Uncovering the Narratives of the Rehtaeh Parsons Case: A Content Analysis of Canadian
Newspapers

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Abstract

       The present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. Through the use of qualitative content analysis of Canadian newspapers, the present research involved an examination of how the media socially constructed the case with specific focus on how the issues of bullying and harassment were depicted in comparison to broader social inequalities within our society. This research is methodologically qualitative, informed by an intersectional conceptual framework and engages content analysis of media sources as key method.

       The purpose of this study was to examine how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was constructed by Canadian news sources, with specific focus on aspects of bullying and social inequalities that were discussed by the media in relation to the case, and subsequent reaction and response after the suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons. This analysis provided an in-depth understanding of how the case was conceptualized and the core components of the case that were discussed by news sources across Canada. Through the use of an intersectional framework and content analysis this study examined twenty-three selected Canadian newspapers articles that discussed the core components and issues surrounding the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

       More specifically, this study sought to address two major research questions:

1. How was the Rehtaeh Parsons case conceptualized by Canadian news outlets?

2. To what extent was the Rehtaeh Parsons case constructed as a case of bullying, harassment and sexual assault in comparison to broader social inequalities within society?

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Introduction

The decision of a high school teen to share sexually explicit images of a teen girl left a trail of devastation which began in November of 2011, lasting almost seventeen months and ended with the tragic death of Rehtaeh Parsons. In April of 2013, seventeen-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons attempted suicide by hanging which resulted in a coma; the decision was made three days later by family to remove her from life support (Segal, 2015). But the beginning of this tragic case dates much further back and began when the then fifteen-year-old Parsons attended a high school party, with little knowledge that her life would be changed from that day forward. Parsons was reportedly raped by four teenage boys while attending the high-school party (Segal, 2015). The teen had very little memory of the night but reported at one point vomiting out of a window while a boy continued to rape her from behind. The incident was photographed by one of the boys involved and the photo was subsequently distributed through text message to various people including several of Rehtaeh's classmates (Segal, 2015). It did not take long for the photo in question to be sent around to teens from Rehtaeh's local high school in Nova Scotia. Parsons then experienced extreme torment and bullying from her schoolmates and experienced people calling her a "slut" and receiving text messages from people requesting to have sex with her (Segal, 2015). The extreme torment that Parsons received resulted in her switching schools several times; despite attending various different schools the torment continued, with little assistance from school authorities (Segal, 2015).

A year following the alleged rape of Rehtaeh Parsons which occurred in November of 2011, the RCMP declared that there was insufficient evidence to lay charges on the boys involved in the incident. Following the suicide of Parsons in April of 2013, the RCMP reopened the case which resulted in two boys pleading guilty to a charge of making child pornography, there were still no charges laid for the alleged sexual assault of Rehtaeh Parsons. This fact points

to the complexity of sex crime cases in this age of ubiquitous digital evidence impacting the processes and outcomes of police investigations (Dodge, Spencer, Ricciardelli & Ballucci (2019). Since the tragic incident, many have called into question the actions of both the police and the school who many believe failed the teenage girl. Despite the school being aware of the incident and the immense torment that Rehtaeh was enduring, little action was made on behalf of the various schools in which Rehtaeh attended throughout the incident.

There has been wide debate over the case, and many have attributed the death of seventeen-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons to both the alleged gang rape and subsequent distribution of photos but also the failure of the justice system and the school the youth attended in Nova Scotia to properly address the extreme bullying and torment that the youth experienced after the incident. The case attracted major media attention both within Canada and across North America as many criticized the ways in which the local police, justice system and school dealt with the situation. The widespread media attention this case attracted led to questions about how to better understand how the case was socially constructed through various news outlets. The present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. Using qualitative content analysis of Canadian newspapers, the present research involved an examination of how the media socially constructed the case with specific focus on how the issues of bullying and harassment were depicted in comparison to broader social inequalities within our society. This research is methodologically qualitative, informed by an intersectional conceptual framework and engages content analysis of media sources as key methods source.

Timeline of Important Events

April 7, 2013- Rehtaeh parsons is taken off life support have her suicide attempt places her in a coma.

April 11, 2013- Vigil held in remembrance of Rehtaeh Parsons with a focus on creating awareness and putting a stop to violence against women and girls.

April 12, 2013- The RCMP decides to reopen the investigation of the Rehtaeh Parsons case after receiving new evidence.

April 15, 2013- Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter says the province will launch an independent review of the RCMP's original investigation of allegations made by Parsons.

April 18, 2013 – Nova Scotia appoints two experts to review how the Halifax Regional School Board, the Capital District Health Authority and the IWK Health Centre responded to the Parsons case.

April 24, 2013 – Prime Minister Stephen Harper meets with members of Parsons' family in Ottawa and in question period says it is time to speak out against the notion that "anything goes" on the Internet. Harper says his government will fast-track efforts to create an anti-cyberbullying law.

September 21, 2014 – One of the boys involved in the case pleads guilty to child pornography charges.

November 24, 2014 – A second man involved in the case pleads guilty to distributing child pornography.

October 8, 2015 – "Independent Review of the Police and Prosecutor Response to the Rehtaeh Parsons Case" is released. It concludes that there were errors in law made by the Crown Prosecutor who first reviewed the case who failed to consider other charges that could have been laid.

(Chronology of Rehtaeh Parsons Case, 2013)

Social Location of Researcher

Due to the nature of this research project and adopting an intersectional framework it is important that I discuss my social location as a researcher. Due to the intersections of our experience related to race, religion, age, physical size, sexual orientation, social class and various other characteristics, every individual experiences a different social location. It is important, however, that we do not assume someone's social location until we are better able to understand the experiences and circumstances that an individual has gone through.

The work of Andrea Doucet stresses the importance of reflexivity within research. Reflexivity is defined as "the process of reflecting critically on the self, and of analysing and noting personal values that could affect data collection and interpretation" (Walker, 2013, p. 39). Central to reflexivity is the importance of understanding how "values within our research practices are part of how we define, approach, and negotiate the making of evidence, data, and narratives" (Doucet, 2018, p.302). Reflexivity is a core component of qualitative research and provides researchers the opportunity to account for the various influences that shape their research (Mauther & Doucet, 2003). I believe that by stating and understanding my social location, I am critically identifying my position as a researcher and how this could ultimately impact my research process. Doucet (2016) states "taking into consideration that reflexivity is a complex, and multi-faceted, ever changing process that requires ongoing practice, it represents an important part of educational research and teaching" (p. 49). Through the identification of my social location, I strived to incorporate reflexivity throughout the research process and I hoped to create impactful research within the field of child and youth studies.

With regards to my own social location and lived experience I am a white heterosexual female who was born and raised within a middle-class Canadian family. I had the opportunity to pursue an undergraduate education which then led me to undertake my master's to continue my

educational journey. I understand that my social location has awarded me a position of relative privilege. I also reflect on the fact that I benefit from "the racialized, gendered, and colonial systems" in Canada (Kouri, 2020). I considered my positionality throughout the research process. In addition, I work within a female juvenile closed custody unit. I am constantly in contact with girls involved in the justice system, many of whom have experienced similar circumstances as Rehtaeh.

My social location is important to understand as it allows me to be transparent with the reader about my position, world view, and how it guided my approach to this research topic. I believe that my lens is shaped by my social position within society, and in turn influenced my research questions and approach to this project. I recognize that young teenage girls, as I was once one myself, are vulnerable to male power. I reflect on my own position as a woman and as a researcher exploring the case of a young girl and her experiences of male violence. By doing so, I understand that my bias is not erased but instead I hope that by stating my social location, I can be transparent and accountable in relation to my research questions, methods, and analysis and reporting of what I found (Patton, 2015). Ultimately, I strived to promote a better understanding of how my past and current experiences impacted my research approach and analysis. I believe that as a qualitative researcher it is important to be transparent as it increases the rigour of research and ultimately shapes the lens in which we ask and answer questions (Patton, 2015).

Throughout the research process I continually reflected on my social location as the researcher and was aware of my personal pre-understandings such as personal assumptions, professional background, and previous experience and knowledge (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017) and how it may have impacted the research process. This involved continually reflecting

on concepts related to power, privilege, and oppression and how they impacted this research process overall. As the researcher when I believed that my social location and pre-understandings had impacted the analysis of the data, I took a step away from the research to reflect and gain better insight into how my personal beliefs and lived experiences may have been impacting the research. This often involved taking time away from the data and continually reflecting on the coding and the research process as a whole. It was important that as a researcher I identified my social location and background in order to understand how it may have been impacting the research process (Doucette, 2016; Walker, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Methodology

Through the combination of qualitative methodology, discourse analysis and literature review the present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. Mills (2017) stated "methodology determines how the researcher thinks about a study, how they make decisions about a study, and how they position themselves to engage firstly with participants and then with the data generated/collected" (p. 3). As previously stated, the goal of this research project was to understand how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources, to accomplish this goal I implemented the use of qualitative methodology, discourse analysis and literature review, to better understand the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

Qualitative discourse analysis was implemented as the chosen methodology within this research project, as the main goal of this project was to understand how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized through Canadian newspaper articles. LeGreco (2014) explained how discourse analysis "offers a methodology that turns our focus on talk and text, then its related methods of data collection are almost exclusively qualitative and include recordings of naturally occurring speech, interviews, observations, and relevant texts" (p. 11). The emphasis of this methodology is on understanding and examining texts and their meanings, through the involvement of the close reading of specific texts (Vaara, 2015).

