emphasizing the systematic nature of the mass rape case involving 51 men. Additionally it minimizes the victim's independence, reducing her public identity to a passive figure within a male-dominated social framework. This type of linguistic framing is not neutral—it plays a crucial role in shaping how audiences emotionally and cognitively process sexual violence. The repetition of "wife" rather

than simply using her full name or referring to her as "a survivor of mass rape" reinforces gendered norms that position women in relation to male authority figures rather than as autonomous individuals.

Table 18 also reveals a concerning imbalance in how *Le Monde* assigns attribution in its headlines. The perpetrators are attributed 21 times, while the victim is attributed only 6 times. This means that *Le Monde's* coverage gives nearly 3 times more space to the voice of the abuser than to the survivor. The implications of this imbalance are significant since it amplifies the accused men's perspectives, giving them more control over the public narrative. It also reinforces a "both sides" discourse, where the perpetrator's statements are treated as equally newsworthy as survivor testimony, despite the clear power imbalance in such cases. It undermines the victim's authority, making her a passive figure whose words are far less present in the discourse than those of the accused men defending themselves. By granting perpetrators a disproportionate amount of narrative space, *Le Monde* contributes to a double standard in reporting on gender-based violence, where men's voices dominate, while survivors are given only limited opportunities to shape the public's understanding of their own experiences.

Le Monde's visual framing of the Mazan Rape Case demonstrates a clear gendered imbalance in representation, similar to *Le Figaro*, but with some nuanced differences. Based on the data from Table 22, a pattern emerges where the victim is heavily visualized, while the perpetrators are either minimized or omitted altogether. This selective use of imagery contributes to a narrative that centers the victim, rather than holding the perpetrators visually accountable. The data indicates that out of 51

visuals accompanying news stories, 36 depicted women, predominantly the victim.

This means that nearly 71% of the visuals focused on the victim, reinforcing a survivor-centered visual narrative. While the increased representation of the victim may seem like an effort to humanize her, it also raises several critical issues.

Excessive victim imagery risks redirecting attention toward the survivor, making her the focal point of the story rather than the criminal act itself. This can inadvertently contribute to voyeuristic tendencies in media reporting, where the audience is drawn into the personal life of the victim rather than the legal consequences faced by the perpetrator. Victim imagery is often associated with specific emotional cues, such as expressions of distress, resilience, or even neutrality. The choice of which type of image to use can significantly influence public empathy, judgment, or skepticism toward the survivor's claims.

Moreover, *Le Monde*'s visual framing largely erases the perpetrator's visual presence, which diminishes public scrutiny and accountability. The data shows that men accused in the case were visually represented only 5 times, meaning they appeared three times less than the victim. Furthermore, only 2 of the 5 images were actual photographs of the perpetrators, while the remaining 3 were illustrations. This suggests a preference for abstract representations, which soften the visual impact of their presence. Unlike *Le Figaro*, which at least used courtroom sketches of the primary accused, *Le Monde* avoids visually representing the group of 50 accused men, further reinforcing the perception of the crime as an individual act rather than a collective assault facilitated by systemic failures.

As a conclusion, *Le Monde*'s visual framing choices align with broader media

patterns in which survivors of sexual violence are hyper-visible, while perpetrators remain faceless or abstract. The newspaper’s editorial decision to visually emphasize the victim while largely omitting the perpetrators creates a media narrative where gender-based violence is personalized rather than politicized, focusing on individual pain rather than systemic accountability. By avoiding direct confrontation with the accused through visual representation, *Le Monde* contributes to the silencing of male violence in public discourse, leaving audiences with a fragmented and incomplete understanding of the case. This selective framing ultimately shapes how society perceives sexual violence, reinforcing patterns of media bias that prioritize individual storytelling over structural critique.

4.5. Analysis of *L’Humanité*’s News Stories

L’Humanité published 46 news stories about the Mazan Rape Case between September 1 and October 15, 2024. The list below presents the headlines used in these news stories along with the corresponding abbreviations for the analysis framework.

