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The Woman Was Raped

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Swedish News Media Coverage of Rape and Sexual Assault

Writer: Lisa Lindqvist
Master Thesis: SOCM13, 15 hp
Fall Semester of 2017
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Abstract

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Departing from the question of how linguistic representations of sexual crime are connected to social practices around sexuality, this discourse analysis looks into 30 news articles on sexual crime to identify discourses around male and female sexuality. As most sexual crimes are committed by men and against women, the analysis focuses on connecting discursive descriptions of men and women in relation to sexual crime, to power relations between men and women in society. It investigates whether the identified discourses contribute to sustaining an unjust power relation between men and women where women are subjugated.

The analysis builds on theories on gender constructivism and feminist theory departing from Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, and discourse theory and theories on the relation between power, discourse and sexuality as formulated by Michel Foucault and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, a method developed and defined by Norman Fairclough and Lilie Chouliaraki, the texts are analysed in relation to their role in social practices.

The findings in this analysis are in line with the referenced previous research centred around the theme of how victims and perpetrators of sexual crime are portrayed linguistically in the media, in police reports and court documents. They show that linguistic constructions of sexual crimes, victims and perpetrators in the investigated news texts use discourses around male and female sexuality by centring the criminal activity around the female victim and by using passive form. Several discourses around female sexual behaviour are identified as used in the material to put part of the blame for sexual crimes on the female victim, e.g. responsibility to protect one's sexual virtue by saying no and by not being intoxicated.

Key Words: sexual crime, rape, discourse on sexuality, critical discourse analysis, gender constructivism

Popular Description

This Critical Discourse Analysis of news articles from the two largest (by circulation) broadsheet newspapers in Sweden aims to identify discourses on female and male sexuality in the linguistic construction of sexual assault and rape within the written news genre in Sweden. This is done as a means to connect the linguistic representation of sexual crimes, their victims and perpetrators with the gendered patterns of who performs sexual crimes (men) and against whom these crimes are directed (women). The purpose of showing this connection is to shed some light on the role of linguistic constructions of male and female sexuality in maintaining an unjust power relation between men and women in social practices concerning sexual, and other, behaviour.

The analysis departs from a view of social practices, what we do in our daily social lives, as dialectically connected to language use, meaning what we do affects our language and our language affects what we do. Discourse is treated in the analysis as ways of understanding the world that at the same time constitute the world, and they are seen as shaped in and maintained by social processes. These ways of understanding the world are regarded as temporary, they can change with social processes. But discourse is at the same time understood as something that can constitute objectivity by cementing a particular way of understanding something. The purpose of this analysis is therefore to try and see beyond what is seemingly objective, to try and spot discourse on sexuality in how sexual crimes are written about.

In this analysis, 30 articles depicting sexual crimes, their victims and perpetrators are analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis. Using theories of gender constructivism, where sex and gender are viewed as social constructions that are shaped and maintained in social processes, descriptions of female victims and male perpetrators are investigated in order to spot allusions to female and male sexuality making it seem as though both victim and perpetrator are guilty of the crime. Furthermore, the descriptive words used for the crimes themselves are analysed in the same manner.

The results show that in the short descriptions of sexual crimes within the news genre in the two largest Swedish broadsheet newspapers, male perpetrators and female victims are described in ways alluding to stereotypes of female and male sexuality. The female victims are placed in an active linguistic position in the descriptions of the crimes, and properties such as age, actions around the crime, level of intoxication are mentioned in almost every article in the material. The male perpetrators are rarely placed in an active linguistic position in the descriptions of the crimes, and their personal properties, actions before, during or after the crime or levels of intoxication are rarely mentioned. The conclusion of this analysis is that this difference is in line with discourse on male and female sexuality, where female sexuality is more tightly controlled in social processes, leading to women receiving part of the blame for the sexual crimes committed against them.

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1. Background

Sexual crime is a category of criminal activity often present in public debate. In the fall of 2017, when this thesis was written, the hashtag #metoo started spreading in social media around the world. Originally created by the American human rights activist Tarana Burke in 2006 in her work starting a non-profit organisation committed to helping victims of sexual abuse, the large number of mentions of the hashtag in 2017 began when American actress Alyssa Milano posted on Twitter suggesting all women who had experienced sexual harassment or assault reply to her tweet with the words "Me too".¹ In Sweden, the hashtag gave rise to a movement where several powerful men in media and politics have had to leave their posts due to accusations against them regarding sexual assault and rape. Thousands of Swedish women from various occupational groups have since then gathered their experiences in joint announcements in the media.²

Sexual crimes, including rape, assault and sexual violence, are mostly committed by men and the victims are to a large extent women. In Sweden, 97 percent of the suspects of rape and sexual crimes in 2016 were men, according to The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. 96 percent of rape victims the same year were women.³ Many cases of sexual crime are never tried in court. In fact, only 11 percent of all reported sexual crimes in Sweden in 2016 led to a conviction.⁴

Research has shown there is a culture of victim blaming, in court as well as in the media.⁵ The victims' own sexual history, lifestyle, how they were dressed when the crime took place, as well as their actions before and during the criminal act are all frequently mentioned and questioned. How the perpetrator's life will be affected by accusations of sexual assault is also regularly addressed, made apparent in the debate following the #metoo-movement, where several debaters have argued for the protection of the accused men for the sake of their careers and families.

¹ Garcia, 2017-10-20.

² Wikipedia: "metoo", 2017.

³ Brå (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention), 2017.

⁴ Brå (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention), web page, 2017.

⁵ E.g. Meyer, 2010 & Ehrlich, 2001.

How we linguistically construct sexual crimes is proposed here to be key to understanding the gendered nature of these crimes, and how they are connected to unjust power relations between men and women in our society.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this analysis is to identify discourses around sexual criminality that may help to maintain a social order where these gendered patterns of who commits sexual crimes, against whom they are committed and who is blamed by the media and the justice system are possible. This will be an analysis of news articles that report on sexual assault and rape. The reason for choosing this type of material is the 'neutral' and seemingly objective nature of the news text genre. Beyond the news article descriptions of sexual crimes, their victims and their perpetrators one might find discourse on female and male sexuality. Used as point of departure is the idea that the social world is mirrored in our language use, and that this connection is dialectical, meaning language and the social world create and enable each other.

1.2 Research question

How are sexual crimes, their perpetrators and victims linguistically created in news texts, which discourses can be identified and how can we understand the use of the identified discourses in a social context?

1.3 Definitions

Sexual crime is used as an umbrella term including two types of crime; rape and sexual assault. The articles investigated all portray one or both of these types of crime.

Discourse is defined in the Theory section.

The terms **perpetrator** and **victim** are used throughout the analysis, although the crimes might not have been settled in court. The terms are used to describe the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) that are portrayed in the news articles.

1.4 Limitations

- This analysis is limited to investigating only Swedish news media, and furthermore it investigates only material from two news publications that are within the same genre (broadsheet newspapers). More on this in the Material section.
- The Previous research section addresses how sexual crime is depicted in the media and to some extent police questionings and court hearings. It does not address public opinion, crime prevention material, the victims' or the perpetrators' own descriptions of the crime outside of court or police hearings, or other textual representations of sexual crime.
- The analysis is limited to only investigating representations of sexual crimes, descriptions of other types of crimes are not studied.

1.5 Before we begin

Growing up a woman has, for me, meant becoming increasingly aware of all the ways in which I am expected to behave, and realising most women share particular experiences due to the mere fact that we are seen as women by our surroundings. I wanted to take the opportunity, when writing this thesis, to use scientific methods to dive deeper into this experienced social pressure. Not being the first to investigate a power relation between men and women where social practices help maintain an order where women hold a position not quite as powerful as the one held by men, I try to build upon the research of several women and men making important contributions to the explanation behind the experiences shared by me, my female friends, acquaintances and family members: The constant feeling of being a little less important, a little less powerful, a little less in control of our own destiny than the men of the world. This was a point of departure for me in writing this analysis. As Donna Haraway explained, a view from somewhere, a situated knowledge, is more meaningful than a stated objective view from nowhere, because true objectivity could never exist.⁶ The illusion of objectivity instead is and has been used to mask the interest of the dominating. Situated knowledge, as it takes in the position of the researched as well as the researcher in relations of power, will not make claims of creating universal knowledge but rather creating specific knowledge.⁷ In this case, I formulated the problem that is analysed here from within the

⁶ Haraway, 1988, p. 581-589 & 591-595

⁷ Collins, 1997, p. 375-376

dominated group in the power relation of the dichotomy of gender, meaning I share the position of the victims in the articles analysed. I will return to comment on my position as a researcher in the concluding part of the analysis.

2. Previous research

This section will focus on research on how female and male sexuality are constructed when connected to sexual crime. The researchers have all studied textual representations of sexual crime, in the media or in court documents and interviews.

