Discovering Conversation Spaces in the Public Discourse of Gender Violence: a Comparative Between Two Different Contexts

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Abstract

A huge factor in gender-based violence is perception and stigma, revealed by public discourse. Topic modelling is useful for discourse analysis and reveals prevalent topics and actors. This study aims to find and compare examples of collectivist and individualist conversation spaces of gendered violence by applying Principal Component Analysis, N-Gram analysis and word association in two gender violence cases which occured in the different contexts of the Philippines and the United States. The data from the Philippines consist of 2010-2011 articles on the 1991 Vizconde Massacre and the data from the United States consist of 2016-2017 articles from the 2015 Stanford Rape Case. Results show that in both cases' conversation space there is a focus on institutions involved in the cases that does not really change over time, and a time-dependent conversation space for victims. Even in two different contexts of gender violence, patterns in conversation space appear similar.

1 Introduction

In 2010, around 20 people in the United States were being physically abused by a partner every minute (Black, Basile, Breiding, et al, 2011). Gender-based violence is a prevalent problem, even until today: 1 in 3 women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence worldwide(World Health Organization, 2016). The emphasis on gender points to the context that this violence happens because of unequal power relations between women and men. Gendered expectations and structures of power are passed down and learned through interactions and discussions - discourse datasets are a potential source to analyze for this (Butler, 1988).

This study uses principal component analysis, word frequency counts, word associations, and N-gram analysis to compare two different public discourses on gender violence, specifically articles written about the Stanford rape case and the Vizconde massacre. This is done between two sets of discourse that happens in an individualist society(U.S.) and a collectivist society(Philippines). It aims to analyze a conversation space to see what aspect of gender violence discourse appears to be the primary focus - victims, perpetrators, institutions or society as an initial diagnosis of how gender violence is framed in such discourses.

People v. Brock Allen Turner(the official name of the legal case of the Stanford rape) began on January 18, 2015 when a college student athlete named Brock Turner was indicted for charges of rape and sexual assault. Turner was convicted on March 30, 2016 for charges of sexual assault. On June 2, 2016, he was sentenced to 6 months of jail. This case raised controversy because of the constant defense of the Turner family, claiming their son's reputation would be ruined, as well as the short amount of time given to Brock Turner for his crime.

On the other hand, the Vizconde massacre in June 30, 1991 was a homicide case where one of the victims was raped before being killed. Several men were involved as suspects in the case, including Hubert Webb, Joey Filart, Artemio Ventura, Michael Gatchalian, Hospicio Fernandez and Anto-

nio Lejano II. All of them were convicted in regional court as well as the court of appeals. However, the Supreme Court chose to reverse this decision and acquit the men on December 14, 2010. Recent discussion on the memory of the case emerged once more during Lauro Vizconde's death on February 13, 2016.

The study is limited to the data of articles about the Stanford rape case starting from when its decision was released on June 2, 2016, until 2 weeks afterward, as well as articles written 6-7 months afterwards. The articles chosen for the Vizconde massacre are the ones written after the announcement of the Supreme Court's reversal and acquittal on December 14, 2010 up to two weeks afterward, as well as articles written 6-7 months afterwards.

2   Related Literature

Discussions on rape frame how it is understood by readers. It is thought that whoever's story is believed is the story that gets to determine the definition of what rape is (Kaiser, 2002). This is aggravated by several rape myth acceptance factors that exist in society today - things which can shift responsibility from victims to perpetrators, or only accept certain kinds of events as 'real rape' (Frese, 2004). Individualist and collectivist societies have displayed differences in gender violence perception due to different notions of responsibility (Lo, So and Zhang, 2010; Yamawaki, 2007).

Several feminist scholars have talked about concepts such as masculine aggressiveness and feminine weakness(MacKinnon, 1989), constant victim narratives for women (Sjoberg, 2010; Maeda, 2011), entitlement over female bodies and promiscuity as invitation(MacKinnon, 1989; Maeda, 2011). There has also been analysis that incidents of gender violence talk about perpetrators as outliers(du Toit, 2010; Murphy, 2007). Several of these play into how victims of violence are perceived (Menaker and Franklin, 2015; Olwan, 2013), and how this violence is potrayed in artworks (Nixon, Rodier and Meagher, 2012; Yarbro-Bejarano, 2013).

Other studies have also looked at various institutions and how they affect gender violence perception (Joyce-Wojitas and Keenan, 2016; Hudson, 2002; Morrison, Ellsberg and Bott, 2007).