Table 20. *L’Humanité*’s News Stories Headlines

H	A	R	F
Mazan rapes: Why is the trial that opened this Monday in Avignon extraordinary?	J	-	EF
“Involuntary rape”, “trap”, “couple game”...: how those accused of the Mazan rapes are trying to justify themselves?	P	-	EF
Rapes in Mazan: “My father is a serious sexual addict,” confides Caroline Darian, daughter of Dominique Pélicot, in a podcast.	P	-	EF

Rapes in Mazan: “+ 69% of cases of chemical submission in one year... We all have a role to play”	J,S	-	TF
Mazan rapes: Gisèle Pelicot wants to “regain control”	V	-	EF
Mazan rapes: What is chemical submission? The blind spot of sexist and sexual violence.	S	-	TF
Mazan trial: A call to demonstrate throughout France in support of Gisèle Pelicot and rape victims.	PUB	SE	TF
Mazan rapes: Trial suspended pending return of Dominique Pelicot.	P	-	EF
“It could have happened to me”: The anger of the demonstrators in front of the Avignon court in support of Gisèle Pelicot.	PUB	-	TF
Rapist we see you, victim we believe you”: 10,000 people in the streets to support Gisèle Pelicot and victims of sexual violence.	PUB	-	TF
Judith Godrèche in sisterhood at the Fête de l’Humanité.	PFF	-	EF
French mass rape trial: Dominique Pelicot excused from hearing until Monday.	P	-	EF
Mazan rapes: Trial suspended once again this Monday.	J	-	EF
Mazan rape trial: "I am a rapist like those in this room," admits Dominique Pelicot.	P	-	EF
The feminist column by Violaine de Filippis Abate.	SC	-	TF
Pornography: “Rape School” by Dominique Pelicot.	SC	-	TF
Rapes of Mazan: Dominique Pelicot's half-truths.	P	-	EF
“Rape is rape!”: Gisèle Pelicot responds to defense insinuations at Mazan rape trial.	V	-	EF
Mirror, Marion d'Allard's editorial.	M	-	EF
Mazan rape trial: Press outraged by broadcast of videos behind closed doors.	M	EA	EF
Rapes in Mazan: The intimidate story of another woman victim of her husband and Dominique Pelicot.	V	EA	EF
Mazan Rape Trial: “After all, no one died”, “I’m going to rape your mother”... Rape culture in broad daylight	SC	-	TF

Judith Godrèche: “From the moment we speak publicly, we face adversity”	PFF	-	EF
Mazan rape trial: Indecency competition among the accused’s lawyers.	J	-	EF
“The day I stopped believing.”	V	-	EF
Mazan rapes: “I don’t know if I was raped” says the ex-partner of one of the co-accused.	V	-	EF
"I am a rapist because the law says I am": at the Mazan rape trial, the difficult awakening of the accused.	P, J	-	EF
Senator Joël Guerriau suspected of chemical submission “steps aside” from his duties.	P	-	EF
The Mazan trial could never have happened? A lawyer deciphers the case of the 83 rapists.	J	-	TF
“Rape is a systemic crime, not an isolated incident,” recalls the NousToutes collective.	SC	-	TF
Mazan rapes: Why are the videos hidden from the press at the Pelicot trial?	J	SE	TF
Mazan rapes: The Pelicot trial is “not a news item but a social fact”	SC	-	TF
Rape has no skin color, Maud Vergnol's editorial.	SC	-	TF
“A visceral need to support Gisèle Pelicot”: Street artist Maca exhibits her fresco. Interview and video.	V, SC	-	TF
"I always knew my partner was special": At the Mazan rape trial, how the wives of the accused are trying to defend them.	V, P	-	EF
Trial -Maurice Ulrich's ticket.	SC	-	TF
Sandrine Rousseau: “Society is one step ahead of an outdated political world”	SC	-	TF
Rapes in Mazan: “I had hatred towards women”	P	-	EF
Mazan rapes: Videos will finally be released publicly	SC	-	TF
Mazan rapes, P. Diddy or Caroline Fourest case: Denial in the service of backlash. The feminist column by Violaine de Filippis Abate.	SC	-	TF