Within discourse analysis there are two dominant camps which include: Foucauldian-inspired discourse and critical discourse analysis. Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis is heavily focused on power relationships within society and how language can provide information on social structures throughout history. Irene Stevens (2011) stated that from a Foucauldian perspective "the language and texts generated at particular points in history give clues about the

structures of knowledge and power underlying them" (p. 476). From this perspective power is something that can control social institutions and ultimately plays a role in whose voices are heard and in turn impact aspects of social justice within our society (Stevens, 2011). In comparison, critical discourse analysis was heavily influenced by the work of Fairclough (1989). Fairclough was interested as to why some ideas within our society are very heavily visible and reported on while others seemed to go unnoticed and even ignored (Stevens, 2011). Fairclough (1989) described discourse as "language as social practice determined by social structure" (p. 14). Today we see language as social practice in the form of newspapers, blog posts and journals. Stevens (2011) states, "as language is determined by social structures, then an analysis of language can provide some indications as to the origin of ideas about social justice" (p. 476).

Through the analysis of language in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons we can better understand the core components of the case in connection to aspects of social justice and through this understanding we can determine appropriate actions, so such a tragedy does not occur again. Furthermore, Vaara (2015) states that critical discourse analysis "aims at revealing taken-for-granted assumptions on social, societal, political and economic spheres, and examines power relationships between various kinds of discourses and actors" (p. 4). It is for these reasons that I decided to implement a critical discourse analysis as methodology which in turn impacted my decision to implement content analysis as methods, which will further be discussed within the methods section of this paper.

The ultimate goal of critical discourse analysis is to provide knowledge on the subject matter, illuminate the concern, and provide change (LeGreco, 2014). The present study consisted of the content analysis of media texts, specifically newspaper articles on the Rehtaeh Parsons case. In keeping with the goals of critical discourse analysis, this research project aimed to

provide knowledge on the Rehtaeh Parsons case while illuminating the various concerns associated with the case, and lastly understanding how the case provides us with the ability for change.

I recognized the importance of including an in-depth literature review as I believe it provided the foundation of this research project. Xiao and Watson (2019) stated "by summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing a group of related literature, we can test a specific hypothesis and/or develop new theories. We can also evaluate the validity and quality of existing work against a criterion to reveal weaknesses, inconsistencies, and contradictions" (p. 1). By conducting a literature review, I was able to receive an in-depth analysis of literature that provided context and background to begin the analysis of newspaper articles related to the Rehtaeh Parsons case. This study implemented a narrative literature review which aims to be descriptive in nature. A narrative review does "not aim to expand upon the literature, but rather provide an account of the state of the literature at the time of the review" (Xiao & Watson, 2019 p. 3). The goal of conducting a literature review was not to expand on the already existing literature in the various areas of research that were included in this project, but instead use the existing literature as a basis for this research project.

I conducted this literature review using the three major stages outlined by Kitchenham and Charters (2007) which included: planning the review, conducting the review, and reporting the review. Planning the review consisted of formulating the research question and identifying the need for a literature review. Conducting the review involved deciding what literature would be included and excluded, identifying where literature would be extracted from, and analyzing the literature. Lastly, reporting the review consisted of reporting the findings of the review to provide an in-depth account of the literature that was extracted. Conducting a literature review

established the foundation for this research project and provided scholarly knowledge on the

various topics included within the literature review.

Literature Review

To support this research project, four main categories of literature have been addressed including literature on bullying, critiques of bullying, gender inequalities and sexualized violence and literature on crime and the media. Literature on bullying will focus on the main components of bullying and the occurrence of bullying specifically within school settings. In addition, an emphasis will be placed on cyberbullying due to the nature of the case. The bulk of this literature is focused on psychological and social psychological factors. Literature focusing on the critiques of bullying will offer insights on some of the shortcomings of bullying literature. This literature provides a wider context to better understand how the case was constructed predominately as a case of bullying and harassment in comparison to pointing to broader social inequalities that influence misogyny and sexual assault occurring within society. Understanding how the case was conceptualized as one of bullying in contrast to broader social inequalities allows the researcher to analyze both the micro and macro level components of this case. In addition, literature on both gender inequalities and sexualized violence allow us to understand how the law, as a response to social problems, neglects broader structural inequities of age, class, gender, and race and misogyny. Lastly, literature on the media provide an in-depth understanding of how the media constructs social issues, including crime, bullying and sexual assault and harassment. Literature on the media also provide a broader context for the analysis of newspaper articles to better understand how the media constructed the Rehtaeh Parsons case. These bodies of literature, overall, will act as the lenses through which the Canadian news reports on the case were analyzed.

Bullying and Youth Violence

A vast range of literature and research around bullying describes this activity as a complex and widespread health concern that extensively impacts both children and adults

(Kuykendall, 2012; Olweus, 2003; Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). But due to the nature of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, the focus will be on bullying that impacts children and youth, specifically youth within high school. Despite varying definitions, bullying is usually described as "repetitive and intentional aggressive behavior by one individual or group against another in situations where there exists some sort of power differential between the bully and the victim in terms of physical size, social status, or other features" (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016, p. 236). Bullying differs from a simple disagreement between two individuals due to it being characterized as an intentional hurtful action which is often both abusive and malicious (Olweus, 2003). Bullying can involve physical, verbal, and emotional attacks on the victim, with the main goal being to isolate and hurt the victim (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). For the purpose of this research, literature related to bullying has been divided into four main categories: prevalence, causes, treatment and prevention of bullying within school settings. While these issues do not cover the vast array of literature and research on the topic of bullying, they are best related to the research project and to providing a better understanding of the impact of bullying within the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

With regards to the prevalence of bullying data within Canada shows that approximately 1 in 3 adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied and 47% of Canadian parents report having a child victim of bullying (Government, 2012). Research has indicated that the prevalence of bullying throughout the various grade levels remains relatively the same, although the type of bullying we see changes (Kuykendall, 2012). As youth age we see the types of bullying change to more subtle and discrete forms of bullying. We may no longer see the bully physically abusing and teasing third graders during recess, but we now see high school bullying

present itself in other forms such as sending around gossip through texts and other forms of media.

The victim of bullying from a developmental perspective is defined as the individual(s) who experiences some form or type of bullying behaviour which is targeted against them on behalf of the bullying perpetrator (Kuykendall, 2012). In relation to the types of bullying we see within schools, one study found that name-calling accounts for a higher degree of physical victimization compared to more verbal bullying (i.e., 36% victimization; physical bullying 18%; relational exclusion 15%; rumors 14%; nasty comments of a sexual nature 13%; nasty comments about race or ethnicity 10%; theft 5%; and nasty comments about religious affiliation 5%) (Kuykendall, 2012). When it comes to gender, females, and males experience similar rates of victimization, although the type of victimization they experience may differ. In addition, there are various groups of youth that are at a higher risk of experiencing bullying and victimization within schools, such as: children who are new to a community; children with disabilities; children with learning disabilities; children with mental health disorders; youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered youth, youth who are considered overweight, children who experience poverty, racialized minorities, immigrant youth, and youth who do not speak the language of their peers (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). The higher rates of victimization of these youth is often due to the inability or struggle to create meaningful friendships or become a part of a group that brings a sense of belonging to the individual. In addition, youth who are seen as different from their peers, or who do not necessarily fit into their peer group can often experience increased victimization (Black et al., 2007).

Due to the nature of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, it is important to discuss the occurrence and prevalence of cyberbullying especially within high school settings. Cyberbullying has been defined as

> online or electronic (through mobile phones and computers) harassment that is
> repeated over time and involves a power imbalance. Cyberbullying is an aggressive,
> intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of
> contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or
> herself" (Cheng, 2012, p 118).

Cyberbullying can include receiving threatening messages, sending rumours through text, email, or social media, and sharing personal photos or messages online (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Due to the increased ability to access and use technology and social media platforms, we have seen the occurrence of cyberbullying increase among young people (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Research shows that 47% of Canadian parents report having a child who has experienced some form of cyberbullying throughout their lives, and since youth are having access to technology at an earlier age, we are seeing the occurrence of cyberbullying among younger age groups (Ben-Frenette, 2019 & Cheng, 2012). There have been various negative consequences associated with people who experience cyberbullying, such as withdrawing from school and social groups, depression, and in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons; suicide (Cheng, 2012).

There is no one simple cause to explain the causes of bullying and why bullying occurs within schools. There are many factors that can impact the occurrence of bullying and victimization within schools, which makes it hard to understand and pinpoint the root causes of bullying behaviour. However, research around bullying has developed various theories and hypotheses for why a person may be more likely to bully others. For the purpose of this research,

three main theories, that are largely psychological in approach, will be focused on: biological, frustration-aggression theory, and adolescent development.