What these various literature show are different aspects at play when rape narratives are framed - for the purpose of this study, these can be summarized into four entities: victims, perpetrators, institutions, and society/culture.

3   Methodology

Two datasets are used in this study. The first is the set of articles on the Stanford rape committed by Brock Turner starting from June 2, 2016 on the day Brock Turner's sentence was given. The second is the set of articles on the Vizconde murders starting from December 14, 2010 when the suspects of the case were acquitted by the Supreme Court. These articles were gathered from various media sources. To account for different media biases, a single source was never to exceed a fourth of the total dataset. Data for each event was divided into two sets: one dataset of articles starting from the day of acquittal or sentence for up to two weeks afterward. The second dataset would be for articles occuring six months after the event.

3.1   Pre-Processing

Stop words, filler words and punctuation are removed from articles, and documents converted to lowercase. Aside from the standard dictionary of English stopwords, profanities are also removed from the data because of the vague emotions often associated with their use. Names of individuals involved in the cases are also removed for most processing steps. These are retained for bigram frequency count to see which actors in the discourse are more mentioned than others.

3.2   Word Frequency, Bi-Gram Frequency, and Word Association

Document-term matrices are generated for both unigrams and bigrams and collapsed into a word-frequency and bi-gram-frequency tables, arranged in descending order. Word association is done for the top fifteen unigrams and top five bigrams, using a minimum correlation value of 0.5.

3.3   Principal Component Analysis on Unigrams and Bi-Grams

Using document-term matrices generated for unigramas and bi-grams, principal component analysis is

applied for each. Generated document-term matrices had sparse terms removed, allowing for 85% to 90% maximum sparsity. Topics are located using PCA results, using all words in the first and second dimensions with a correlation value of 0.5 and above.

Principal component analaysis is applied three times to the Stanford Rape and Vizconde Massacre datasets. Once for the set immediately after the chosen events, once for the set six months afterward, and one for the datasets as a whole.

3.4 Comparison

Lastly, the results of the two datasets are compared by looking into similarities and differences in key topics and actors in the conversation space. First, comparisons are drawn by looking into any changes over time for both events. Secondly, comparisons are drawn by looking at any similarities and differences between the two cultures. These are contextualized and analyzed by looking at cultural differences between the Philippines and United States as collectivist and individualist states.

4 Results and Discussion

Results are analyzed with the overall goal of finding out (a) if there are changes in the conversation space for the same gender violence event over a period of six months (b) what particular aspect of gender violence discourse appears to be the focal point of a particular set (victim, perpetrator, institution, or society), and (c) if there are similarities between two different contexts of gender violence(between the Philippines and the United States) even if the events occur in different times and societies.

4.1 Frequency Count and Associations

Frequency counts for words and bi-grams in the Stanford dataset can be found in table 1. Some things are worthy of note. First of all, words such as "victim" and "woman" disappear from the top 10 frequently mentioned words six months afterwards. "Campus", most possibly referring to the Stanford Rape, disappears as well. "Judge" appears to be a consistent entity mentioned even six months afterward.

This trend continues even with bi-gram analysis, in table 1. The closest bi-gram which could refer to

Table 1: Stanford Rape: Frequency Words and Bi-Grams

After Sentencing	
victim	197
sentence	137
woman	130
judge	121
time	114
statement	112
campus	99
night	98
life	96
unconscious	91
After 6 Months	
judge	76
commission	62
sentence	43
judicial	40
recall	39
probation	29
campaign	28
misconduct	28
months	28
jail	26
After Sentencing	
brock turner	65
stanford university	42
santa clara	29
county jail	28
aaron persky	25
probation officer	25
clara county	24
minutes action	23
unconscious woman	22
pine needles	20
After 6 Months	
judge persky	49
brock turner	19
commission judicial	15
santa clara	15
clara county	14
judicial performance	14
recall campaign	13
stanford university	13
evidence bias	10
former stanford	10

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the victim in this case is "unconscious woman", not even "Emily Doe" as she used a pseudonym. "Aaron Persky", "Brock Turner", and "Stanford University" appear more consistent.