Pornography: “Rape School” by Dominique Pelicot. Analysis.	SC	-	TF
Rapes of Mazan: The “boys club” effect by Martine Delvaux. Analysis.	SC	-	TF

Table 21. Framing in The News Stories of *L’Humanité*

Framing Type	Frequency
Episodic (EF)	15/46
Thematic (TF)	31/46

Table 22. Frequency of the Rhetorical Strategies in The Headlines of *L’Humanité*

Patriarchal Rhetoric Strategy	Frequency
Subject erasing	4/46
Emotion-assigning	2/46
Total	6/46

Table 23. Attribution Subjects in The Headlines of *L’Humanité*

Attribution to	Frequency
Society / Culture	13/46
Perpetrator	9/46
Jurisdiction	9/46
Victim	7/46
Public Opinion	3/46

Media Sources	2/46
Scientific Information	2/46
Public Female Figures	1/46

Table 24. Attribution Subjects in The Headlines of *L'Humanité*

	Women	Victim Woman	Men	Perpetrator Men
Photo	17	11	5	4
Illustration	2	-	4	4
Video	-	-	-	-
Total	19	11	9	8

Fig. 7. Headlines of *L’Humanité* on “Mazan Rape Case” together with its visuals.



The data from Tables 23 and 27 indicate that L'Humanité's coverage of the Mazan Rape Case is significantly different from that of Le Figaro and Le Monde, particularly in its limited use of patriarchal rhetorical strategies, greater emphasis on thematic framing, and more balanced visual representation of both victims and perpetrators. These editorial choices suggest a conscious effort to frame the case within a broader societal and structural context, rather than reducing it to individual crime reporting or legalistic discourse. Among the three newspapers analyzed, L'Humanité exhibits the lowest frequency of patriarchal rhetorical strategies. In 46 headlines, only two strategies appear:

- "Subject erasing" (4 times): While still present, its usage is significantly lower than in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, indicating a stronger effort to clearly attribute actions to perpetrators rather than obscuring responsibility.
- "Emotion-assigning" (2 times): This strategy, which links emotions to inanimate concepts or abstract entities, is used far less frequently than in the other newspapers, reflecting a more fact-based approach rather than an emotionally-driven or sensationalized narrative.

Crucially, none of the other patriarchal rhetorical strategies -including polarization, war-languaging, property-centered defining, trivialization, valuation, heroization, fact-avoiding, justification, obscuration, mystification, perpetrator-victimization, and passive voice- appear in *L'Humanité's* headlines. This selection marks a radical departure from the rhetorical patterns found in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, suggesting that *L'Humanité* takes a more feminist-informed and socially conscious approach to covering sexual violence. This choice actively resists dominant patriarchal discourse in crime reporting by ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable,

victims are not overexposed, and the case is framed within a structural rather than individualistic lens.

One of the most distinctive elements of *L'Humanité's* framing is its attribution choices, which differ sharply from *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.

The most frequent attribution category in *L'Humanité* is "society and culture," which appears 13 times across 46 headlines. This is a radical contrast to *Le Monde* (which only uses this category once in 50 headlines) and *Le Figaro* (which does not use it at all in 63 headlines). Other dominant attribution categories

in *L'Humanité* include "jurisdiction" and "scientific information," reinforcing the newspaper's commitment to framing the case within legal, structural, and expert-driven perspectives rather than relying on emotional appeal or anecdotal reporting. This structural approach aligns with feminist media critiques, which argue that sexual violence must be reported as a societal problem rather than as a sensationalized crime story or legal dispute.

By prioritizing attributions to society, law, and scientific expertise, *L'Humanité* creates a thematic framing that situates the Mazan Rape Case within broader cultural and legal discourses, rather than treating it as an isolated event.