The biological theory of bullying has focused on the occurrence of aggressive behaviours in relation to the brain. Research in this area has focused on the link between aggressive behaviour and brain malfunction, complications during pregnancy, genetics, neurotransmitters, hormones, and abnormal brain development (Moeller, 2001). The biological lenses of understanding bullying have also focused on the relationship between traumatic brain injuries and the impact of drugs and alcohol on subsequent bullying and violent behaviour. The main focus is understanding how a person's biology and genes can play a role in why a person may bully.

The theory of frustration and aggression posits that there is a link between a person experiencing some sort of frustration in their life which results in them acting out with aggression. When an individual is unable to reach a desired goal, this often results in some form of aggression which frequently involves forceful actions characterized by hostility or destructiveness (Breuer & Elson, 2017; Dollard et al., 1939). In relation to bullying the theory explains that "the bully who acts out of frustration–aggression is reacting to a situation, person, or event. Someone, or something, is blocking the bully from desired goals and the victim is either perceived as the source of the impediment or as an acceptable substitute for the frustration/aggression" (Kuykendall, 2012, p. 77). The belief is that the bully initiates aggressive behaviour as a way to gain control over an individual or situation.

Adolescence is categorized by developmental psychology as a period of immense change and sometimes struggle in an individual's life, a time often consisting of rapid hormonal change

and physical and emotional growth. This is a time in which a teenager's brain is still developing, as Kuykendall (2012) explained,

> the frontal lobe, the part of the brain that guides judgment and decision-making skills, is not fully developed until the mid-twenties. The last part of the human brain to develop is the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex guides re-flection, consideration of possible solutions, and critical problem-solving. Lacking a fully functioning prefrontal cortex, teenagers must rely on other areas of the brain to help make decisions. Adolescents use the amygdala, a portion of the brain that regulates emotional reactions (p. 79).

Since the brain is still developing this often results in teenagers making quick and impulsive decisions without understanding the consequences of their actions. In relation to bullying, the individual may be unable to understand how their actions will impact both others and them.

In addition, it is important to discuss the various treatments of bullying, from the psychological perspective, that can be used within the school setting. In the area of treatment there have been numerous strategies that have been suggested to help deal with the occurrence of bullying within schools. Research has highlighted the importance of focusing on strategies such as emotional support for victims, offering services to support and assist bullies, and building empathy within schools to build a culture of acceptance and diversity (Dollard et al., 1939).

Providing emotional support for victims is a key strategy in helping victims overcome experiences of bullying, as many victims may not understand why they were targeted in the first place. Victims may initially experience feelings of confusion, denial, and may simply not be ready to acknowledge the issue and what has happened to them. This is a time in which there needs to be support from friends, family, and in the case of bullying that occurs within schools, the support from the school (Cheng, 2012). It is important to reach out and offer support for the

victim since many victims may begin to withdraw from friends and families, which in some cases can result in depression and suicide. Lastly, through providing emotional support individuals can help the victim devise a plan of safety, to protect themselves from future bullying incidences. With regards to bullying within schools, this will involve assistance from school staff to help keep the youth safe within the school (Black et al., 2007).

Although it is important to offer support for victims of bullying, research also highlights the importance of providing support and services for offenders of bullying (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Due to the public perception of offenders of violence, there is often a lack of support and services for offenders. This often results in a lack of funding to understand offender therapy, leaving the community with little information about what might work best to treat bullies (Evans, 2010). However, there have been numerous studies done that show that treatments such as bootcamps, residential treatment, group therapy, and programs such as scared straight, are ineffective when it comes to treating bullying behaviour (U.S. DHHS, 2001). Despite the lack of research around offender services for bullies, some suggestions such as recognizing normal and healthy boundaries; trying to understand the underlying issues that result in bullying behaviour; and treating issues such as anger management; can be useful in trying to support offenders of bullying (Evans, 2010; Kuykendall, 2012).

Lastly, building empathy has been discussed as a preventative strategy to help eliminate bullying within schools. Empathy is described as the ability to understand why other people act or feel the way they do (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). By building empathy, bullies are better able to understand the circumstances and situations of others, instead of only understanding situations from their own perspective. Building empathy requires self-reflecting, and the ability of the bully to reflect on their own behaviour and how it has impacted others. This may be done

through role playing exercises, which allows the bully to understand the victim's experiences

(Cheng, 2012; Kuykendall, 2012). These exercises will allow the bully to recognize how their

behaviour impacts others and the various negative outcomes of their actions. However, it has

been recognized that empathy building strategies will not work for all bullies, because they may

associate empathy with weakness (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016).

Critiques of Bullying and Youth Violence

Despite the vast array of bullying research that explained the occurrence, prevalence, and

preventative strategies for bullying within schools, many still critique this area and believe there

are shortcomings around bullying literature and research. Research in this area highlights that

literature around bullying is too limited and narrow, and often ignores the experiences of various

groups of people such as youth who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans (Formby, 2015).

Mainstream bullying discourses, such as the frustration aggression theory are unable to capture

the unique experiences of these individuals and wider social factors, which often results in them

becoming greater targets for bullying and violence within schools (Formby, 2015). A study

looking at the experiences of bullying among gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans individuals

explains that the mainstream bullying literature creates a binary between victims who are need of

protection and the often-vilified bully (Payne & Smith, 2013). Payne and Smith (2013) propose a

new way of addressing the problem of bullying with a framework that "encompasses many forms

of aggression that fall outside bullying discourses and locates the root issue in a heteronormative

and heterosexist culture that is reinforced through the institution and practices of schooling—not

in individual aggressive children" (p. 3).

In addition, bullying research from a developmental and psychological perspective fails

to recognize that violence or aggression against a less powerful individual, which they define as

bullying, is a social construction. We have categorized certain behaviour as bullying, as it is a

way of describing relational violence and is ultimately contextual to the situation at hand (Payne & Smith, 2013; Thornberg, 2011). Maunder and Crafter (2018) highlight the social construction of bullying through their research and state,

> bullying is contextual, mediated by situated relationships between individuals in social contexts that have their own norms and practices. The multiple settings and groups in which individuals interact mutually creates their behaviour, attitudes, social relationships and identities. Therefore, it is understandable that bullying is interpreted differently; changes as society shifts; occurs in some groups more than others; and is experienced and responded to differently by individuals (p. 18).

It is important to understand the social construction of bullying behaviour does not deny its existence within our society, but instead we must understand that we have applied this definition across various domains, and it ignores many of the underlying issues and inequalities that may be contributing to why this behaviour is occurring in the first place.

Furthermore, it is important to understand how the victim of violence or aggression on behalf of a more powerful individual is also a social construction. Strobl (2004) states "that the term 'victim'- like the term 'criminal' – is conceived as a social status that is ascribed to a person according to formal and informal rules" (p. 1). A victim is very much contextual to the situation, and being a victim is related to the lived experience of the victim; a person is often not a victim until they feel as if they have been victimized (Terasahjo & Salmivalli, 2003; Thornberg, 2011). In addition, being a victim is related to sources of power, and who in that situation has the power to deem an individual a victim (Thornberg, 2011). For example, research conducted by Terasahjo and Salmivalli (2003) found that within the school setting children socially construct the victim based on various characteristics. The victim is ultimately separated from the other students who

have "constructed him or her as a negatively deviant student, the 'odd student', who deserved to be treated with hostility" (Thornberg, 2011, p. 4). In addition, a 'victim' must also comply with the societal definition of victimization and must receive the social recognition of being a victim within society (Strobl, 2004). Furthermore, within the legal field the Crown prosecutor deems the individual as a victim, but the defence is very careful in not describing the individual as the victim and instead refers to them as the complainant. This again reinforces the idea that being a victim is very much contextual to the situation at hand and is related to power dynamics.

Research in this area calls for the need to focus on broader social inequalities that often, bullying literature fails to recognize and acknowledge. Bullying literature has been critiqued because it often emphasizes the experiences of white, middle-class individuals, failing to recognize the bullying experiences of those who do not fit into this category, as well as focusing on largely individual and psychological perspectives (Payne & Smith, 2013). Pascoe (2013) explained that "developing a sociological approach to bullying will refocus this discussion on the aggressive interactions between peers while relating them to larger issues of inequality" (p. 97). Implementing a sociological approach would provide better resources and strategies to address bullying issues, especially in relation to the experiences of individuals who are left out of mainstream bullying research.

There has also been critiques of bullying research that suggest using a zero-tolerance policy in response to bullying occurring within schools. Many believe that there is a lack of evidence for these types of interventions, and they often do more harm such as creating increased bullying (Pascoe, 2013; Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Research suggests that policies and strategies aimed at preventing bullying should view bullying as a broader social and public health problem which requires comprehensive strategies that address underlying inequalities to

aid in preventing bullying from occurring within schools (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Gerald Walton (2011) highlights the importance of reframing the ways in which we understand bullying and prevention and adopt a new way of conceptualizing bullying that moves away from practices that focus on the behavioral and developmental perspectives. The focus of his work is on moving away from bullying strategies and prevention that focus on concepts such as safety and diversity and instead "acknowledge, address, and educate about notions of difference so that children who are vilified for being different (or perceived as such) are accorded safer learning environments than currently is the case in most schools" (Walton, 2011, p.142). The ways in which we understand and define bullying is clearly limiting and must be reframed and reconceptualized around the ideas of social difference and structural inequality.