2.1 Discourse on female and male sexuality in media reports on sexual crime

Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson investigate one case of “date rape” and how this is portrayed in the media by analysing descriptions of the identities of the victim and the perpetrator. The authors show that in these descriptions, the female victim is portrayed as the villain while the man accused of rape is portrayed as the victim. The writers claim this role reversal occurs because this provides a more newsworthy story, making possible a “psychopathic pervert/virginal victim scenario”. Hollway and Jefferson point to media descriptions of the victim’s sexual behaviour as “promiscuous” and the defendant as being “sexually inexperienced”.⁸

Connecting these descriptions to discourses on (heterosexual) sexuality, the authors point to the “promiscuous” victim being placed within a “permissive” discourse where “women as well as men can hold a subject position in which sex is construed as [...] meaningless fun”, while the man who is accused of rape in this case holds a subject position within a “have/hold discourse” focused on sexual monogamy within long-term relationships, a subject position more frequently held by women, at least on a discursive level. A third discourse on sexuality is also described, the “male sexual drive discourse”, and the authors point out that history lacks constructs of “women as active sexual subjects”, placing such positions in conflict with dominant discourses around female sexuality. This makes possible the description of this particular crime as having a “virginal victim” as the perpetrator, while the woman against

⁸ Hollway & Jefferson, 1998.

whom the crime was committed is described as the “promiscuous, permissive” part in the scenario, putting the blame for the crime on the actual victim.

Hollway and Jefferson points out the instability of identities and subject positions, claiming they are not as stable as we tend to interpret them. In the context of this one case, this may be interpreted as pointing to us as a society having great difficulty in dealing with cases of sexual crime because male and female sexual identities are difficult to comprehend as soon as they seem to conflict with dominant discourse.⁹

Taking as point of departure the fact that when victims of rape are drunk this tend to lead to acquittal of the perpetrator, Anneke Meyer discusses how women being drunk contradicts stereotypes around female behaviour. This, therefore, makes possible a “regendering” of rape as being an issue of female drunkenness and not male violence. Her analysis of articles in the British conservative newspaper The Daily Mail show how a regendering of the problem is realised through three discursive strategies seen in the material: Direct statements, focus on women’s drinking and the connection of female drunkenness and vulnerability to rape. This builds the image of rape as a deserved and therefore avoidable “consequence”, and female drinking behaviour as the cause of rape, leading to rape being something which women put themselves at risk for and not something men perform. This description of rape where women, when acting a certain way, *make rape happen* to themselves, while men are never guilty of rape but only of “misunderstanding” the female victim’s behaviour as consensual is, Meyer points out, in line with a myth around female sexuality saying women lack the ability to communicate sexual desires. This opens the possibility of women “asking for it” when performing certain behaviours and men “misunderstanding” situations and committing rape *by accident*.¹⁰

Josefin Bernhardsson and Alexandra Bogren have looked into how Swedish media portrayed rape victims and offenders in two famous cases of rape in Sweden. They show that alcohol was used as an explanation when rape was committed in a place that was constructed as an upper and middleclass area (in this case, famous upper-class hangout area Stureplan in

⁹ Hollway & Jefferson, 1998.

¹⁰ Meyer, 2010.

Stockholm), whereas immigration and “foreign culture” was used as an explanation when the rape was committed in a socially disadvantaged neighbourhood (in this case Stockholm suburb Rissne). The authors show that in the upper-class case, the victims were given part of the blame. Calling them “Drink Sluts”, many voices from Bernhardsson and Bogren’s material claim that women going to night clubs around Stureplan accept free drinks and status in exchange for sex, and authors claim it is implied in the material that women with this type of behaviour puts themselves at risk, knowingly, for assault and rape.¹¹

Meyer, Hollway and Jefferson and Bernhardsson and Bogren all show how blame for sexual assault falls, at least partly, on the victim. Meyer quotes a British report on sexual assault, showing between 20 and 34 percent of participants partially or fully blame female victims of rape, on the grounds of what the victims wore, whether they were drunk at the time, or if they willingly visited a “dangerous area”.¹² As we have seen, this construction of female victims of sexual crime not behaving in accordance with the discourse on female sexuality can be identified in several media reports on rape and sexual assault. Drunkenness, promiscuity and going to night clubs are all commonly used in descriptions of female victims that as a consequence puts part of the blame of the sexual crime on them.

2.2 Constructing active victims and passive perpetrators in juridical proceedings

Susan Ehrlich has looked into police investigations and court protocols concerning sexual crimes. She talks about the agency of rape victims being constructed and constrained by discursive application of institutional frames. Building on the discourse analyst Norman Fairclough, she suggests an ideological frame “of utmost resistance” functioning as a discursive constraint on victim’s own stories of sexual assault. They are constructing themselves as agents not resisting enough, who by their passiveness and lack of resistance might actually be perceived as giving consent. This, Ehrlich claims, is in accordance with a gendered identity of stereotypical femininity into which these victims are forced by the questioners in juridical proceedings.¹³ This mistakenly puts part of the blame on the victim, by the victims themselves, as they construct their own identity when questioned in court.

¹¹ Bernhardsson & Bogren, 2012

¹² Meyer, 2010, p. 26.

¹³ Ehrlich, 2001, p. 95-96 & 113

Ehrlich points out that when the crimes are “non-consensual acts of sexual aggression”, the strategy of the defence is not to deny the occurrence of some form of sexual activity, but rather to eliminate the perpetrator’s *agency* in aggressive sexual and non-consensual acts. This contrasts the descriptions made by victims, where the perpetrator is the active subject of verbs signalling wilful acts.¹⁴ Ehrlich also point to agentless passives, a description of an event constructed so that it has no agential position, making events seem to occur without any participation from either party. This is exemplified by using a particular court case and the story told by the accused, where he among other similar statements says “...our pants were undone”, “our pants were unbuttoned”, “they [the victim’s pants] were pushed down”.¹⁵ Sexual activities were in the same case described by the usage of “unaccusative” verbs such as “start, begin, and go on”, transforming the action into an un-action, an event that has no agent or cause.¹⁶

How then can one understand why these actions of sexual aggression are described as non-agential events that “happen”? The media constructs of the male perpetrators in Bernhardsson and Bogren’s, Meyer’s and Hollway and Jefferson’s research is in line with this, describing the sexual crimes as caused by the behaviour of the female victims, as they do not act in accordance with discourse on female sexuality. In addition, the victims of Ehrlich’s research construct their own stories around blaming themselves: They didn’t use “utmost resistance”, they failed to protect themselves against the naturally occurring event of rape, which is constructed as an “occurrence” without agent.

3. Theoretical background

These theories that follow are chosen for the purpose of giving a description of the background and theoretic point of departure for the following analysis. They describe a social constructivist point of view of sex and gender connected to power relations in society. They also describe discourse theory as a way of explaining the relation between language, social practice and the social world.

¹⁴ Ehrlich, 2001, p. 39-43

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 47

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 50

3.1 Constructing sex and gender

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir claims philosophical systems have always taken the division into two sexes for granted, and that the systems have been built around this division. The idea of love and that of sexuality have been constructed using this division as a point of departure, and the different roles given to the two different sexes have in the same manner been constructed from social myths, not biological facts. Giving several examples, Beauvoir paints a picture of how the woman came to be described as the weak, passive sex, while the man, with his active, moving sperm, became the active, strong sex. Although the role of women in society may appear to have risen to the same level of the man according to Beauvoir, this passive/active dichotomy has remained a part of how we perceive and construct femininity and masculinity and have done so throughout history.¹⁷

Based on Beauvoir's statements on the division into two sexes being taken for granted, Judith Butler questions the distinction often used between sex and gender, created to signal the socially constructed nature of gender as opposed to the idea of a biological base for sex. Butler points out the fact that gender mimics the binary of sex, while sex is said to be based on certain (unknown and/or disputed) conditions which could be anatomical, hormonal, chromosomal, but is always considered to be binary without any real explanation. In other words, she points to sex being discursively produced by scientific discourses, and to these discourses being connected to other discourses such as political, cultural, social ones. Butler concludes that sex is socially constructed, just as is gender, and asks why one would separate the two based on only one being described as socially constructed.¹⁸

"If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all."¹⁹

Butler also builds on Michel Foucault in pointing out that systems of power produce the same subjects they represent, meaning that in defining subjects, systems create them. For women as subjects in a juridical context, or a feminist context for that matter, the very definition of "women" in these systems will serve to create a *category of women*. Butler uses the example

¹⁷ Beauvoir, 1949, p. 43-46

¹⁸ Butler, 1990, p 9-10

¹⁹ Ibid.

of juridical subjects, and claims this creation of categories is hidden once the juridical system is established.²⁰ Construction of a binary category of sex, how this construction happens and how it is connected to specific gendered bodies, is therefore constituted by discourse, and defined and institutionalised in systems of power.