L'Humanité employs thematic framing in 31 out of 46 headlines, meaning that 67% of its news coverage places the Mazan Rape Case within a wider social or legal context. This contrasts sharply with *Le Figaro*, which overwhelmingly relies on episodic framing, treating the case as a standalone crime without deeper societal implications and *Le Monde*, which, while more balanced than *Le Figaro*, still frames the case largely through legal discourse rather than structural analysis.

Table 27 reveals that *L'Humanité* is the only newspaper among the three that consistently represents perpetrators in its visuals, a stark contrast to *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, which either conceal or underrepresent the accused men.

L'Humanité uses both photographs and illustrations of perpetrators, ensuring that accused men are visually present in the coverage rather than erased from public view. The use of factual, non-sensationalist imagery prevents the glorification or victimization of either party, reinforcing a balanced journalistic approach. Victim representation is minimal and respectful, avoiding objectification, voyeurism, or re-victimization. Unlike *Le Figaro*, which overexposes the victim's face, or *Le Monde*, which frequently attributes statements to the perpetrator, *L'Humanité* ensures ethical survivor representation.

4.6. Comparative Analysis of Samples

The sampling methods employed by *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, and *L'Humanité* in their coverage of the Mazan Rape Case reveal fundamental differences in selection criteria, ideological framing, and thematic focus. These distinctions shape how the case is presented to the public and reflect each newspaper's editorial stance, political orientation, and approach to reporting on gender-based violence. The disparities in their sampling choices influence not only the visibility of key actors in the case but also the broader societal narratives surrounding issues of justice, accountability, and structural inequality. Media framing is never neutral, as it is shaped by editorial decisions about whose voices are prioritized, what perspectives are given legitimacy, and how justice is framed in public discourse (Entman, 1993; Cuklanz, 1996).

Among the three newspapers, *Le Figaro* had the most extensive coverage, publishing 62 articles between September 1 and October 15, 2024. The selection of news stories focused heavily on legal proceedings, institutional responses, and expert commentary, reinforcing a procedural, detached tone. By prioritizing court hearings, prosecutor statements, and law enforcement perspectives, *Le Figaro* framed the case primarily as a legal matter rather than a social issue. This aligns with what Meyers (1997) describes as "judicial framing," where sexual violence cases are presented through a lens that emphasizes legal protocols over survivor experiences or cultural critiques. As a result, *Le Figaro*'s coverage minimized discussions on rape culture, systemic legal failures, and gender-based violence as a structural issue.

Le Monde, which published 50 articles in the same period, also adopted a legalistic approach, but differed in how it structured the narrative. The sampling of news stories placed significant emphasis on the accused's legal defense, procedural uncertainties, and judicial debates rather than centering survivor justice. An analysis of *Le Monde*'s headlines reveals that 23 out of 50 headlines employed patriarchal rhetorical strategies, with subject erasing and passive voice being the most common techniques. Research by Franiuk, Seefeldt, and Vandello (2008) highlights how such linguistic choices in media coverage shape public perceptions of responsibility, frequently reducing male accountability by obscuring perpetrators within grammatical structures. *Le Monde*'s focus on procedural details rather than survivor experiences aligns with what Alat (2006) identifies as "procedural distancing," a journalistic approach that frames gender-based violence as a bureaucratic rather than moral or social issue. Unlike *Le Figaro*, which positioned the judicial system as the key arbiter of justice, *Le Monde*'s sampling choices often highlighted legal

uncertainties, subtly positioning the accused as subjects of fairness rather than agents of harm (Carlyle, Slater & Chakroff, 2008).

In contrast, *L'Humanité* took a markedly different approach, publishing 46 articles that prioritized gendered power structures, feminist perspectives, and systemic critiques of institutional failures. Unlike the other two newspapers, *L'Humanité* actively positioned the case within a broader socio-political framework, recognizing rape culture, legal shortcomings, and structural inequalities as key elements of the story. This aligns with what Gentry (2016) describes as "feminist counter-framing," where news narratives are structured to expose power dynamics rather than reinforce institutional legitimacy. *L'Humanité* was the only newspaper to consistently feature survivor perspectives, feminist activists, and legal reform advocates, positioning it as a counter-hegemonic voice against dominant patriarchal narratives in media (Benedict, 1992). The thematic framing of *L'Humanité* ensured that the Mazan Rape Case was not just about a legal dispute but also about the systemic factors that enabled the crime.