This literature on the critiques of mainstream bullying research will help to deconstruct the concept of bullying and highlight the fact that bullying is a social construction. Furthermore, research that critiques mainstream bullying literature will shed light on why the case was discussed and related to aspects of bullying but not other factors, that may have played a role in the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

Gender Inequalities and Sexualized Violence

Throughout history it has been evident that women face greater inequalities within our society compared to men. Women face inequalities in various aspects such as access to healthcare, education, proper housing, employment equity and increasingly experience sexualized violence at alarmingly higher rates than men (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). We also see gender inequality present in areas such as politics, cultural norms, religion, and the media. Society is constantly presented with various messages both directly and indirectly that it is permissible for men to have power over women, and for women to be treated unequally compared to their male counterparts (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). This inequality often

presents itself in the form of sexualized violence against women. Sexualized violence is defined as "any non-consensual, unwanted, actual, attempted, or threatened act or behavior that is carried out through sexual means or by targeting a person's sex, sexual identity, or gender identity or expression" (What is sexualized violence? 2018, p.1). Sexualized violence can take many forms such as; sexual assault, stalking, sexual exploitation, indecent exposure, sexist remarks or jokes, catcalls, and distribution of sexually explicit images without consent (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2019).

The Canadian Women's Foundation (2019) explained that "sexual assault and harassment are persistent forms of gender-based violence that are rooted in gender" (p. 1) Sexualized violence often occurs due to the perpetrator perceiving the victim as unequal (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). This inequality often results in the ability for the perpetrator to take control over their victim and cause humiliation, intimidation, and abuse (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2019). The existence of gender inequalities within our society is the result of misogyny that has been present throughout history. Misogyny means hatred towards women and dates to ancient Greek mythology (Richardson-Self, 2018). Despite its history we are still presented with the negative consequences of misogyny within our male dominated society. Despite seeing advances such as the ability for women to vote, go to school, earn a fair wage and to be involved in politics, there are still great gender inequalities within our society. Gender inequalities continue to present itself in the form of sexualized violence against women, which can be seen through various issues such as the #MeToo movement, Harvey Weinstein allegations and the Jeffrey Epstein allegations (Hudak, 2019). Despite efforts made my women in the fight against sexualized violence, there continues to be a battle to eradicate the inequalities that exist within our society due to the continuation of misogyny.

Sexualized and gendered violence also presents itself in the form of photographs of incidences of sexual assault. Photographs of sexual violence and the distribution of such photos presents various negative consequences for both the perpetrators and especially the victims. In the age of social media, we are presented with new concerns in relation to the distribution of sexualized photos and the normalization of such acts. Dodge (2015) further highlighted this concern, stating, "the sexual assault and cyberbullying cases of Rehtaeh Parsons, Jane Doe and Audrie Pott all bring up disturbing questions about the ways that sexual violence can be normalized and condoned within western society and the role that new media increasingly plays in the perpetration of this violence" (p. 2). This brings into question how our society has created the space for such acts to occur and ultimately provides added consequences for the victims of sexual assault and violence.

Literature focusing on gender inequalities and sexualized violence against women will help to explain how incidences of misogyny can often be misidentified and simplified as bullying among youth, especially within institutions such as schools. Compared to literature on sexual assault and harassment, research around bullying is neglecting larger, critical discussions about the structural violence against young females.

Media Construction

As Anastasio and Costa (2004) argued, "[t]he news represents but one small slice of all mass media, yet it possesses enormous power to subtly shape our perceptions of important issues, of other people, of the world" (p. 535). The ways in which media outlets such as newspapers, news reporting stations and more recently, social media platforms, report on various societal issues and concerns shapes the views our community has on issues related to crime and justice. Research illustrates that most of the information that the public receives about crime and justice is derived from the media and news outlets (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Surette, 2014).

Society receives the vast majority of information on these topics through news outlets, resulting in them playing a major role in the information that individuals receive, and ultimately impact societal perceptions of crime and how society comes to understand issues of crime and justice (Marsh & Melville, 2019).

This fascination with crime is not a recent phenomenon but has been witnessed throughout history. Research has shown how media coverage throughout history has created various moral panics with regards to the fear of crime occurring within certain communities (Marsh & Melville, 2019). Moral panics are the result of an overrepresentation of certain crimes within the media which results in the public having an increased fear of certain crimes occurring. Cohen's (1985) work on moral panics explained "the way in which the media present key factors as representing a symbolically loaded crime problem which then leads to the wider population, egged on by media, demanding that something be done, typically through widening the social control net" (Marsh & Melville, 2017, p.16). Throughout history we have seen moral panics in connection with crimes such as youth crime, cybercrime, and pedophilia which have resulted in an exaggerated reaction from the public, often leading people to believe that these crimes are occurring far more often than they truly are (Marsh & Melville, 2019). An overrepresentation of media coverage on crime has resulted in people believing that crime, and specifically violent crime, is occurring at an increased rate, which statistics have shown is certainly not the case (Marsh & Melville, 2019).

As a society we are inundated with an array of options when it comes to information about crime, which often results in an overrepresentation of crime within the media. Studies indicate that despite significantly lower crime rates Canadians are more afraid of crime in comparison to Americans, highlighting the impact that media portrayals of crime have on

viewing audiences (Roberts, 2001). There is little doubt that the media has become central in the ways in which society receives information on crime and has ultimately created a one-sided and perhaps inaccurate picture of the world of crime and criminality (Dowler et al., 2006). Research conducted by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1994) indicated that individuals who watch increased amounts of television are more likely to feel a greater threat about crime occurring, believe that crime is more prevalent than statistics indicate, and are more likely to take more precautions towards protecting themselves from crime. Media coverage on crime and justice has the ability to impact public perceptions on these issues, despite the many issues related to media coverage and how crime is depicted through such outlets.

It is fundamentally important to understand that the media is selective in the types of stories it covers in relation to crime, and this can often result in the public only receiving information on certain crimes, or crimes committed by certain groups of people (McMullan & Mcclung, 2006). Politicians and those with power often have control over media outlets, resulting in certain stories never becoming public knowledge due to the ability of certain groups of people to cover things up (McMullan & Mcclung, 2006). For example, McMullan and Mcclung (2006) discussed the events and press coverage related to the Westray mining explosions. They explained that what was reported by the media was only a snapshot of what was going on behind the scenes. There was little to no discussion by the media about corporate crime in relation to the disaster. Their work highlighted an inability or unwillingness to address issues that involve wrongdoing, negligence, or abuse by corporate and state interests (McMullan & Mcclung 2006). In addition, due to the reliance media reporters have on police to receive information on crimes occurring within the community, we often see a lack of criticism of police behaviour due to fear of losing access to information from police services (McMullan &

Mcclung 2006). McMullan and Mcclung (2006) explained that various critical news stories will not appear within the media, leaving certain individuals, groups, and stories invisible.

Furthermore, there is often an overemphasis of the media to report on crimes of violence and offenders are frequently portrayed in stereotypical ways. The public is repeatedly presented with views of offenders that are often shown as psychopaths that prey on victims who are weak and vulnerable (Dowler, 2003). The media regularly focusses on individual level characteristics for why the offender committed the crime, and there is often little discussion of societal level factors or structural inequalities that may have impacted why the crime occurred in the first place (Dowler, 2003). This represents a reminder to the public that stories in the media related to crime and justice provide only a snapshot of what is occurring within our community, and often a snapshot that is an inaccurate portrayal of what is occurring. Additionally, McCormick (2020) provided a noteworthy and powerful argument that perhaps as a society we should not expect the media to provide a truth-worthy snapshot any more than any other measure of crime, including official statistics, victimization studies and self-report surveys. Instead, we should understand that each of these measures of crime provide us with a different "window into the world", and no one of them can provide us with an accurate and complete representation of crime occurring within our society (McCormick, 2020).

There are also several issues with the ways in which certain groups of people such as racialized groups and women are represented in the media in relation to crime. We often see a highly skewed representation of crime stories in relation to racialized and other marginalized social groups. Kenneth Dowler (2004) argued that within news reporting both within Canada and the United States, "racial images saturate media portrayals of criminality and victimization; minority crime victims receive less attention and less sympathy than white victims, while crime

stories involving minority offenders are rife with racial stereotypes" (p. 840). This oversaturation

of racial images in relation to criminality perpetuates stereotypes of the "black criminal" and

contributes to the systemic racism within our society (Dowler, 2004). As a result, minority

individuals often face disproportionately high arrest and imprisonment rates, and repeatedly deal

with increased surveillance and harassment (Dowler, 2004). With regards to being victims of

crime, non-white victims do not receive the same coverage as white victims (Dowler, 2004).