It is hegemonic cultural discourse which sets the boundaries for what is imaginable in form of sex/gender configurations within a particular culture.²¹ Building on Beauvoir again, Butler explains that what becomes woman and man in a particular culture is respectively the other (the body), and the “disembodied universality”, both constructed and restricted by these limitations. In our particular, modern western, culture, Butler states, the body as a female identity is separated from what is free, it is marked with masculinist discourse, while the male body is unmarked and therefore free.²² To conclude, it is systems of power that create discourses which constitute male and female identities, based on the presupposed notion that there are two separate sexes with different characteristics, and these discourses set boundaries on what a man and a woman is respectively in any given society. In our society, following Beauvoir and Butler, there is a masculinist discourse granting the male body freedom, while the female body is unfree.

3.2 Discourse, ideology and hegemony

There are different approaches and definitions to the term discourse, but they are all based on discourses being ways of understanding the world and these ways being constitutive of the social world, shaped in and maintained by social processes.²³ As shown above, the construction of gender and sex is regarded within this theoretical framework as based on discursive formations of the dichotomy of sex/gender, women and men.

Discourse in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s sense is the result of articulation, and articulation is “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified”²⁴. Laclau and Mouffe describe the social world as an open system, where a

²⁰ Butler, 1990, p 2-4

²¹ Ibid, p 11-13

²² Ibid, p 15-17

²³ Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1–6

²⁴ Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105

proposed infinitude of possible articulations makes all discourses unstable. This means articulations of discourses can only temporarily fix meaning. Articulation can be hegemonic, and hegemonic articulation makes the resulting discourse seem natural and objective. This is, in Laclau and Mouffe's sense, ideology.²⁵

Laclau and Mouffe state that there is no possible way to define social elements outside of discourse, meaning everything is discursive²⁶. Norman Fairclough and Lilie Chouliaraki, on the other hand, define discourse as semiotic elements that together with other elements constitute social practices while being dialectically related to them, and social practices in turn constitute social life in the same manner²⁷. Discourse is to be understood, according to Fairclough and Chouliaraki, as a structural resource in interpreting and creating the social world, as it is at the same time produced and transformed in, and limiting the possibilities of, interaction.²⁸

Fairclough points out that the critical study of power relations should be an analysis of ideology, and an analysis of ideology always requires an analysis of discourse. Ideology is, in Fairclough's explanatory system, dialectically connected to textual elements and, therefore, these textual elements work to sustain power relations within ideology. This way ideology works as hegemony, not as a force, where hegemony transforms ideology into common-sense, it 'naturalises' ideology.²⁹

Both Laclau and Mouffe and Fairclough and Chouliaraki point to hegemony and the seemingly objective nature of the dominant hegemonic discourse as the analytical focus of discourse analysis. Departing from the field of the discursive being an open system of infinite possible articulations of discourses, an analysis would then aim to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses, showing there are other possible articulations than the hegemonic, that the hegemonic articulations (the dominant discourse) is contingent.³⁰ Critical Discourse Analysis,

²⁵ Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105, 113, 136

²⁶ Ibid, p. 107

²⁷ Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 37–38

²⁸ Ibid, p. 47

²⁹ Fairclough, 2010, p. 26-30

³⁰ Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 113–145, Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 48

a method created and defined by Fairclough, aims to “de-naturalise” ideologies made to appear natural by what he calls “ideological discursive formations”.³¹ This is the aim of the analysis that will follow here. However, first we must establish the relation between construction of gender and discourse on sexuality.

3.3 Power and discourse on sexuality

Connecting discourse and the construction of sex, gender and sexuality turns us back to Foucault, Butler and Beauvoir.

Foucault gives a historical description of the regulation of sex through public discourse by showing how population became constructed as an economic and political “problem”, giving rise to analysis of phenomena such as birth rate, age of marriage, frequency of sexual relations and the impact of contraceptive practices. The sexual conduct of the population became the target for both investigation and intervention going from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, Foucault claims. This connected the state with sex, and the sexual behaviour of its citizens thus became the subject of discourses around how, when and why one should make use of one’s sex.³² As the interest in sexuality became political, several social institutions started producing discourses aimed at sex: medicine, psychiatry, criminal justice, as well as economy and pedagogy. This worked to institutionalise discourse on sex, and these discourses multiplied, working, Foucault states, as the means of the exercise of power.³³

Foucault sketches a discourse on sexuality as an economic behaviour with the intention of reproduction, to ensure population and to reproduce labour capacity, common to all different discourses on sexuality that are scattered throughout the institutions of our modern society, although prohibitions have loosened and sexuality became more heterogeneous from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries³⁴. As Foucault describes condemned forms of sexuality, and this is an important point for the purpose of the following analysis, he points to a separation of the “unnatural” forms and other condemned forms of sexuality, where unnatural in this case means sodomy, violation of cadavers and the likes, and “other forms”

³¹ Fairclough, 2010, p. 30-31

³² Foucault, 1978, p. 25-27

³³ Ibid, p. 30-33

³⁴ Ibid, p. 36-39

are phenomena such as adultery or rape, meaning rape is counted as natural however condemned.³⁵

Butler discusses whether sexuality has an existence outside the influence of discourse and power relations. She involves Foucault, suggesting from his point of view that power both produces and regulates sexuality, which would suggest subjects can never have access to sexuality outside of, or before, power.³⁶ As mentioned above, Foucault claims discourses regulating sex are not created separate from systems of power, but instead work as means to exercise power. Butler claims the “pro-sexuality movement within feminist theory” uses a different understanding, where for example lesbianism is seen as existing before or outside of the existing power relations where male centred, heterosexual discourse dominates. This, Butler claims, is a contra productive way of thinking about sexuality since this would, given the Foucauldian view on power and discourse, be impossible. Therefore, thinking one could change power relations from the outside would postpone the task of rethinking possibilities for sexuality and identity *within* the terms of power; it would instead work to reproduce the same discourse that makes existing power relations possible. Butler instead suggests a displacement of the law, a restructuring of sexuality and identity within the current relations of power.³⁷

To summarise, discourse on sexuality is connected to systems of power in this way, institutionalised in the juridical system, medicine, education, and therefore, it produces the subjects it defines. It stems, following Foucault, from the state starting to regulate sexual behaviour as a means of controlling the population. As Butler claims, to rethink discourse on sexuality is to displace the law within the systems of power, because trying to work around the systems of power will instead work to reproduce and reinforce discourse.

³⁵ Foucault, 1978, p. 36-39

³⁶ Butler, 1990, p 40

³⁷ Ibid, p. 41-42

3.4 Female sexuality: Rape and virtue

Susan Brownmiller writes about *the rape fantasy*, the supposed and/or sometimes real rape dreams women are said to have, originating, she states, from male conditioning since it is male fantasies that are given space and importance in popular culture. Given this is all the input women get, since there is rarely space for women's sexual dreams and fantasies in popular culture, women's sexual fantasies have been "handed to us [...] by those very same men who have laboured so lovingly to promote their own fantasies" and, Brownmiller claims, consist of exploitative, sadomasochistic, power-driven imagery placing men in power positions and reigning women powerless and passive.³⁸

While *the rape fantasy* is accounted for as inherent in woman nature by several Freudian researchers of the past, Brownmiller concludes that rape dreams that are actually present in women rather indicate these women's struggle "to find their sexuality within the context of male sexuality".³⁹ Rape taking place within sexual fantasies is described, both by the author and the research reports she quotes where women themselves have described them, as consisting of the overpowering of the woman's will and the physical and/or mental abuse, respectively, as erotic elements. Brownmiller goes on to explore the religious world and its use of sainthood, given to women of purity for protecting their virtue in rape situations, leading to their deaths as well as them being the perfect examples of female morality.⁴⁰

If the constructed sexuality of women is based on male ideas of power and exploitation, and these ideas are presented to women as the only option of how sexuality could be construed, women have no choice but to either base their sexual fantasies on these male ideas or divert from sexual behaviour altogether. This leaves the male perception of female sexuality a rather constricted one – women want to be raped, or if not raped, coerced, passive, and if they don't want to be raped at any given moment, they will vocally protect their virtue until death, as the sainted women of virtue did.

³⁸ Brownmiller, 1975, p. 323

³⁹ Ibid, p 323-325

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 331

4. Into the material

Entering the analysis part of this report, this description of the theoretical background and previous research on discourses around sexuality in the media provides a point of departure where women's subordination in the social world is open to negotiation, seeing as the social world is an open system of infinite possible discourses, but where the construction of women as a specific and universal category is in dialectical relation to social practices, the juridical system, the media descriptions and our social lives. The problem investigated here is how this subordination of women is hidden within a seemingly objective construction of sexual crimes in news articles, and how this in turn contributes to hegemonic discourse on male and female sexuality where men are the sexual norm and women are second hand sexual citizens susceptible of rape that is caused, at least partly, by their own behaviour. This will arguably add value to the field of research since the genre studied here is recognised for its objectivity and truth-telling aims. The ambition of this analysis is to complement the studies shown in the Previous research section, that study all forms of media texts and/or court documents, by focusing on a genre where discourse is probably more well-hidden.