Table 2: Stanford Rape: Word Associations for 'Victim'

confirmed	0.71
crime	0.7
actions	0.65
serious	0.64
caused	0.63
remembered	0.63
county	0.62
attempt	0.61
lives	0.61
meet	0.61
conversations	0.6
lines	0.6
remorse	0.6
request	0.6
genuine	0.59
letter	0.59
punishment	0.59
tried	0.59
legal	0.58
leniency	0.58

What this is presenting so far is a discourse that inconsistently talks about victims. An analysis of some words associated with "victim" that can be found in table 2 in the Stanford Rape dataset reveal that many words that are associated with "victim" are still in reference to legal institutions - words such as "legal", "leniency", "crime" and "punishment" which are more tied to the legal aspect of the cases. However, one set of word association results shows a break from this - when looking at associated words for "sentence" in table 3, there does appear to be a sudden association with the victim 6 months afterward with words such as "emily" and "victim" which were not present earlier.

The emerging trend of a more institution-centric discourse is consistent with findings in the Vizconde Massacre dataset, presented in table 4. Top words are "court" and "nbi", referring to the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the Bureau of Investigations in the top words without any words that could be attributed to victims, and "Supreme Court"

Table 3: Stanford Rape: Word Associations for 'Sentence'

Immediately After	
law	0.7
county	0.68
felony	0.67
minutes	0.66
hours	0.64
clara	0.61
leniency	0.61
probation	0.61
santa	0.61
send	0.61
viral	0.61
urged	0.6
dedicated	0.59
pages	0.59
superior	0.59
action	0.58
convicted	0.58
california	0.57
class	0.57
court	0.57
6 Months After	
prison	0.89
jail	0.82
judicial	0.82
recommended	0.81
defense	0.8
excuses	0.8
independent	0.8
looked	0.8
assessment	0.78
decision	0.77
critics	0.75
probation	0.75
national	0.74
prosecutors	0.74
emily	0.73
offender	0.73
performance	0.73
victim	0.72
clara	0.66
defendant	0.66

and "de Lima"(the head of the Department of Justice) being the top bi-grams. Bi-gram analysis for the Vizconde Massacre dataset does, however, have "Lauro Vizconde" as a more consistent bi-gram immediately after the events and even 6 months afterwards. "Carmela Jennifer" appears in the case six months afteward, referring to two of the victims who were murdered in the case, Carmela and Jennifer Vizconde.

4.2 Principal Component Analysis

Principal component analysis results for the Stanford Rape case are in tables 5 and 6.The topics continue to show more of a focus towards institutional aspects of the case, with a topic on cultural discussion that emerged in the dataset six months after. A topic that would be close to the victim is the rape event itself which she herself narrated in the letter that she had written - a topic which can no longer be found in the later set's PCA results. However, when PCA is applied to the overall dataset, the topic of the "victim" does emerge.

Meanwhile, in the case of the Vizconde Massacre in tables 7 and 8, the victims of the case, the Vizconde Family, emerge as a topic only six months afterwards. It is possible that this is a response to their family announcing things such as their remembrance masses and 20th anniversary of the deaths of the victims. The institution of the Supreme Court appears prominent throughout time, as "failure of prosecution" is still being talked about six months afterwards. Running PCA for the overall dataset reveals the topic "perceived injustice".

5 Conclusion

In both datasets from the United States and the Philippines, discourse appears to be primarily institution-centric, though it could possibly be argued that there is a very prominent space for the perpetrator as well. This is based on the consistency of their prominence even across a change of 6 months - with topics such and words such as 'court' 'judge', 'nbi' and topics such as 'court decision', 'judge persky' and the like. Victims, however, do not appear to have a very consistent space in the conversation as conversations seem likelier to change focus over time. Instead, victims are promi-

Table 4: Vizconde Massacre Frequency Words and Bi-Grams

After Acquittal	
court	306
justice	129
accused	110
decision	108
supreme	94
crime	92
family	82
witness	81
evidence	72
nbi	72
After 6 Months	
nbi	54
investigation	41
evidence	40
witnesses	40
crime	38
court	36
justice	33
time	29
country	22
doj	22
After Acquittal	
supreme court	92
hubert webb	55
jessica alfaro	39
lauro vizconde	37
trial court	31
court appeals	30
reasonable doubt	30
beyond reasonable	28
co accused	28
associate justices	24
After 6 Months	
de lima	45
hubert webb	24
supreme court	22
lauro vizconde	15
bureau investigation	11
carmela jennifer	10
national bureau	10
leila de	9
crime scene	8
double jeopardy	8

Table 5: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions Immediately After

Rape as Crime

santa clara	0.8620547
clara county	0.8562122
minutes action	0.6171062
intent commit	0.5957213
intoxicated person	0.5732411
former stanford	0.5321426
county jail	0.5047081