Coverage on non-white victims not only includes less coverage but the limited coverage they do

receive is less sympathetic and lacks outrage towards the victimization (Dowler, 2004). In

addition, research has also highlighted the impact that media reporting has on individuals of

inter-racial relationships. Frequently these individuals experience increased forms of violence,

often the result of media representations. Perry and Sutton (2006) explained that

> media reporting, in various forms, contributed to an environment that facilitates, if
>
> not encourages violence against individuals involved in such relationships. It is clear
>
> that media portrayals of crime are in need of new directions when it comes to
>
> reporting of crime in order to display a more accurate representation of crime and justice
>
> occurring within our society, and news outlets must be held accountable for media that
>
> promotes stereotypes and biased coverage (p. 887).

Furthermore, women are often misrepresented in the media when it comes to being both

victims and perpetrators of crime. Female victims of crime are often represented as being

responsible for the actions against them and are blamed for the victimization and creates a sense

of victim blaming (Marsh & Melville, 2019). Violence against women is often not taken

seriously and female victims of crime are often depersonalized, objectified, and dehumanized

(Anastasio & Costa, 2004). Female victims of crime receive increased coverage in the media, but

this coverage is repeatedly dependent on the social status of the victim. It is female victims of higher social status that receive coverage in the media, in comparison to women of lower financial status. In addition, this coverage is also dependent if the female victim is deemed as innocent, virtuous, and honorable (Dowler et al., 2006). Female perpetrators of crime are frequently overrepresented by the media due to the fact that when women commit crimes, they are not only breaking the law, but they are also going against gender norms (Marsh & Melville, 2019). When women commit heinous crimes, society is often outraged and mortified by these actions due to the ways in which society views women and how they should act. Marsh and Melville (2019) explained how "common-sense assumptions about gender roles and the 'appropriate' behavior for men and women are reflected in the way the media report crime and criminals and their use of these stereotypical views of women" (p. 96) Society regularly relates violent acts to males and not females, resulting in society becoming outraged when females do commit such acts. In addition, women and girls who participate in crime are deemed as participating in risky activities and has created a phenomenon of girls being increasingly risky (Barron & Lacombe, 2008). Once again, resulting in an inaccurate representation of women who commit crimes, and contribute to stereotypical views of women and crime.

In addition to the importance of understanding the ways in which crime is portrayed by the media and its overall impact, it is equally as important to understand how the media portrays sexual assault and rape, including how the media perpetuates rape myths. With regards to sexual assault against women, it is often represented in the media that victims of sexual assault are dishonest about the crimes committed against them. Stabile (2011) explained that "the idea that women typically lie about rape has been broadly accepted, with deep historical roots, though, in reality, the incidence of false reporting of rape has been shown to be relatively rare" (p. 81). The

ways in which the media report on sexual assault and violence against women often results in the public disbelieving women who report being sexually assaulted, ultimately resulting in the negative social construction of women (Stabile, 2011). Research indicated that "rape myth acceptance is associated with negative attitudes about women, stronger anti-victim, pro-defendant judgements, and influencing what is considered a legitimate rape and who is considered a credible victim" (Stabile, 2011, p. 83). This negative social construction of women has also been highlighted in other forms of media such as Twitter and Instagram, which often highlight narratives that portray women in a negative light in relation to sexual assault (Ash et al., 2017). Narratives in the media related to rape myths serve to reinforce stereotypes of women and assists in the perpetuation of a rape-supportive culture (Ash et al., 2017). A rape supportive culture creates a disservice to women, as they often do not receive the support and justice that they deserve, resulting in victims of rape failing to report what has been done do them due to fear of not being believed (Engel, 2017).

Furthermore, how the media perpetuates rape myths can also be seen in the ways in which sexual violence and rape have been portrayed in movies. How sexual assault is depicted through media forms such as movies and television shows are often flawed and inaccurate. Females within films continually face objectification and are shown as being less powerful than their male counterparts (Projansky, 2001). Victims of rape are viewed as being dishonest and face criticism when they report being raped to the police. Women are continually scrutinized for what they were wearing, if they were drinking, if they were out late at night, or walking home alone (Mulvey, 2014). Violence against women has often been normalized and accepted within mainstream media. These portrayals in movies and television shows frequently result in the continuation of rape myths and stereotypes of women being sexually assaulted in real life and

result in the public believing that violence against women is acceptable within our society

(Projansky, 2001). The main concern with regards to portrayals of crime and sexual assault

within movies and TV shows is often these forms of media are all too often presented as realistic

portrayals of crime and justice, which further blurs the lines between fiction and reality and

creates issues on what people see as truth within our society (Dowler & Fleming, 2006). The

ways in which these topics are covered through films and TV repeatedly present a skewed

version of rape and sexual assault and in turn impacts how victims of sexual assault are treated

and viewed in the real world.

Theoretical Framework

This research was grounded in an intersectional framework, which allowed for an effective understanding of how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was depicted by Canadian news and media. Intersectionality is defined as "the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p. 4). The history of intersectionality dates back almost thirty years ago when Professor Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term. Kimberle Crenshaw was a graduate of Cornell University, Harvard University, and the University of Wisconsin, and is most well known for her work on race and civil rights. Much of her research in these areas focused on the concept of critical race theory. The focus was on the impact of deep-rooted and structural discrimination and inequality that has occurred for far too long (Collins, 2015). Crenshaw explained that there was no rational reason for why there was such a great racial wealth gap that had persisted throughout history (Crenshaw, 2019). These inequalities did not exist just by chance, but instead due to the "stubborn endurance of the structures of white dominance" (Crenshaw, 2019). Crenshaw understood the need to ask questions that would make many people within society uncomfortable, but she also knew that these questions about discrimination and inequality needed to be discussed if any real change was going to be created.

The concept of intersectionality came about from the ideas debated in critical race theory. Crenshaw first discussed the term intersectionality when she published a paper titled "Demarginalizing the Intersections of Race and Sex" in the University of Chicago Legal Forum in 1989 (Collins, 2015). The focus of the paper was on three legal cases that dealt with issues of both racial and sex discrimination. She argued that "the law seemed to forget that black women are both black and female, and thus subject to discrimination on the basis of both race, gender,

and often, a combination of the two" (Coaston, 2019). The court ultimately ignored the specific

challenges that women of colour face as a group. In addition, to her original work Crenshaw has

been widely regarded for her work focusing on the various intersections of race and gender in the

context of violence against women of colour, disparities in seeking employment, access to health

resources, and various other inequalities that women of colour face within our current society

(Collins, 2015).

When Crenshaw first coined the term intersectionality, it was primarily regarded as a

legal term to explain how race, class, gender, and various other personal characteristics intersect

and overlap with one another (Coaston, 2019). It was not until recently that the term became

viral and more widely discussed within academia. The term appeared in the Oxford English

Dictionary in 2015, in addition the term gained widespread knowledge during the 2017 Women's

March, and we have increasingly seen the term used in various protests and fights against

inequality within our society (Coaston, 2019). The ultimate goal of Crenshaw when the term was

first created, was to demolish racial hierarchies within our society. We have seen today how this

has evolved to consider how various characteristics that an individual may possess can create

inequalities. In addition, intersectionality draws attention to the social and systemic inequalities

that have become rooted within our society throughout history. It has been highlighted that

intersectionality has been increasingly deployed in various disciplines and aspects of our society,

in addition, it has resulted in facilitating consideration of gender, race, and other forms of

inequalities in a wide range of academic and societal discussions (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall,

2013).

Furthermore, within Crenshaw's (1991) original work on intersectionality she presents

three forms of intersectionality which include: structural, political and representational

(Crenshaw, 1991). Structural intersectionality is related to how social structures within our society have been organized in a way that benefits certain social groups while disadvantaging others. This can be seen in the ways in which our legal system over time has created disadvantages for certain races. Within Crenshaw's original work she describes that political intersectionality "highlights the fact that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas" (Crenshaw, 1991, p, 1252). Political intersectionality can be seen in the ways in which certain political movements that strive to create justice within our society often unintentionally exclude certain groups of people which ultimately results in additional forms of injustice for these social groups. Lastly, representational intersectionality highlights how the devaluation of certain groups of people is often represented in cultural imagery, including newspapers and more recently social media (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) provides an example of representational intersectionality within her original work and states "with respect to the rape of Black women, race and gender converge so that the concerns of minority women fall into the void between concerns about women's issues and concerns about racism" (p. 1282).

For the purpose of this research study, I implemented representational intersectionality as it addresses how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was depicted through the media, and structural intersectionality as it incorporates the social structures of our legal system. Since the focus of this research project is on how the media represents identity and its complexities and how this ultimately influences and shapes our interpretations of the world, it was important to include both forms on intersectionality within this project. However, I also believe that within an intersectional perspective it is important to understand that many of these components and characteristics are intertwined within one another.