5. Method

The intention of this analysis is to identify and deconstruct hegemonic discourses on female and male sexuality in newspaper articles depicting sexual crime, and to investigate if these discourses can be understood as constitutive parts of social practices around sexuality involving the juridical system as well as our personal lives. Choosing this aim is connected to the choice of method and the orientation of the researcher. In chapter 1.5, there is a discussion about the type of results sought out in this analysis. Departing from a feminist and social constructivist perspective, the aim is to create situated knowledge, and to do so with an agenda of exposing power relations. Doing so using newspaper articles as material means forming an understanding of use of discourse in a genre read by many, but not gaining insight into how people actually interpret these articles when consuming them, insight one had gained using e.g. interviews. The choice of the aim of the analysis and the material used is in line with one another, as the media is a large part of what forms our way of speaking in the social world, and the research question is directed at precisely that: how one might find discourse behind what is constructed as objective truths in institutions which form our social reality.

5.1 Qualitative method: Credibility and quality

Qualitative methods do not use formulas and rules, as do quantitative ones, instead they depend of the ability of the researcher to use insights and conceptual abilities to find patterns in the material analysed.⁴¹ The choice between them is often one of either wanting to create generalizable broad knowledge, using quantitative methods, or aiming at a deeper understanding of specific cases, using qualitative methods. As this analysis departs from a social constructivist point of view, it makes sense to try and understand the socially, politically and psychologically constructed social world using a method that aims to create a subjective, deep understanding of the social dimensions of the phenomena studied.⁴² Therefore, the aim of the study is to create specific, situated knowledge, unique for this analysis which uses particular materials and methodological tools, as well as for having a social constructivist and feminist point of departure.

Often times, qualitative research methods are critiqued for not ensuring the objectivity of the researcher, it is suggested that the analysis and results are shaped by the researcher's predispositions and biases.⁴³ To give credibility to this study, three measures have been taken. First, the position of the researcher is discussed (see chapter 1.5, the positioning of the researcher in chapter 5 and the methodological discussion in chapter 8.1). Second, a systematic gathering and analysis process is followed, which is described in chapter 6. Third, alternative explanations to the findings in this analysis is presented in the discussion in chapter 8. Departing from a social constructivist and a critical analysis point of view, the criteria for quality assurance is reflexivity, an aim of situated knowledge, and an agenda of presenting critique and raising consciousness of social injustices.⁴⁴

5.2 Choosing discourse analysis: Deconstructing objectivity

The purpose for using discourse analysis is to deconstruct seemingly objective common-sense knowledge using the conceptual system of discourse theory: hegemonic articulations are dominant explanations in an infinitude of possible articulations within the discursive field. These other possible articulations could be realised through the dialectical relations between

⁴¹ Patton, 2002, p. 553

⁴² Ibid, p. 546

⁴³ Ibid, p. 553

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 546-549

social practices, elements of social practices (text), and the social world, but are not because of hegemonic articulation being dominant and therefore seemingly objective. If the question is asked in this way, the most appropriate method for examining this will be discourse analysis. Trying to go beyond common-sense knowledge to see which constructed truths might lie beneath could be done using different qualitative methods (interviews, observations, etc.), but for this analysis, the purpose being trying to identify hegemonic articulations regarding male and female sexuality in news reports on sexual crime, discourse analysis is best suited, since it is a method that is constructed for this purpose: critically assessing which discourses seem natural and objective and pointing to the consequential power relations stemming from this. Interviews and observations could wisely be done in further research on the matter, since these methods would be make gaining insight into the interpretations by the recipients of the media material investigated in this analysis possible.

5.3 Choosing Critical Discourse Analysis: An activist stance

Within Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse is regarded as both constitutive and constituted of the social, it is dialectically related to social practices. Therefore, the usage of discourse has ideological effects that helps sustain relations of power and domination, it is partly responsible for sustaining social injustice.⁴⁵ The point of departure for CDA is that people's "ways of speaking are socially determined" and that how we speak, as a society, has social effects.⁴⁶ As CDA aims to show the role played by discourse in sustaining power relations within the social, with the explicit goal of social change, choosing CDA as the method for this analysis gives the analysis the opportunity to have as its goal to help to bring about a more nuanced way of reading and writing descriptions of sexual crimes, and as a more long-term goal, to help to achieve social change within this particular issue.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 61, Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 37

⁴⁶ Fairclough, 2010, p. 39

⁴⁷ Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63-64

6. Research design

Practicing CDA means analysing both discourses and social practices as a whole, as social practices are defined as consisting of both discursive and other elements. Fairclough states one should conduct one's analysis along three dimensions, considering the semiotic event as respectively: a text, a discursive practice and a social practice.⁴⁸ The discursive practice is what connects text and social practice, where the nature of social practices shape, and are shaped by, processes of text production, while the production process of a text, at the same time, shapes the text, leaving traces that are then acted upon in the interpretation of the text on a discursive and social level.⁴⁹ Tools used within these different levels are linguistic and grammatical, but also unique for this type of analysis. Genre and interdiscursivity are two tools that are used, and they are explained as they are practiced in the analysis.

This analysis will follow four stages outlined by Fairclough in his essay *A dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis*. These are:

- "Stage 1: Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect.
- Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong.
- Stage 3: Consider whether the social order 'needs' the social wrong.
- Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles."⁵⁰

"Social wrongs", or "problems", are exemplified as material inequalities, inequality before the law, etc. In stage 2, the semiotic aspects of keeping the problem as is in the social order where it exists are identified. Stage 3 examines whether there is a need for the social order to change for the wrong to be overcome. The possibility to change or overcome the problem identified in stage 1 by "contesting and changing discourse" is looked into in stage 4.⁵¹ Within each of the stages, the analysis will touch upon the three levels of the event: the textual nature of the event, the discursive level of the event and the social practices derived from the event.

This systematic approach to the analysis of the gathered material aims to give credibility to the study. It is an inductive way of conducting analysis, as the patterns, themes and categories will be discovered during the course of the analysis.⁵²

⁴⁸ Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 68-69

⁴⁹ Fairclough, 2010, p. 94

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 226

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 226-227

⁵² Patton, 2002, p. 453

6.1 Material

How media depicts and portrays reality plays an important part in how people understand the world around them.⁵³ Choosing newspaper articles as a focal point for this analysis, and in particular, articles within the news section of the chosen papers, was done because the news genre aims at an objective reporting style. For this reason, the news genre is arguably more trusted among the public than are other genres within the media.

The material consists of 30 newspaper articles published in the two Swedish newspapers *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*. These publications are so called broadsheet newspapers, which traditionally implies higher quality and less sensationalistic journalism than tabloid press. This is the reason for choosing them. Arguably, people believe in the words if these types of publications over tabloid publications of a more sensationalistic character. *Dagens Nyheter* is a liberal newspaper with a reach of 612.000 people and *Svenska Dagbladet*, conservative, has a reach of 380.000 people⁵⁴. This makes these publications the two largest daily broadsheet newspapers in Sweden.

The 30 articles were chosen based on characteristics intended to present material focused on the issue at hand, while using news genre type language and containing descriptions of both the crime, the perpetrator and the victim. The selected articles were published within the news section of the two papers. They do not contain any opinions and if they include quotes, these are disregarded in the analysis as the aim is to investigate the words of the newspaper rather than those of possible interviewees. The selection was made using certain search phrases on the newspaper websites. These search phrases were “våldtäkt” (rape) and “sexuellt övergrepp” (sexual assault). 15 articles from each newspaper have been included, and all the articles were published in 2017. Only articles describing crimes with male perpetrators and female victims were used as this is the focus of the analysis, established in the research question.

⁵³ John Fiske referenced in Bernhardsson & Bogren, 2012.

⁵⁴ Kantar Sifo: Orvesto Konsument 2017:2

7. Results and analysis

The analysis and results will be presented here following the four stages of CDA described above, while at the same time touching upon the different levels of analysis (semiotic, discursive and social) within each stage.

7.1 Stage 1: Presenting the problem

Departing from a view of the world where there is an unjust division of power between men and women, where men are constructed as the norm, free and autonomous, whereas women are bodies marked by masculine discourse, the material will be analysed as a part of what is keeping the world order that way. This is the social problem which is to be investigated.

As pointed out, news articles tend to be semiotically constructed in a way that gives them a truth-telling character. Within the news genre, the ethical code of journalism is embedded, and this presents itself in wording and other characteristics of news texts. The journalist is supposed to be an objective reporter of the truth. This provides the very basis of the idea that semiotic events have a dialectical relation to social structures. If these descriptions of sexual crimes are presented and interpreted as truths, they will construct the social practices around sexual behaviour, and this in turn might influence the power relation between men and women on a larger scale.