Rape Event

night	0.9308822
time	0.9091522
body	0.9084846
life	0.8999215
family	0.8937538
told	0.8856298
drinking	0.8837296
party	0.8835866
happened	0.8788474
consent	0.8695934
attorney	0.8629541
dumpster	0.851985
unconscious	0.8511993
naked	0.8508088

Turner's Sentence

clara	0.7986594
santa	0.7986594
county	0.6862388
sentence	0.6565878
law	0.6543873
california	0.6096214
sentencing	0.5948697
media	0.5923465
report	0.5858502
felony	0.5478694
prison	0.5177417
court	0.5151062
national	0.5084797
judge	0.5053399

Table 6: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions 6 Months After

Cultural Discussion

discipline	0.893028
social	0.8883636
bias	0.8625273
conclude	0.8556272
convincing	0.8556272
warranting	0.8556272
published	0.8554577
thousands	0.8258422
party	0.8134658
online	0.790534
authority	0.7841988
california	0.7760179
prosecutors	0.7727551
media	0.7695833
engaged	0.7258757
received	0.7150418
misconduct	0.7033931
passed	0.6973579
ignited	0.6958733
concluded	0.6665783
system	0.6654961

Judge Persky

judicial performance	0.7815202
commission judicial	0.7355416
judicial misconduct	0.6994272
california commission	0.696224
turner months	0.5849886
law professor	0.5161074
stanford law	0.5145941

Table 7: Vizconde Massacre: PCA Dimensions Immediately After

Court Decision

court	0.868481
prosecution	0.808735
accused	0.777947
evidence	0.76032
associate	0.758914
testimony	0.736475
trial	0.716811
crime	0.697268
justices	0.69006
paranaque	0.680054
inconsistencies	0.643145
appeals	0.607427
sister	0.599042
ruling	0.591526
dna	0.581791
midas	0.560098
released	0.551964
decision	0.547805
prove	0.54019
witness	0.53984

Hubert Webb

senator	0.744941
father	0.652629
son	0.615067
home	0.602323
prison	0.582448
family	0.546761
day	0.531314
former	0.50988

Jessica Alfaro

positive identification	0.786539
credible witness	0.726663
court court	0.709272
court appeals	0.678953
substitute witness	0.648001
lower court	0.589628
defense alibi	0.587118
witness nbi	0.559133
nbi asset	0.557574
trial court	0.548972
alfaros testimony	0.506208
physical evidence	0.503106

Table 8: Vizconde Massacre: 6 Months After

Crime Investigation

national	0.768269
investigation	0.725393
secretary	0.676848
bureau	0.668087
period	0.651219
suspects	0.610525
country	0.589908
crime	0.577354
reinvestigation	0.565068
nbi	0.544061
evidence	0.512984
file	0.502901

Vizconde Family

friends	0.750561
people	0.746146
family	0.66433
wife	0.660527
paraaque	0.630516
involved	0.621915
homes	0.618088
told	0.607636
supposed	0.596577
murders	0.525381
witness	0.511999
daughters	0.502754

Failure of Prosecution

co accused	0.715868
corroborated testimony	0.697234
period apply	0.697234
testimony witness	0.697234
national police	0.6949
defense alibi	0.66142
time crime	0.66142
charges filed	0.630004
crime happened	0.630004
failed establish	0.630004
police pnp	0.630004
prescriptive period	0.615335
prove guilt	0.592484
based testimony	0.53435
acquitted supreme	0.520877
crime evidence	0.520877
file charges	0.520877

nent when there is a particularly striking occurence within the case events - such as Emily Doe's letter in the Stanford rape case leading to the topic "rape event" and the words "victim", "woman" and "unconscious woman" being more prominent in the discourse; while the Vizconde Family's remembrance mass in the Vizconde massacre case lead to people discussing the topic "Vizconde family". Thus, it can be said that victims have a time-dependent role in the conversation space. Societal discussions, on the other hand, appear inconsistent as well - with topics such as "cultural discussion" or "perceived injustice" not being as prominent.

Even in two different contexts- in two different cultures and two different times -patterns in gender violence discourse appear to be similar - both focusing on institutions and perpetrators more than on victims and society. This opens up further questions still in terms of how much more understanding or progress still needs to be made in terms of how cases such as these are discussed, and if these kinds of attitudes towards discussions on gender violence exist across various cultures. In any case, for both events that were studied for this research, it appears that media discourse remains somewhat silent when it comes to analyzing societal culture; as a result, victims may still find themselves in the background of their own injustice.

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