When the theory was first developed, it was primarily implemented to analyze the intersection of race and class, however over time various researchers pushed to include other forms of marginalization such as sexual orientation, immigrant status and age (Tyyska, 2006). In the work conducted by Thorne (2004) he explained the importance of age being included within an intersectional framework. He explained that age is often excluded from the trajectory, despite its ability to offer an imperative insight into understanding structural inequalities (Thorne, 2004). Thorne (2004) stressed the importance of including a multitude of social divisions and forms of oppression with an intersectional perspective and stated, "but in researching a particular empirical context, the effort to be inclusive, to attend to multiple and interrelated differences – and similarities – provides fuller, more satisfying forms of knowledge than does the single-minded pursuit of only one social division" (p. 404). Due to the work of many scholars, in present time an intersectional theoretical framework places emphasis on the significance of recognizing how multiple interlocking factors such as gender, class, age, race, sexuality, immigration status and various other forms of marginalization and oppression create structural inequalities within our society (Gueta, 2017; Tyyska, 2006). In addition, an intersectional analysis stresses the importance of both micro and macro levels of society, which allows for research in this area to facilitate structural-level interventions in comparison to interventions that solely focus on an individual-centered approach (Bowleg, 2012). Furthermore, an intersectional framework stresses the importance of looking at how the criminal justice system itself is an institution that has been socially constructed so that it contributes to immense structural inequalities within our society. Not only do marginalized categories allow us to understand sexualized violence, but the law and criminal justice system continually reinforces and contributes to sexualized violence by being unable to address the underlying structural

inequalities that lead to sexualized violence (Crenshaw, 2019). Despite the public perception of believing that the law and punishment through corrections is the answers to these problems, intersectionality places emphasis on going beyond surface level remedies and looking deeper into understanding the root level causes that are causing these issues, and how these institutions were socially constructed in the first place to create such inequalities.

Accordingly, the present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. Furthermore, the goal of this research will be to apply an intersectional lens to understand how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian newspapers outlets, specifically with a focus on examining how the case was constructed in relation to bullying and broader social inequalities within society. In addition, an intersectional approach will help uncover the various structural inequalities within our society that have contributed to the occurrence of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and perhaps what can be done to prevent this from occurring again. Lastly, this theoretical framework will help to uncover how media sources that document experiences of a teenage girl as bullying, violence, or sexual assault without deeper consideration that this is a much wider experience of violence against women only serves to reinforce ongoing oppression and misogyny within our society.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite a vast array of literature and research that has been conducted in the various areas highlighted above, there is little research that uncovers how these areas are interconnected and related to one another. This research project addresses how these areas of literature connect to one another in relation to the Rehtaeh Parsons case. In addition, the research reviewed discussed how perhaps the case was framed as an incident of high school bullying and harassment despite evidence that suggests the case being much more of an incident that encompassed so many broader social inequalities within our society. This research project uncovered how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was constructed by media outlets in Canada by focusing on two main research questions. From an intersectional framework, this study will aim to understand the Rehtaeh Parsons case from the perspective of media outlets in Canada by answering the following questions:

1. How was the Rehtaeh Parsons case conceptualized by Canadian news outlets?

2. To what extent was the Rehtaeh Parsons case constructed as a case of bullying, harassment and sexual assault in comparison to broader social inequalities within society?

Methods

  To accomplish the goals of this research project a content analysis was utilized to understand the Rehtaeh Parsons case. According to Neuendorf (2004), content analysis is described as the "systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of the characteristics of a message" (p. 3). However, Krippendorf (2004) critiques this notion and argues that all content analysis is qualitative in nature explaining that "all reading of text is qualitative even when certain characteristics are later converted into numbers" (p. 16). In addition, Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) define content analysis as "a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications." (p. 438). Despite varying definitions, the main goal of a content analysis is to understand and examine human behavior which consists of techniques of systematic text analysis through written or visual communication, such as newspapers articles, magazines, speeches, books, and various others forms of communication (Mayring, 2007). A content analysis allows for a thorough examination of various forms of communication in an unobtrusive manner, as it does not involve human participants, and it almost always relies on studying already existing text (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

  Within qualitative content analysis there are two main frameworks for conducting an analysis which include inductive and deductive approaches. Despite which approach is being implemented all approaches to qualitative content analysis involve seven classic steps, including formulating the research questions to be answered selecting the sample to be analyzed; defining categories to be applied; outlining the coding process and the coder training; implementing the coding process; determining trustworthiness; and analyzing the results of the coding process (Tesch, 2013). Both approaches have three main phases, which include: preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Despite which approach is being implemented for the

research project, both approaches have similar preparation phases. The preparation phase begins

with selecting the unit of analysis; for this research project the unit of analysis will be newspaper

articles. The next step in the research process is for the researcher to become immersed in the

data and strive to make sense of what is going on and to "obtain a sense of the whole" (Tesch

2013). Dey (1993) suggests that when reading the data, the researcher should ask questions such

as:

Who is telling?

Where is this happening?

When did it happen?

What is happening?

Why?

The goal of this is to help the researcher gain a better understanding of the data. It is also

suggested that the researcher reads the material through several times. This phase began by

analyzing and familiarizing myself with all the newspapers articles and determining an overall

categorization of the articles.

   After becoming immersed within the articles, I categorized the articles using four main

categories, these included: 1) incident of the case, 2) legal process, 3) legal changes, and 4) call

to action. Articles categorized as "incident of the case" consisted of articles that primarily

described the facts of the case. These articles were predominantly centered around the initial

incident of the alleged sexual assault of Rehtaeh Parsons and subsequent distribution of photos,

and the death of Rehtaeh. For the most part these articles provided a synopsis of what happened

and when it happened. Articles that were categorized as "Legal Process" mainly discussed the

legal components of the incident. These articles were typically focused on the legal case against

the boys involved and the legal charges associated with the case. Articles categorized as "Legal Changes" consisted of articles which focused heavily on the legal changes that have occurred or suggestions about changes to the law that have been put forward since the death of Rehtaeh. These articles primarily explained changes to the law in areas such as cyberbullying and ways to protect victims of cyberbullying. Lastly, articles categorized as "call to action" consisted of articles which focused on this sense of change that has been a result of the death of Rehtaeh. These articles were predominantly centered around learning from what went wrong in the Rehtaeh Parsons case and trying to move forward by creating change in remembrance of Rehtaeh. With regards to the number of articles within each category; 6 articles were categorized under the categorization of "Incident of the case," 5 articles under the legal process category, 4 articles within the Legal Changes category, and 8 within the Call to Action category, for a total of 23 separate news stories.

After the categorization of the articles, I moved onto the organizing phase. The research process was dependent on the researcher choosing an inductive or deductive approach. Deductive content analysis aims to "validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory. Existing theory or research can help focus the research question" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Deductive content analysis may be used to retest existing data or testing hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The main goal of inductive content analysis is to describe a phenomenon, usually when existing theory or literature on the subject is limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For the purpose of this research project, I implemented an inductive qualitative content analysis for the most part but included components of a deductive approach within certain areas of coding.

During the organizing process I implemented open coding, creating categories and abstraction (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Open coding consisted of reading through the data several times while making notes and headings written in the text. As many headings and notes as necessary were used to understand and describe the content. The headings and notes were then collected on coding sheets from which categories were generated to help organize the notes and headings. Categories are main themes or patterns that are derived directly from the text (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). After open coding was completed, the data was then grouped together to help organize categories that are similar, in which relationships among categories were able to be identified. Dey (1993) explains that

creating categories is not simply bringing together observations that are similar or related; instead, data are being classified as 'belonging' to a particular group and this implies comparison between these data and other observations that do not belong to the same category. The purpose of creating categories is to provide a means of describing the phenomenon, to increase understanding and to generate knowledge (p. 237).

This phase also included assigning preliminary codes to the newspaper articles in order to describe and understand the content. Identifying and coding the main themes throughout the newspaper articles was in relation to the research questions. Next, I compared the various codes from the newspaper articles to identify patterns and themes that occurred throughout the different articles.

The last phase in the organizing process is abstraction, which involved creating a general description of the research topic by generating categories of the data. There were three categories in which data was grouped into: sub-category, generic category, and main category. Each category was named using content-characteristic words which helped to provide a description for

that category of data. Lastly, I completed the process by reporting the analytical process and the results, which will be discussed in the findings and discussion sections below. (Elo & Kyngas, 2007).

The Rehtaeh Parsons case attracted major media attention both within Canada and across North America as many criticized the way in which the local police, justice system and school dealt with the situation. The widespread media attention this case attracted made it a viable topic to conduct a content analysis to better understand how the case was portrayed by the media. Using qualitative content analysis of Canadian newspapers, this research explored the Parsons case to uncover how the media constructed the case, with specific focus on aspects of bullying and social inequalities that were discussed by the media in relation to the case, and subsequent reaction and response after the suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons. This analysis provided me with an in-depth understanding of how the case was conceptualized and the core components of the case that were discussed by news sources across Canada.

Data Selection

      Various Canadian newspaper articles that focused on the Rehtaeh Parsons case were analyzed using diverse themes uncovered from the coding phase related to the main components of this case. This allowed for an in-depth analysis of the Parsons case to better understand how the case was conceptualized by news outlets in Canada. The research was comprised of a sample of twenty-three newspaper articles, which consisted of a variety of Canadian newspaper sources. I found merit in including both well-known Canadian newspaper sources such as CTV, CBC and the National post, but also found it important to include articles from local newspapers of where the incident occurred and also lesser-known Canadian news sources.