Given the nature of this analysis, the semiotic and discursive take on this problem is at the centre of how the problem is described. Within the field of the discursive, as it is described in discourse theory, the texts describing the sexual crimes and the sexual crimes themselves are discursive, cementing this discourse through hegemonic articulation around sexuality, men and women. The practice of sexuality will align with the hegemonic discourse as a part of this hegemony itself. If everything is discursive, identifying what is hidden behind the seemingly objective is the key to discursive struggle, where objectivity is the practice of hegemony – there is no un-discursive objectivity but objectivity is hegemony acted out in practical terms. The aim of this analysis might, therefore, be described as uncovering which hegemonic discourses are hiding within seemingly objective descriptions of sexual crimes.

The description of the female victim and the male perpetrator will be at the centre of the analysis, as the unjust power relation between men and women, specifically within the field of sexuality, is what is to be investigated using tools of Critical Discourse Analysis. This description of an unjust power relation departs from theories of gender where the social construct of femininity and all that is interpreted as feminine is both in constant contrast and constantly inferior to that which is interpreted as masculine, shown earlier by drawing on Beauvoir and Butler. When it comes to sexuality, although there have been large steps taken by women's movements in "freeing" the female sexuality (birth control, criminalisation of marital rape, etc.), female and male identities are constructed differently. As we have seen in the previous sections, research shows constructions of and norms surrounding women's sexuality are focused on modesty and "purity", and that other behaviours, such as drunkenness, certain types of clothing and promiscuity, are regarded as breaking the stereotype. Men's sexuality, on the other hand, is given room to play and is constructed as the norm.

The analysis will depart from the point of view that had sexuality been ungendered in its construction, the nature of the description of sexual crimes, their perpetrators and their victims, would have been different. Had this been different, discourse around female and male sexuality would have been different too. This in turn would have an impact on the power relation between men and women. One of the texts in the material points clearly to this, as it is about rape being used as a weapon in war, an example of power relations departing from norms and stereotypes around sexuality as well as sexuality in practice in concrete social situations.

The next stage in the analysis will analyse the material by investigating the ways in which crime, perpetrators and victims are described on a semiotic level, taking in the genre and discursive practice of text creation and consumption, and presenting the dialectical relations between them as well as between texts and other elements.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Fairclough, 2010, p. 243

7.2 Stage 2: Obstacles to addressing the social wrong

Departing from the power relations between men and women discussed in the previous stage, as well as how this social problem is expressed through stereotypes and discourse surrounding sexuality, that in turn are expressed through textual representation of sexual crime, this stage will begin with a textual analysis which is structured around the categories of crime, perpetrator and victim. But first, there is a need to point out the semiotic dimension of how sexual crimes are created and treated within the societal institutions that handle them: the criminal justice system, the police and the media. Embedded in these institutions is discourse regarding sexuality, and this in turn will determine what constitutes the border between sexual behaviour and sexual crime in descriptions, investigations and court hearings.

The previous stage, as well as the theory section, touches upon discourse on sexuality and how there is a difference between masculine sexuality and feminine sexuality within it, leading to putting part of the blame on the victims of rape while removing some of the blame from the perpetrator. This is made apparent in Meyer's research on rape and alcohol, where she shows how discourse around sexuality puts part of the blame for sexual crime on female victims through focusing on their behaviour as something that puts them "at risk" for rape.⁵⁶ Hollway and Jefferson also point to media reports of the particular rape case they investigate discussing the victim's behaviour, not only in proximity to the event, but her overall sexual behaviour, which is described as promiscuous.⁵⁷ This discourse on male and female sexuality is operationalised in social practices and structures, institutions and relations⁵⁸, for example in court rooms, as Ehrlich shows with her example of a perpetrator describing his actions as events out of his control, and in popular opinion, as shown in the British report on sexual assault from 2005, quoted by Meyer, showing 20-34 percent puts part of the blame for sexual assault on the female victim and her behaviour. Given this, the textual expressions in the media through which sexual crimes are created, are in a dialectical relationship with the construction of sexual crimes within justice and penal practices, and all these textual constructions are constitutive of real sexual behaviour. Hereby, they are part of the obstacle

⁵⁶ Meyer, 2010.

⁵⁷ Hollway & Jefferson, 1998.

⁵⁸ Fairclough, 2010, p. 244

in addressing the social wrong, the social wrong being the unjust power relation between men and women surrounding sexuality as well as other areas in society.

The textual analysis which follows here will show the semiotic aspects of the obstacle of addressing the social wrong. Departing from the view that the modern discourse on sexuality has embedded within it unjust power relations between men and women, themes have been identified in the material. The analysis will follow these themes and move through the semiotic and discursive level as well as the structural level of social practices, focusing on the interplay between these three levels.⁵⁹

7.2.1 Textual analysis

The textual analysis will touch upon the descriptions of the perpetrators, victims and criminal actions. First, the descriptions of the criminal activity as something that is performed by someone or committed against someone, will be discussed. Following this is a discussion of the naming of the criminal activity, and after this is a short discussion of the news genre.

The passive perpetrator and the role of the victim

Throughout the material, the criminal activity is described mostly in passive terms. No one is executing the activities that the crime consists of, but instead, the crime *happens* to the victim. There are a few exceptions, but in most of the texts the only linguistically constructed agent is the victim, to whom the crimes happen. These are some examples from the material:

Original text in Swedish	English translation⁶⁰
fick träföremål uppkörda i slidan, och dödades	had wooden objects pushed up inside the vagina, and were killed
utsatts för grova övergrepp och våldtäkter	subjected to grave sexual assaults and rapes
hon tvingas ta av sig naken	she is forced to get naked
hotats och förmåtts att utföra sexuella handlingar	was threatened and made to perform sexual activities
misstänks ha blivit våldtagna, sexuellt utnyttjade, misshandlade	is suspected to have been raped, used sexually, assaulted
flickan våldtogs under dödshot	the girl was raped under death threats
en annan ung kvinna ska då också ha blivit fasthållen och våldtagen	another young woman is then also said to have been retained and raped
kvinnan våldtogs utomhus	the woman was raped outside

⁵⁹ Fairclough, 2010, p. 232

⁶⁰ All translations are made by the writer

enligt anmälan skedde våldtäkten i Folkets park	according to the police report, the rape occurred in Folkets Park
våldtäkten ska ha skett natten till lördagen	the rape allegedly occurred during the between Friday and Saturday
övergreppen började när flickan var 15 år	the assaults began when the girl was 15 years old
nio kvinnor som utsatts för olika sexuella övergrepp sedan de drogats	nine women who were subjected to different sexual assaults since they had been drugged
våldtäkten ska ha skett natten till lördagen och kvinnan ska enligt anmälan ha blivit attackerad	the rape supposedly happened on Friday night and the woman was supposedly, according to the report to the police, attacked
våldtäkterna skedde med ett fåtal timmars mellanrum	the rapes occurred a few hours apart

Table 1: Passive descriptions of the crime

The victims are described as people to whom assaults happen, and the act itself is sometimes the agent of a sentence, giving the action and not the actor the main stage in the description of the crime. The woman was raped, the rape happened. Although these descriptions are sometimes varied with sentences where the perpetrator is the active agent, there is no article in the material where there are not one or more descriptive sentences where the victim is the agent and where the crime is described using agent-less, passive constructions.

The genre of newspaper news articles is a certain semiotic way of acting, and in the material this genre can be identified through the passive description of sexual crimes as something that has happened in the past, and that has happened to someone, making the victim of the crime the agent of the description. The sentences are constructed with focus on the event itself, not the actors. This way of describing an event may be used, one could argue, in order to seem like an objective part. The event has occurred in the past and the description is conveying this to the public in a neutral way. However, this neutrality is problematic since it describes the event as something inevitable, and not something acted out or performed by the perpetrator. He or they are hidden behind the habit of using the victim as the subject of the sentence, and naming the actual criminal action as something that *happened to them*.

Focusing on the victim implies that the victim is an active part of the event to a larger extent than the perpetrator, and when identity markers such as age and the victim's behaviour around the event are added to the description, this turns the event from being an action performed by someone to being something that happens to certain people with particular characteristics and behaviours. Putting part of the blame for the sexual crime on the victim

can, therefore, be seen as constitutive of the use of news genre specific semiotics when describing these crimes. Although the victim is never blamed in so many words, the passive nature of the description of the crime and the focus on the victim as someone who the crime happens to, is in line with this. Following here are some examples from the material of descriptions of the victim's characteristics and behavior during or around the event:

Original text in Swedish	English translation ⁶¹
en kvinna har anmält till polisen att hon strax efter midnatt blev våldtagen av två män när hon var på väg från en av campingarna på området	a woman has reported to the police that she was raped just past midnight by two men, as she was on her way from one of the camping sites in the area
en kvinnlig patient utsattes för övergrepp av en vårdare	a female patient was subjected to assault by a member of the care staff
båda kvinnorna är i 20-årsåldern och våldtäkterna skedde med ett fåtal timmars mellanrum	both women are in their 20s and the rapes occurred a few hours apart
kvinnan har undersökts av läkare	the woman has been examined by a doctor
hon har en utvecklingsstörning som gör att hon har svårt att säga nej	she suffers from a developmental disability making it hard for her to say no
den drabbade kvinnan våldtogs av två män på en rastplats norr om Varberg, sedan hon följt med i deras bil efter ett krogbesök i Göteborg. Hon var påverkad av bland annat alkohol	the affected woman was raped by two men at a rest area to the north of Varberg, after she had gone with them in their car after visiting a bar in Gothenburg. She was intoxicated from alcohol among other things
flickan blev berusad av ölen	the girl became intoxicated by the beer
när kvinnan sedan ville avbryta accepterade mannen inte detta, utan fortsatte med "sexuella handlingar"	when the woman later wanted to stop, the man did not accept this but kept performing "sexual acts"
flickan träffade gärningsmännen, två pojkar som är 15 respektive 16 år gamla, i en lägenhet	the girl met the perpetrators, two boys of 15 and 16 years old, in an apartment

Table 2: Descriptions of the victims' characteristics and behaviour

These examples show descriptions of the female victims of sexual crime. Their age is presented, and in several cases, their actions around the crime is described. The fact that the victim has been through a medical examination is pointed out in several articles. In one article describing a rape in a car, the fact that the female victim got in the car with the perpetrators before the crime happened is pointed out in the text, and it is also stated that she was intoxicated. In another, the fact that the female victim has a developmental disability is pointed out together with that statement that this "makes it hard for her to say no", which in clear terms state that saying or being unable to say no is a part of a sexual crime, and that this action is the victim's responsibility. Another article states that the female victim wanted to discontinue consensual sex, but the man "did not accept" this, but "kept performing sexual

⁶¹ All translations are made by the writer

acts”, pointing to the possibility for the male perpetrator to not *accept* the will of a woman in a sexual situation.

The examples indicate that the actions of the victim are of importance for the description of the crime, they are constructed as parts of the crime. This can be illustrated by the article about the car rape mentioned above, where there is a shift from passive form when the rape itself is described (“The [...] woman was raped”) to active form when describing the behaviour and actions of the rape victim (“...she got in the car with them after visiting a bar...”). This shows the tendency to place the victim, and not the perpetrator, as the active agent in the descriptions of sexual crimes in the material.

To summarise, the descriptions of sexual crimes in the articles constructs sexual crime as occurrences that happen to someone, not acts committed by someone against someone. The behaviour of the victims, on the other hand, is made important in the constructions of sexual crimes in this material. This could be seen to indicate that female victims of sexual crimes are able to avoid being subjected to these crimes, if they behave in a certain way. This might be constitutive of the discourses on female and male sexuality, that in turn are constructed from and constitutive of the genres of police reports, justice protocol, court hearings and the social practices of what happens between men and women out in the world and in the privacy of their homes.

The criminal actions

Since the material was gathered using specific search phrases, as mentioned above, all the news texts in this material contain either the words “sexual assault” or “rape”, but there are other descriptions of the criminal actions as well. The words used when describing the criminal activities are often centred around their sexual and not their criminal nature. These are some examples from the material:

Original text in Swedish	English translation⁶²
oralsex	oral sex
samlag	intercourse

⁶² All translations are made by the writer

sexuella handlingar	sexual acts
sex	sex
händelsen	the incident
uppmanat henne att utföra oralsex	encouraged her to perform oral sex
det sexuella umgänget	the sexual relations/intercourse

Table 3: Names for the criminal actions

As these names for the crimes committed are interchangeable in the texts (they are either used as synonyms or as the actual and only description of the criminal action) these could be seen to serve as cushions softening the perception of the crime. The sexual nature of the criminal action is in focus more so than the criminal nature of the action, pointing to criminal sexual behaviour as a normal state of things while potential victims need to act a certain way to avoid being exposed to such crimes.

This makes the news texts harmonise with the discourse on male and female sexuality, making them a recontextualisation of the discourse around female and male sexuality, where news discourse works together with juridical discourse around criminal behaviour and discourse on sexual modesty for women to form an interdiscursive chain (when diverse genres and discourses are articulated together in a textual event⁶³). This description of crime, victim and perpetrator in news texts becomes a semiotic realisation of the legitimisation strategy of making something seem authentic through expert knowledge, which would here be represented by the criminal justice system's descriptions of sexual crimes as well as their perpetrators and victims.

To summarise, the in the material identified obstacles to addressing the social wrong is the discourse on female and male sexuality where men are not active agents in sexual crimes they are committing, while female victims are active agents putting themselves at risk for sexual crime by having certain characteristics and behaviours in conjunction with the crime. This is in line with discourse on female sexuality identified in the previous research shown above, where women cannot be promiscuous or voice sexual desire, but they should use resistance to protect their virtue. The truth-telling character of the news genre and with it the seemingly

⁶³ Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 73–74, 81–82

objective language use, and the legitimisation through recontextualisation and an interdiscursive chain where the justice system works through the news media as legitimising expert, all contribute to sustaining these relations of sexual power through discourse.

The news genre

As previously stated in the analysis, it is important to note that the genre of the material being used is one that builds upon other genres, and that the conditions of the creation process within the genre are those of high tempo as well as a want for high credibility, meaning critical examination and rewriting of the material which news articles are based on is probably not prioritised. There is a constant time shortage in creating news, and it is important for news media to be the first to report on something, this gives them credibility in the eyes of the public. In delivering news fast, the language of the news article might not be critically assessed from a point of view of social responsibility, norms and discourse use. Instead, aiming at having a high credibility in the eyes of the public, one might build upon other genres that in their language use imply trustworthiness. Such a genre would in this case be the juridical. News articles depicting crimes are often based on police reports, statements from the police and statements from the justice system. Those statements and reports supposedly constitute the objective backbone of the constitutional state, and the public reading news articles are in no other position than to trust in these police statements and descriptions of police reports, and interpreting the crimes as they are linguistically constructed. As mentioned above, this creates an intertextual chain where texts from different genres build on one another, making the recipients of the texts interpret them as trustworthy.

[7.3 Stage 3: Is the social wrong inherent to the social order?](#)

Discourse on female and male sexuality appear in the material of this analysis, as well as it does in the examples of previous research on the subject, and it builds on the construction of a female and male sex as differing from each other, being the opposites of one another, without there being any reasons for this other than social, historical and mythical ones. As Beauvoir points to, the differentiation between the two sexes has been taken for granted throughout the history of philosophy, and so it still seems to be handled. The need for a universal female identity, which is questioned in Butler's critique of feminism, seems to be at the centre of how perpetrators and victims of sexual crimes are constructed in the newspaper

articles at hand. As Hollway and Jefferson point to in their analysis, there are two discourses being called on when explaining how people feel and think in terms of relationships, and while women and men alike can be sorted into the “promiscuous/permissive” one, the “have/hold” one is more reserved for women. The victim in the case Hollway and Jefferson studied was in part blamed for being subjected to rape by being sorted into the permissive sexual discourse, while the male perpetrator was not entirely blamed for his actions given he was claimed to act in accordance with the have/hold discourse.

The articles used in this analysis are short, focusing on telling the events of the crime and not going into detail about either victim or perpetrator, but it is still visible in the language use that the victim is the focus of the story. The crimes are not committed by men, they happen to women, and are they indeed crimes, or are they sex (given the words describing the action in the articles are “sex”, “sexual activity”, “oral sex”), but sex gone wrong? As shown in the previous section, these are common marks for all the articles. Looking to the social world and the power relation between men and women, this seemingly objective way of describing sexual crime could be said to be contributing to sustaining these power relations. Stating sexual crimes happen to women is putting them in the centre and active agential position in the description of the crimes, while the perpetrator is mostly a passive part, not described in more words than that he is a man (or a boy, or several men). This could arguably indicate that ideology and hegemonic articulation is at play here, and that the social wrong is indeed inherent to the social order. Objectivity is what hides ideology through hegemonic articulation of discourse. Discourse on sexuality arguably puts women in the centre of the story of sexual crimes for letting them happen to themselves, while not putting male sexual perpetrators in the centre of the description of their own crime. This could be said to help sustain relations of power and domination, and at the same time, it would seem the social wrong is inherent to the social order.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Fairclough, 2010, p. 250

7.4 Stage 4: Is there a way around the social wrong within the social order?

As this analysis was written, the campaign or social uproar #metoo was giving rise to a debate on sexual assault and who is to blame for them. The hashtag was created as a means for victims of sexual crimes to tell their stories in their own words on social media. This has gained a lot of attention in Swedish media and was also the cause of many workplaces investigating staff members who had been accused of some form of sexual harassment. A few of the articles used in this analysis are based on this initiative and concern TV show hosts and journalists accused of sexual assault, resulting in them having left or lost their posts. At the same time, there was an ongoing debate in Sweden about a demand by some political parties as well as organisations and voices from within the justice system, to add a clause on sexual consent to the legislation around sexual assault, which in short would criminalise non-consensual sex making it easier to prove sexual crime.