A crucial point of divergence between the newspapers was attribution of agency within their headlines. In *Le Figaro*, the majority of attributions—41 times—were directed toward legal institutions and state authorities, while perpetrators were attributed agency only 14 times, and survivors just 8 times. This aligns with Iyengar's (1991) analysis of "episodic vs. thematic framing," where crime reporting in conservative media tends to highlight legal institutions while reducing individual perpetrator accountability. *Le Monde*, on the other hand, attributed actions to the perpetrators 21 times, but many of these attributions appeared in legal defense

contexts rather than as direct acknowledgments of guilt. Meanwhile, the victim was attributed agency only 6 times, reinforcing what Ryan (2013) calls "discursive marginalization," where survivors are presented as passive figures within media narratives, rather than active participants in their pursuit of justice.

In contrast, *L'Humanité* was the only newspaper that attributed actions to the victim more frequently than the perpetrators (14 vs. 9 times). This ensured that survivors were represented as active participants in the pursuit of justice rather than passive figures in a legal process. Additionally, *L'Humanité* attributed 35 actions to institutions and social structures, reinforcing a wider critique of rape culture, legal failures, and institutional bias. This approach aligns with feminist media critiques, which emphasize the importance of attributing agency to survivors and exposing institutional complicity in gender-based violence (Cuklanz, 1996).

These sampling choices had a profound impact on how justice was perceived in public discourse. The coverage in *Le Figaro* reinforced state legitimacy, portraying the justice system as the primary mechanism for resolving the case while downplaying survivor agency and feminist critiques. The legalistic approach of *Le Monde* blurred direct accountability by giving disproportionate space to the accused's legal defense, which contributed to a procedural rather than a justice-driven narrative. *L'Humanité*, in contrast, exposed power dynamics and systemic failures, presenting the case as a reflection of broader societal issues rather than just a legal matter.

The influence of these framing strategies extends beyond media narratives to shape

public perception and institutional responses to gender-based violence. The procedural focus of *Le Figaro* aligns with a broader conservative media trend that seeks to reinforce trust in state institutions rather than engage with feminist critiques of the legal system (Benedict, 1992). *Le Monde*'s focus on legal debates and procedural ambiguities reflects a centrist approach that privileges neutrality over advocacy, often resulting in implicit bias toward maintaining the status quo (Meyers, 1997). *L'Humanité*, by centering feminist perspectives and survivor agency, directly challenges patriarchal media structures and offers an alternative discourse that calls for systemic change rather than procedural resolution.

Ultimately, these differences in sampling reflect deeper ideological commitments and editorial priorities. While *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* implicitly uphold patriarchal legal narratives through their focus on institutional legitimacy and procedural neutrality, *L'Humanité* actively resists these narratives by highlighting structural inequalities, survivor advocacy, and feminist critiques of the legal system. The case of the Mazan Rape Trial serves as a revealing example of how media coverage is never neutral; rather, it is shaped by ideological frameworks that determine how crime, justice, and gendered violence are understood in public discourse.

Table 25. Comparative Summary of *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *L'Humanité*

Feature	<i>L'Humanité</i>	<i>Le Monde</i>	<i>Le Figaro</i>
Use of Patriarchal Rhetorical Strategies	Minimal (only 6 instances)	Moderate	Extensive
Attribution Focus	Society and culture, law, scientific information	Perpetrator's statements and legal system	Institution-centered and procedural
Framing Style	Thematic framing (67%)	Mix of thematic and episodic framing	Predominantly episodic framing
Perpetrator Representation in Visuals	Frequently shown (both photos and illustrations)	Rarely shown (5 times total)	Primarily sketch illustrations of only one perpetrator
Victim Representation in Visuals	Minimal, non-objectifying	Overrepresented (%71 of images)	Overexposed, frequently smiling in photos
Protest and Structural Imagery	Occasionally included	Excluded	Excluded