      Data selection began by using Google to search for newspaper articles related to the Rehtaeh Parsons case. This search engine was decided upon as there are no biases embedded within this search engine. In addition, there were no embedded biases in the types of newspapers articles that were retrieved by this search engine. I used search terms such as "Rehtaeh Parsons," Rehtaeh Parsons Case," "Death of Rehtaeh Parsons," "Rehtaeh Parsons Suicide," "Rehtaeh Parsons Sexual Assault," "Parsons Case," and "Rehtaeh Parsons Rape." I was then presented with a range of articles that discussed various components of the Rehtaeh Parsons case. I began to narrow down the articles my excluding those that were not specifically related to the Rehtaeh Parsons case. For example, several articles related to cyberbullying, and the Amanda Todd case were generated, however they did not primarily discuss the Rehtaeh Parsons case, which resulted in them being excluded. With regards to selection criteria for which articles were selected to be analyzed, the articles needed to be predominantly based on Rehtaeh Parsons case. Articles that simply used her name throughout the article or briefly discussed the case were excluded from this research project. In addition, I excluded articles that were not published by a Canadian news source. Since the case occurred within Canada I believed it was realistic to only include

Canadian newspaper articles. Despite there being articles published within the United States and Britain, most articles were Canadian, in which I decided to only include Canadian articles within the final sample. The final sample consisted of twenty-five articles, however during the analysis stage, two articles were no longer available on the internet, in which I decided to exclude these articles. The final sample consisted of twenty-three articles being analysed. All articles that were included in this research project were deemed as articles that discussed the major components and issues related to the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

I selected a variety of newspapers from Canada-wide news sources such as the National Post, CBC, CTV, and Huffington Post in the final sample. In addition, I decided to include local news sources in relation to where the incident took place. I also found it important to include a variety of different news sources in order to capture a breadth of reporting on this case. In addition, by only including well known Canadian media sources such as the National Post, CTV, and CBC I may have missed out on different views and reporting of the case from local and smaller news sources.

Based on available information I compiled background material on various Canadian news sources to understand the various biases that are part of their reporting which could have influenced how the Parsons case was described and addressed. Information was collected about the political slant, readership and general reporting style of various Canadian News sources that were included in this research project. The Globe and Mail is Canada's most widely read newspaper, and largely focuses on issues related to the Canadian economy. With regards to their editorial stance they have been attributed to take a center-right stance and are considered less socially liberal in comparison to their top competitor the Toronto Star (Tattrie, 2019). CBC is considered the national public broadcaster and is the oldest existing broadcast network in Canada

(News and Media, 2020). CBC has been known to take a center-left editorial stance. The network has received allegations for operating through a liberal bias; despite this, the network states that they "ensure that the information that we put out is fair and unbiased" (CBC News). CTV is Canada's largest privately-owned television network. Throughout the years CTV has been praised for their unbiased reporting style and balanced story selection (Tattrie, 2019). As the researcher, I personally believe that the reporting styles of the various articles included within this research project were primarily unbiased. I consider that the articles selected for this analysis provided an in-depth snapshot and unbiased opinion of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and the events that transpired after the death of Rehtaeh.

Lastly, Huffington Post is a relatively newer news reporting agency in comparison to previously stated news agencies. They have been described as mostly liberal leaning in their editorial stance since they were launched as an alternative to overly conservative news sites (News and Media, 2020). Despite the Huffington post having a different news reporting style than some of the more well-known news sources in Canada, I still believed it provided an additional perspective on the Rehtaeh Parsons case which was important to include within this research project. This research project also included newspaper articles from various other news sources such as IPolitics and local newspapers to where the case occurred, but due to these news sources being smaller reporting agencies there was little information on their reporting styles and editorial stance. As discussed previously, there was no embedded bias within the search engine used to receive these articles, and as a result, I support that the articles included within this research project, taken together, are valid and not systematically biased with regards to their inclusion in this project.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was constructed by Canadian news sources, with specific focus on aspects of bullying and social inequalities that were discussed by the media in relation to the case, and subsequent reaction and response after the suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons. This analysis provided an in-depth understanding of how the case was conceptualized and the core components of the case that were discussed by news sources across Canada. Using an intersectional framework and content analysis this study examined twenty-three selected Canadian newspapers articles that discussed the core components and issues surrounding the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

More specifically, this study sought to address two major research questions:

1. How was the Rehtaeh Parsons case conceptualized by Canadian news outlets?

2. To what extent was the Rehtaeh Parsons case constructed as a case of bullying, harassment and sexual assault in comparison to broader social inequalities within society?

The Google search engine was used to obtain relevant newspapers articles that focused on the Rehtaeh Parsons case. After a sample was obtained, I performed a close reading of the texts to become better acquainted and immersed within the data. I then began the process of coding the various articles using the process of open coding. The codes identified in the various articles have been displayed in Table 1, which outlines the article being coded, the categorization of that article, the news sources, and then the codes that appeared throughout that specific article. Codes marked with an asterisk [*] are codes that appeared more than once throughout the articles. Then, from these codes I identified and developed various themes that began to emerge throughout the articles to help elaborate and explain how the case of Rehtaeh Parsons was conceptualized by Canadian newspaper articles. Table 2 displays the various themes that were

identified throughout the specific articles. After meticulously reading through the articles and returning to the data several times to code and recode the articles, I then began to highlight the presence of the initial key themes identified throughout the various articles. This was not a linear process as I found myself constantly returning to the text and uncovered the main themes over a period of time. By returning to the data several times this allowed myself to reflect on the research process and identify themes that may have been missed before. Through this process, as the researcher, I was open to whatever themes occurred naturally from the text.

This chapter is presented in two sections. First, the findings of the content analysis of the various newspaper articles are presented by discussing the themes uncovered throughout the various articles. These themes are then supported with various quotes from the newspaper articles. Second, the research questions stated above are "answered" with appropriate quotes in the themes uncovered from the initial analysis. These quotes were used to support the various themes that were observed throughout the text as a result of the analysis.

The themes identified throughout the analysis included:

- Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities

- Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use

- Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parsons' family and greater community

- Frustrations related to the legal system

- Connection to the case of Amanda Todd

- Institutional and societal inequalities

At times some of these themes were represented by a sentence or two but at other times they were represented in much more detailed paragraphs and statements. After the initial coding

and once the themes were developed, I went back to the articles and identified where the various themes were identified and highlighted the passages and recorded the theme that was observed. Some of the more dominant themes consisted of "negative consequences of bullying"; "remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities"; and "sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community." These themes appeared most frequently throughout the various articles, and most of the discussion with those being interviewed as part of the story were related to these themes. This has been further highlighted in Chart 1 and will be explained throughout the various sections related to each theme.

Before discussion related to the themes that were identified throughout the data, it should be noted that overall, most of the newspaper articles took a neutral stance on the reporting of the case and relied on both legal professionals and the family of Rehtaeh to help elaborate on the circumstances of the case. Throughout the research process I was vigilant to identify who was being interviewed throughout the various articles, and the potential bias that they may hold in relation to the facts of the case and what occurred throughout the incident. For example, I was aware that when the mother of the boy accused in the case was interviewed, she may have a potential bias to protect her son. In addition, Rehtaeh's mother may hold potential bias related to the case, since she believed her daughter faced immense failure on behalf of the justice and school systems. Articles that presented a bias on the case have been identified and will be further discussed later in the findings section.

The following themes will now be discussed in further detail with the inclusion of quotes to help further explain and support the development of these themes.

Theme: *Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities*

The vast majority (n=16) of the articles represented the theme "Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities" and was considered a dominant theme. This theme primarily focused on aspects such as changes that have occurred since the death of Rehtaeh. In addition, it also incorporated the call to action that many have discussed with regards to areas that still need to be considered and focused on, so the tragedy of Rehtaeh does not occur again. Many of the changes discussed throughout the articles focused on aspects such as greater education; increased support for victims of sexual assault and bullying; changes to cyberbullying laws; and a discussion about consent among youth. Most of the articles discussed the work that has been done by Rehtaeh's mother related to education on issues such as sexual assault, consent and cyberbullying among youth. Rehtaeh's mother called for greater education with respect to consent, and discussions about what constitutes consent. Rehtaeh's mother explained "children on the playground need to learn what is consent, not in terms of sexual assault, but what is consent in terms of 'I don't want you doing that,' and respecting boundaries, so it starts when we're young" (McHugh, 2017).

Additionally, the importance of education related to cyberbullying and the negative consequences of cyberbullying was highlighted throughout various articles. Education and awareness were represented through programs such as a new teaching curriculum aimed at educating youth about proper social media use and the harmful consequences of cyberbullying (The Canadian Press, 2014). In addition, the Federal government took action after the death of Rehtaeh by focusing on "television and online advertising to raise awareness about cyberbullying and the possible legal consequences of tormenting people" (Ogrodnik, 2014). Lastly, Nova Scotia's Justice Minister considered what happened to Rehtaeh as a "community issue" and

explained that "as a community, we need to have more dialogue with our young people about respect and about support to educate our young boys and our young girls about what's appropriate behaviour, what's not appropriate behaviour" (Huffington Post, 2013).