But while it is possible to grasp a different way of construing sexual crime, focusing on the actions of the perpetrator and basing the story on the notion that sex requires consent, this might not suffice as a way past the obstacles. The “objectivity” of police reports and statements and juridical descriptions of crime is intertextually and interdiscursively constitutive of news reports constructions of sexual crime and this operationalises the discourse on male, but mostly female sexuality into seemingly true statements about human nature.

8. Discussion

The theoretical point of departure in this analysis is that semiotic choices made by social actors are at the same time limited by, and constitutive of, discourse. There are several linguistic alternatives when constructing a textual event, in fact, using Laclau and Mouffe’s view on the social as an open system and the discursive field as consisting of endless possibilities of articulations, one could construct a textual event any way one might like. But discourse, as it is constitutive as well as constituted of the social, limits the possible articulations available for social actors when they construct semiotic events. Or as Laclau and Mouffe would put it, due to hegemonic articulation, where ideology is transformed into objectivity, one discourse is cemented while others are dismissed. This in turn contributes to sustaining unjust power relations embedded within the social order.

As stated in the theory section, Beauvoir points out that background knowledge cementing the existence of two separate sexes, and/or genders, with different characteristics, has been taken for granted throughout history. And as Butler states, even in women trying to escape the unjust distribution of power, there are discursive events reinforcing this divide that as a consequence create a notion of a universal femininity that help sustain the very same power relation.

Sexuality, a part of what makes up the discourse on what a woman and a man is respectively, is surrounded by discourse itself. As Foucault points to, discourse on sexuality and sexual behaviour acts as a means of the exercise of power, institutionalised in societal bodies such as the judicial system, education and medicine. Discourse on female sexuality, as shown in the research reports from Hollway and Jefferson, Bernhardsson and Bogren and Meyer, include passivity and not being able to voice sexual desire, while it opposes behaviours such as promiscuity and drunkenness. This is reinforced by Ehrlich's depiction of victims' own stories including commentary on their own actions of resistance, where the discourse of "utmost resistance" reads that victims are responsible for stopping or allowing sexual assault. Adding Brownmiller's historical references to the rape fantasy and the female saints dying to protect their virtue, the image of a stereotypical female sexuality is complete.

Even though the articles in the material of this analysis are stripped of opinions, victims' behaviour is commented on and becomes part of the story of the crime in a seemingly neutral way. This is in accordance with both the passive, non-promiscuous discourse and the protecting their virtue discourse on female sexuality mentioned above. The analysis shows several examples, at least one in each of the articles, where the behaviour or age or other properties of the female victims of sexual crime are described. Whether the women have pressed charges against their perpetrators, what the women were doing when their perpetrator performed the crime, what the women had done before in life and whether they had met up with the perpetrators willingly before the crime, are all examples of this. So is age, state of intoxication and possibility to "say no". The linguistic form is also important to note here. As stated in the analysis above, the crime is often described either by using passive form with no active agent ("sexual assault occurred") or by using the female victims as referents

("the woman was raped"). This indicates discourse on female sexuality and its active part in sexual crime. If a woman fails to act in accordance with the stereotypical discourse on female sexuality, her sexuality is discursively constructed as something deviant, and she becomes partly to blame for the crime committed against her.

The male perpetrators in the material are on the other hand rarely active agents in the descriptions of the crime, as the women are often put in the linguistic agential position instead of them. As Ehrlich points out in her research, this displacement of the intentional action, replaced instead with a passive description of crimes happening without anyone seeming to be in control of them, makes it seem as though the events occur naturally. The agent is instead the female victim who failed to act in accordance with stereotypes around female sexuality, who failed to resist the crime in a proper manner. The agentless passive used in both Ehrlich's examples and at least once in every article in the material of this analysis, points to sexual crime being defined by the actions of the victim, not the actions of the perpetrator.

As shown in the analysis, the description of the criminal activities in the articles focus on the sexual rather than the criminal nature of the events. Using Foucault, one could point to this being part of a discourse around sexuality where sexual crime is made room for inside of the discourse, not as an opposite of sex, but as a form of sex. Adding the notion that discourse works as means of power, and adding this to what we have seen so far regarding female and male sexuality, one could argue that men have sexual power over women. This could be constitutive of, and at the same time consist of, discourse on male and female sexuality, and of the act of heterosexual sex itself. One article mentioned in the analysis points to this. It states that there was consensual sex at first, but that the female victim told the male perpetrator she wanted to stop, which was then "not accepted" by the perpetrator. If the power relation between men and women, working in favour of the man, is acted out in what is discursively constructed as heterosexual sex, the role of the woman in the specific sexual situation is to give permission or to resist. As seen in the analysis, sexual crime is described using the same words that are used when describing consensual sex. This is sex as a means of power, where women are sexually passive, but where it is also the responsibility of the woman to resist crime, and where the man can choose not to accept the act of resistance. Combined

with the tendency to describe sexual crime as an agentless occurrence, it is signalled men cannot control their sexual behaviour, they do not act out the crime, it *happens* to the woman.

This is in line with what Beauvoir and Butler show, that the condition of difference of the sexes is grounds for all philosophical and social belief systems, which gives the sexes (or genders, but as Butler shows we could treat them as the same) different properties. Especially when it comes to sexuality. The active/passive stereotype around men and women respectively, is the basis for the conclusions of this analysis. As the previous research has shown, these stereotypes are constitutive parts of how sexual crime is described throughout society, in the judicial system, by the perpetrators and victims, by opinion pieces in the media, and as shown in this analysis, by news reports in trusted newspapers.

Discourse on sexuality create descriptions (or semiotic events) of sexual crime, which in turn constitute the very same discourse, and this works to sustain power relations in the social world. The consequences of this are very real to the victims of sexual crime. Their own stories of the crime they were subjected to contain, as Ehrlich shows, the construction of themselves as partly to blame for the crime, because it puts focus on how they acted in terms of resistance. As news articles, seemingly objective in nature, construct sexual crime and its victims in the same way, this seems natural. The juridical system, medical care and the public opinion through the media, will also treat female victims of sexual crime in accordance with this. This construction of sexual crime, its victims and perpetrators, could, in accordance with Laclau and Mouffe's definition, be interpreted as ideology and unjust power relations hidden through hegemonic articulation making this particular construction seem neutral and objective.

There are alternative explanations one could support with the same data. For instance, one could argue there is a news media logic applied in the choice of wording of such news articles. The aim of news media is arguably to help people critically examine the events of the surrounding world, their political leaders and other powerful institutions making up their society. But in doing this, they also have to compete with other news media, and this is where the production of news becomes a business. To be able to sell newspapers, journalists might use the story-telling technique of proximity and sympathy. A reader of a news article will

arguably engage more sympathetically with it, if the victim of a crime is the subject of the article. The reader will then connect him- or herself with the victim and be more interested in the story, thinking “this could have been me”, whereas this would not have happened had the story been told putting the perpetrator in the active agential position. This might explain the choice of putting the victim in the active agential position when describing sexual crime, and also the use of non-violent words in describing the criminal actions. However, this explanation debatably lacks connection with the power relation between men and women in society which result in stereotypes regarding female and male sexuality helping to put part of the blame for sexual crimes on women *outside* of the world of the media, and identifying these stereotypes in the descriptions of sexual crimes *within* the media.

8.1 Methodological discussion

This analysis is conducted using a qualitative method: critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis departs from a view of the world as constructed in social interaction. As this is also the theoretical point of view of the researcher, this method was chosen to investigate the particular linguistic and semiotic construction of sexual crimes in Swedish broadsheet newspaper articles. Furthermore, the analysis discusses the findings in relation with proposed social consequences of the specific linguistic constructions of the crime found in the material. The aim of the analysis is not to find generalizable objective truths, but to construct a situated understanding of the specific situation that is investigated. Arguably, a quantitative approach would put more traditional scientific weight behind conclusions drawn, since such research follows formulas and rules and presents mathematically constructed statistical conclusions using larger samples of material. However, it would then have lost some of its deeper proposed understanding of the situated linguistic construction of sexual crime. Had one had the privilege of continuing research, one would wisely do so using e.g. quantitative content analysis, to complement this analysis and form a more complete image of the investigated phenomena, both broad and generalizable as well as deep and specific. The aim of this analysis is, however, to try and deconstruct seemingly objective descriptions and to make visible the connection between language and power in this particular situation. The critical change criteria used here is the explicit aim of this analysis to raise consciousness of unjust power relations between men and women

regarding media descriptions of sexual crime, which follows as a natural consequence of the feminist point of view of the researcher.

9. Conclusion and moving forward

The purpose of this report was to analyse discourses around sexual crimes in news articles, the semiotic constructions of victims, perpetrators and the crimes themselves, and to examine how these might help maintain a social order where injustices in how men and women are seen and treated are possible. The fact that the overwhelming majority of people accused of sexual violence are men and most victims are women was used as a point of departure.