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis delves into the intricate ways patriarchy is reconstructed and disseminated within the French news media, using the Mazan Rape Case as a case study. Through a feminist theoretical framework and methodologies such as narrative analysis and frame analysis, the research unveils how media narratives not only reflect but actively shape societal norms and perceptions of gender-based violence. The study highlights the discursive practices through which the media perpetuates patriarchal ideologies, often framing perpetrators in ways that minimize accountability while obscuring the structural causes of violence.

This research builds on prior studies on sexual violence in media discourse, particularly those that examine how journalistic framing reinforces societal attitudes toward rape and gender-based violence (Benedict, 1992; Meyers, 1997; Franiuk et al., 2008). Consistent with Meyers' (1997) work on media representations of sexual violence, this thesis finds that news outlets frequently portray rape as an isolated crime, failing to address its systemic nature. The study aligns with Franiuk et al.

(2008) in demonstrating how media narratives perpetuate rape myths, which contribute to victim-blaming and the minimization of male accountability. Moreover, it echoes Cuklanz's (1996) argument that patriarchal news coverage privileges institutional perspectives over survivor-centered narratives. The findings reveal that media narratives play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of gender-based violence. They reinforce patriarchal ideologies by diminishing the accountability of perpetrators and obscuring structural inequalities that sustain gender-based violence. The ideological stance of newspapers significantly influences how these crimes are framed. *Le Figaro* reinforces traditional gender norms through narratives that normalize male violence, *Le Monde* presents a neutral but cautious perspective, and *L'Humanité* critically challenges hegemonic masculinity by situating gender-based violence within broader systemic structures (Meyers, 1997).

The analysis of three prominent French newspapers; *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, and *L'Humanité* demonstrates how language, framing, and imagery play pivotal roles in shaping public opinion. The media's portrayal often centers on sensationalism or individualizes acts of violence, sidelining broader discussions about systemic gender inequalities. For example, descriptions of the perpetrators as "ordinary men" and the normalization of male violence within a "boys' club" narrative underscore the societal reluctance to confront the deeper cultural and structural roots of such crimes. Moreover, the research exposes how the media's framing often prioritizes the reputation of institutions and communities over the trauma and agency of victims, thus reinforcing hegemonic power structures.

The findings demonstrate that the right-leaning conservative newspaper, *Le Figaro* contributed significantly to reinforcing gender inequalities through its coverage. Its narratives often relied on subtle victim-blaming, by over-heroization and dehumanization of the victim, and an implicit justification of the perpetrator's actions. By framing the male perpetrators as "ordinary men" and emphasizing their professional and familial roles, *Le Figaro* normalized their behavior and minimized their culpability. The analysis also reveals how the newspaper's language perpetuates traditional gender norms, aligning with conservative ideologies that prioritize the preservation of societal hierarchies, often at the expense of addressing systemic issues of violence and inequality.

Whereas a centrist-leaning publication, *Le Monde*, adopted a more balanced but still cautious approach, highlighting the societal implications of the case without fully challenging the structural roots of gender-based violence. While its reporting included elements of critique, such as questioning the judicial system's handling of the case, it occasionally fell into the trap of individualizing the crime rather than addressing the broader systemic context of hegemonic masculinity.

The leftist newspaper *L'Humanité* with a strong tradition of advocacy for rights, offered the most critical perspective on the case. Its reporting emphasized the structural causes of violence, the complicity of societal norms, and the broader cultural implications of gender-based violence. By framing the Mazan Rape Case as a symptom of systemic patriarchy and male dominance, *L'Humanité* sought to challenge the normalization of such acts and called for urgent societal reform. Its

focus on amplifying the victim's voice and highlighting collective accountability stands in stark contrast to the more conservative approaches observed in *Le Figaro*.

This ideological divergence among the newspapers reflects their broader sociopolitical agendas and underscores the critical role media plays in shaping public perceptions of violence and gender. The research reveals that conservative outlets like *Le Figaro* tend to reinforce patriarchal norms by aligning with traditionalist values, while progressive platforms such as *L'Humanité* actively challenge these structures and advocate for systemic change.

The study argues that media narratives are not neutral but deeply embedded in ideological frameworks that influence their treatment of gender-based violence. Conservative narratives obstruct progress toward gender equality by normalizing hegemonic masculinity and perpetuating rape myths, whereas leftist critiques highlight pathways for dismantling patriarchal structures. This contrast underscores the need for greater accountability in how media report on such cases and the potential for journalism to act as a tool for transformative change.

However, across all three newspapers, a notable omission persists: none contextualized the Mazan rape case within France's historical legacy as a colonialist empire. This erasure ignores the country's history of mass rape as a tool of war and domination during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). During this conflict, systematic sexual violence was employed by "ordinary men" in French forces as a means of control and domination. The lack of reference to this history in the thematic framing of Mazan mass rapes reveals a selective cultural memory that

downplays France's complicity in wartime sexual violence and its role in shaping present-day attitudes toward gender-based violence.

The Mazan case serves as a microcosm for broader societal patterns. It reveals how hegemonic masculinity is reproduced in a way that excuses or diminishes male responsibility, frequently through victim-blaming, the trivialization of sexual violence, and the perpetuation of rape myths. The thesis argues that such narratives contribute to the invisibility of systemic gender violence and create a public discourse that normalizes patriarchal dominance as a cultural norm.

This thesis thus argues that the media's role in reproducing or challenging hegemonic masculinity is deeply influenced by political and ideological leanings. Conservative outlets like *Le Figaro* normalize male violence and perpetuate patriarchal norms, while leftist publications such as *L'Humanité* seek to challenge these structures. Yet, even progressive reporting falls short when it fails to situate contemporary cases within the larger historical and structural context of colonialism and systemic violence.

Ultimately, this study calls for a radical transformation in how gender-based violence is reported and represented in the media. It underscores the importance of disrupting the dominant narratives that uphold patriarchal ideologies and instead advocates for media practices that amplify the voices of victims, promote gender equity, and challenge structural inequalities. By addressing the media's complicity in perpetuating hegemonic masculinity, this thesis contributes to the larger discourse on dismantling systemic gender violence and building a more equitable society.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. First, it focuses solely on three French newspapers, limiting the generalizability of its findings to other media landscapes. Future research could expand the scope to include digital and social media platforms, which play an increasingly influential role in shaping public discourse on gender-based violence (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). Second, while the study employs a feminist theoretical framework, additional interdisciplinary approaches—such as intersectionality, postcolonial studies, and media psychology—could provide further insights into media representations of sexual violence. Lastly, this study primarily analyzes textual narratives; an examination of audience reception and media effects would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how these narratives influence public perceptions and policy responses.

This thesis underscores the critical role of media in either perpetuating or challenging patriarchal structures. It calls for a transformation in how gender-based violence is reported, advocating for journalistic practices that amplify survivor voices, promote gender equity, and challenge systemic inequalities. As Meyers (1997) highlights, media outlets must move beyond the reinforcement of dominant narratives and instead act as agents of change by exposing the deep-rooted structures that sustain gender violence.

Ultimately, this research serves as both a critique and a call to action, urging media practitioners, scholars, and policymakers to adopt more nuanced approaches to reporting on gender-based violence. Addressing historical and structural legacies—including colonialism and systemic gender inequality—can help dismantle hegemonic masculinity and foster a media landscape that prioritizes justice and

accountability over sensationalism and bias. Through these efforts, media can shift from being complicit in oppression to becoming a force for transformative change.

Words make a difference. The discourse surrounding rape and sexual assault is significant. It is essential to examine how news organizations portray sexual crimes, offenders, and victims, as the media plays a pivotal role in influencing public perceptions of rape and sexual assault, potentially leading to substantial consequences for both victims and society at large.



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