The results of the analysis indicate the use of discourse around male and female sexuality in the construction of sexual crime in the newspapers investigated. The texts seem to be based on a proposed difference in male and female sexual identity, where the former is the norm while the latter is passive and unable to voice sexual desire. The constructions of a female victim in the material use this stereotypical depiction of female sexuality in two ways, either the women are conforming to it by being unable to voice their sexual desire (or saying no) or they are acting in an opposing way by being drunk or promiscuous. Part of the blame for sexual crime is hereby put on the female victim, as her actions around the crime are described, making them seem as they are of importance to the construction of the crime. This is also indicated by the linguistic construction of the events, where all the articles use, at one point or another, a passive agentless form for describing the crime and/or a linguistic construction that puts the female victim in the centre by giving her the subject position (“the woman was raped”). The male perpetrators are, at least once in every article, left without agential position. The construction of the male perpetrator, then, shows a neutrality in the activeness of male sexuality, giving the male perpetrator the space to commit crime within the discursive male sexual behaviour. To rephrase, he did indeed perform the sexual act, but not the crime, the criminal part of the events taking place is constructed around the actions of the female victim.

To conclude, the semiotic construction of sexual crimes, perpetrators and victims in the newspaper articles analysed here, could be said to be part of a hegemonic discursive articulation, seemingly objective and neutral, helping to sustain relations of power between

men and women within the social world. This is shown by the use of stereotypical identity constructions of male perpetrators and female victims, as well as the construction of the crimes themselves. The blame for the crimes is partly the victims'. Arguably, this would help to sustain relations of sexual power between men and women, and it may also have consequences for individuals subjected to sexual crimes, their well-being, and the individuals committing them, them not being fully blamed.

In constructing the purpose and research question of this analysis, I departed from my own experiences of growing up and living my life as a woman. I wanted to investigate my experience of feeling like there were stricter norms and stereotypes surrounding my behaviour than that of my male counterparts. This analysis proposes that the semiotic world of newspaper articles constructs sexual crime in relation to a dichotomy of sexual identities, and stereotypes regarding this dichotomy, that are taken for granted in our social world because of their hegemonic nature. These discourses on male and female sexual identity may help sustaining the unjust power relation between men and women in our social world by using stereotypes around female and male sexuality to put blame on victims of sexual crime. The results are in line with the experiences of myself and numerous other women. As I was conducting the analysis, the hashtag #metoo started spreading worldwide, used by women to talk about their experiences of being subjected to sexual crime. These women explain why for a long time they chose not to talk about their experiences: precisely because they feared the blame for the crime would partly or fully be put on them. Time Magazine named "The silence breakers", in reference to women using #metoo, person of the year 2017.⁶⁵ One woman commented this on Instagram:

"I don't know why things like this make me so emotional. Well, actually, I do. I do know why. It's because for half my life I stayed silent. It was the way you dealt with assault, harassment, and any kind of violation. You stayed quiet, letting the shame, guilt and insecurities eat you alive."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Time Magazine, 2017.

⁶⁶ @valeriesprinklz, 2017-12-07

9.1 Suggested future research

This analysis gives several examples of paths that could be pursued when conducting further research. One is linked to the legal system and to popular opinion. Built into the seemingly objective reports of sexual crime by highly regarded newspapers is the focus on the victim's actions, behaviour and properties, playing into the hands of a discourse around female sexuality which make female victims of sexual crimes a part of the actual crimes. This subtle shift of focus from perpetrator to victim might influence popular opinion in thinking about rape and sexual assault as something that happens to certain women rather than being crimes committed by certain men, this in turn influencing decision making around legislation targeted at sexual crimes. This connection could be further investigated, showing if and how popular opinion is influenced by discursive production and reproduction of sexual crimes, perpetrators and victims in news media as well as in the law, and how this in turn affects the juridical and penal systems and law making.

Another path would be to compare discourses around several types of crimes and how they are (re)produced in news media. Are sexual crimes treated differently than other crimes in the media and if not, could we state that news media discourse (re)produce crime in general in a particular way? This would then require further investigation into how news articles are perceived by their audience as well as how these articles are dialectically connected to unjust power relations on a larger scale. And if not, if sexual crimes are actually treated differently in news media than other crimes, this report could be expanded to stating that discourse around female and male sexuality in connection to sexual crimes, being performed by men and directed at women to a large extent, (re)produce discourse around male and female behaviour in general, cementing an unjust power relation between the two.

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List of material: See Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: List of Material

Title	Publication	Source	Search term	Publish date
Parlamentsledamot utreds för övergrepp	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/parlamentsledamot-utreds-for-overgrepp/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-10-21
TV4-ledningen kände till övergreppen i många år	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/arkiv/nyheter/tv4-ledningen-kande-till-overgreppen-i-manga-ar/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-10-21
TV4-profilens sexövergrepp nonchalerades	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/arkiv/nyheter/tv4-profilens-sexovergrepp-nonchalerades/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-10-20
Kvinnor och flickor tas som sexslavar i CAR	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/kvinnor-och-flickor-tas-som-sexslavar-i-car/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-10-05
Bröder åtalas för hundratals våldtäkter	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/broder-atalas-for-hundratals-valdtakter/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-10-05
Misstänks ha tvingat barn utföra sexuella övergrepp på sig själva	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/misstanks-ha-tvingat-barn-utfora-sexuella-overgrepp-pa-sig-sjalva/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-09-28
Man åtalas för barnvåldtäkter över nätet	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/man-atalas-for-barnvaldtakter-over-natet/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-09-25
Larm: Unga tvingades till sprit- och sexfester	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/arkiv/nyheter/larm-unga-tvingades-till-sprit-och-sexfester/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-09-24
16-åring vill frias från våldtäktsdom	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/arkiv/stockholm/16-aring-vill-frias-fran-valdtaktsdom/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-08-08
Unga kvinnor utsatta för sexofredanden på stadsfestival	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/unga-kvinnor-utsatta-for-sexofredanden-pa-stadsfestival/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-08-06
Misstänkt överfallsvåldtäkt på Bråvalla	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/misstankt-overfallsvaldtakt-pa-bravalla/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-07-02
Anmälde förgäves övergrepp på psykklinik	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/sthlm/anmalde-forgaves-overgrepp-pa-psykklinik/	sexuella övergrepp	2017-05-11
Aftonbladetprofil anmäls på nytt	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/arkiv/nyheter/aftonbladetprofil-anmals-pa-nytt/	våldtäkt	2017-10-21
Två döms och en frias för gruppvåldtäkt	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/sthlm/tva-doms-och-en-frias-for-gruppvaldtakt/	våldtäkt	2017-10-17

Kvinna kidnappades och våldtogs - dom idag	Dagens Nyheter	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/kvinna-kidnappades-och-valdtogs-dom-i-dag/	våldtäkt	2017-10-13
Häktad för åtta år gammal våldtäkt	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/haktad-for-atta-ar-gammal-valdtakt	våldtäkt	2017-10-05
Utredningar om överfallsvåldtäkter läggs ner	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/utredningar-om-overfallsvaldtakter-laggs-ner	våldtäkt	2017-10-05
Kvinna våldtagen vid gångtunnel	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/kvinna-valdtagen-vid-gangtunnel	våldtäkt	2017-10-08
Man gripen för våldtäkt	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/man-gripen-for-valdtakt-ttia	våldtäkt	2017-10-09
Äldre man misstänks ha filmat våldtäkt	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/aldre-man-misstanks-ha-filmat-valdtakt	våldtäkt	2017-10-14
Våldtagen hittade sin förövare på Facebook	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/valdtagen-hittade-sin-forovare-pa-natet	våldtäkt	2017-10-20
Festfixare överklagar våldtäktsdom	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/festfixare-overklagar-valdtaktsdom	våldtäkt	2017-01-20
Andra våldtäktsman åtalad i uppmärksammat mål	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/andra-valdtaktsman-atalad-i-uppmarksammat-mal	våldtäkt	2017-02-10
Flicka utsatt för sexövergrepp - hemmet har inte anmält	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/flicka-utsatt-for-sexovergrepp-hemmet-har-inte-anmalt	våldtäkt	2017-05-15
Fängelsedom för grov våldtäkt i bil står fast	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/fangelsedom-for-grov-valdtakt-i-bil-star-fast	våldtäkt	2017-05-23
Kvinna våldtagen i samband med rån	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/kvinna-valdtagen-i-samband-med-ran	våldtäkt	2017-08-04
Bjöd på starköl och våldtog minderårig	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/bjod-pa-starkol-och-valdtog-minderarig	sexuella övergrepp	2017-11-02
Misstänkt övergrepp under färdtjänstresa	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/misstankt-overgrepp-under-fardtjanstresa	sexuella övergrepp	2017-11-02
Göteborgare dömd för sexövergrepp mot minderårig	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/goteborga-re-domd-for-sexovergrepp-mot-minderaring	sexuella övergrepp	2017-07-04
Körskollärare åtalad för sexbrott	Svenska Dagbladet	https://www.svd.se/korskollar-are-atalad-for-sexbrott	sexuella övergrepp	2017-05-24