The death of Rehtaeh also brought attention to changes needed with regards to youth mental health services and support within Canada. In October of 2013 the Partners for Mental Health launched a national campaign against bullying called the Right By You campaign. The goal of the campaign was to draw "attention to the fact that Canada is failing to meet the mental health needs of our children and youth with devastating consequences like youth suicide" (Ogrodnik, 2014). Furthermore, the case of Rehtaeh Parsons shed light on issues within the legal system. We witnessed changes made to Canadian law related to the distribution of sharing images without consent (Pace, 2017).

Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy was represented through actions such as sharing the story of Rehtaeh and refusing to remain silent, campaigns and initiatives in memory of Rehtaeh, and programs aimed at continuing the legacy of Rehtaeh. After the death of Rehtaeh, the Rehtaeh Parsons Society was created in her memory. The goal of the organization was to help girls in similar situations as Rehtaeh receive support and guidance, and to create initiatives that helped to prevent these incidences from occurring in the first place. Rehtaeh's father explained that "the group hopes to speak to those who are abused through sexual violence and will act as an information resource to help victim get the proper help" (The Canadian Press, 2014) Furthermore, the 'Man-Up Campaign was created in memory of Rehtaeh to draw attention to issues related to toxic masculinity. The campaign is "meant to alter what it means to be a man by redefining the toxic notion of what it takes to be a tough guy" (Vaisman, 2019). The group

focused on education related to consent and encouraging men to speak up when injustices are occurring around them.

Additional groups such as the UnSlut Project and Girl on Fire draw attention to the many injustices that Rehtaeh faced, and aim to support and guide girls who may be experiencing sexualized bullying and cyberbullying (Chiu, 2018; Patil, 2016). The author of "The legacy of Rehtaeh" article explains that the Girl on Fire group "was created by former teacher Jenny Kierstead after she was "devastated" by the death. The program, she says in the manual's dedication, is Rehtaeh's "life's legacy."

Theme: Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Negative consequences of youth bullying, and social media use was a dominant theme throughout the articles. Due to the fact that youth bullying, and cyberbullying were highlighted as core narratives of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, this theme was discussed numerous times throughout the various articles and appeared in close to two-thirds (n=15) of the newspaper articles. One of the most serious and tragic consequences of youth bullying that can be witnessed throughout the various articles is the death of Rehtaeh Parsons. Several articles indicated that Rehtaeh suffered extreme torment and harassment and her victimization led to her mental health struggles, depression, and her subsequent suicide attempt. Rehtaeh's mother stated on a Facebook memorial page dedicated to her daughter, "Rehtaeh is gone today because of the four boys that thought that raping a 15 yr old girl was OK and to distribute a photo to ruin her spirit and reputation would be fun," and "secondly, all the bullying and messaging and harassment that never let up are also to blame" (Hamilton & Visser, 2013). In another article, Rehtaeh's mother stated that because of the bullying and torment Rehtaeh's "mental health deteriorated so fast that

it was shocking" (McHugh, 2017). Furthermore, at the funeral of Rehtaeh, Rev. John Morrell noted "social media contributed to Rehtaeh's depression and death" (Huffington Post, 2013).

A friend of Rehtaeh further pointed to the negative consequences of cyberbullying when she mentioned the immense torment that Rehtaeh endured which resulted in her switching schools several times (Patil, 2016). Another article supported these claims as Rehtaeh's mother stated "she was never left alone. She had to leave the community" (Hamilton & Visser, 2013). In addition, Rehtaeh's friend was also the victim of bullying when her peers began to "threaten her if she didn't stop talking about Rehtaeh" (Chiu, 2018). Furthermore, the founder of the UnSlut Project, Emily Lindin was interviewed for an article titled "Rehtaeh Parsons walk highlights slut shaming" (Patil, 2016) which discussed the Rehtaeh Parsons memorial walk, and highlighted the negative consequences related to cyberbullying and social media use. The UnSlut project was created to bring awareness and better education related to slut shaming and the various negative consequences associated with slut shaming (Patil, 2016). Slut shaming is comprised of individuals, often females, being criticized and ridiculed by their peers due to matters related to their sexuality or sexual conduct (Hackman, 2017). Slut shaming may come in the form of rumours, bullying, the distribution of intimate photos, or various other forms of ridicule and harassment (Patil, 2016). Emily stated, "especially in the age of social media, we are in a space where we feel we can say anything or that it's not a real person on the other side of the computer screen or of our phone, and it is." She went on to explain that "sexual bullying can be extra isolating because you don't necessarily have the confidence the adults in your life will support you" (Patil, 2016). This quote illustrates the compounding effects of both age, gender, and sexuality and how these components played a role in the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and how she was treated by her peers and ultimately suffered due to their actions.

Theme: *Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parsons' family and greater community*

The theme "sense of failure" among the Rehtaeh Parsons' family and the greater community was identified as a reoccurring and common theme among the articles and was identified in 13 (n=13) articles. This theme has been broken into two sections, including the first discussing this theme in relation to Rehtaeh Parsons' family, and second the theme with regards to the greater community and authors of the articles. Due to the tragic circumstances of the case, there is no doubt that the family would feel as if their daughter was failed in some way or another. This sense of failure was often related to how the case was dealt with by the legal system, police, the schools in which Rehtaeh attended, and the mental health supports that she reached out to in her time of distress. Rehtaeh's uncle discussed his frustrations related to how the police dealt with the case by stating "I have absolutely no faith in the RCMP or the Halifax city police or the Crown prosecutors because they totally dropped this case, they totally dropped the ball" (CBC, 2013). Rehtaeh's mother also believed that the justice system had failed her daughter and stated, "I think she would have had some satisfaction that it was real if they were charged, because no one believed her" (CBC, 2013). Rehtaeh's mother went on to explain in a separate article the various frustrations she had towards the legal system and how they dealt with her daughters' case. The article explained that's "Ms. Parsons singled out the justice system for failing to prosecute those responsible for the alleged assault on her daughter" (Hamilton & Visser, 2013).

Not only did Rehtaeh's family feel a sense of failure because of what happened to her but so did many other people. There was great public outrage as a result of this case, and many people shared the same feelings as the family; that Rehtaeh had been failed. The community voiced their frustrations by signing petitions, demanding change from their government, and

protesting outside the courthouse with signs reading "Justice for Rehtaeh Parsons," during the legal proceedings related to the case. Another article titled "The legacy of Rehtaeh Parsons (Chiu, 2018) further supported these claims and stated, "her death, the torment she faced when she was alive, and the justice, hospital and school systems that failed her, outraged a community and even a country, and compelled politicians and other officials to do something to prevent another tragedy." The article discussed various independent reviews that found various failures in the ways in which the police, schools, and hospitals dealt with the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

The article entitled "Rehtaeh Parsons case review finds system 'failed'" (McMillan, 2015) discussed the independent review that was conducted on the case, and the various failures in which it highlighted. The author of the articles explained that the "independent review into how authorities in Nova Scotia handled the Rehtaeh Parsons case has found errors were made by both police and Crown" (McMillan, 2015). The article highlighted some of the many failures that were found in connection to the case such as: unrecorded interviews, investigation delayed and obstructed due to school involvement, lengthy investigation, and crown errors (McMillan, 2015). An additional article explained that "since Rehtaeh's death, inquiries and reviews have addressed deficiencies with how police and health care facilities did not protect her" (Vis, 2018). The author of the article "How the RCMP failed Rehtaeh Parsons" (Huffington Post, 2013) shared some of the many frustrations as Rehtaeh's family. The author stated, "young girls are supposed to rely on our institutions to protect them, but in less than a year our authorities have failed two Canadian teenage girls that are no longer with us" and goes on to say, "we're still left with questions of why the RCMP failed Rehtaeh Parsons."

Theme: Frustrations related to the legal system

With respect to the theme frustrations related to the legal system, almost half of the articles (n=11) discussed this theme, and this was deemed to be a minor theme discussed throughout the various articles. This theme was primarily discussed in relation to the reaction and responses from the family members of Rehtaeh. When being interviewed for various articles the family of Rehtaeh made several remarks associated to their frustrations related to the legal system. Some of these frustrations included the cyberbullying law being struck down; issues related to how sexual assault cases are dealt with within the legal system; how the boys involved in the case were treated by the justice system; and issues related to how the legal system dealt with their daughters' case.

After the passing of Rehtaeh, an anti-cyberbullying law was enacted to help protect victims of cyberbullying. The law resulted in the formation of a CyberSCAN unit which was created to investigate allegations of cyberbullying and provide remedies for individuals dealing with online harassment (CBC, 2015). However, it was not long before the law was struck down by the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, as the court deemed that the law infringed on rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CTV, 2018). When the cyberbullying law was struck down by the Nova Scotia Supreme Court Rehtaeh's mother voiced her concern and frustration by stating that it was a "failure for many of our youth" and "I'm sad for all the youth right now that need help" (CBC, 2015).

In another instance Parson's mother discussed her annoyances with the legal system in relation to legal consent under the criminal law and how it is interpreted. After a similar case to Rehtaeh resulted in no conviction for the accused, Parson's mother stated that the case was "a clear case of a witness, DNA (evidence) and a woman passed out and still no conviction. We need news laws regarding what is consent and what is sexual assault" (McHugh, 2017).

Furthermore, Rehtaeh's mother discussed her frustrations with respect to the sentences received by the boys involved in the case, highlighting the fact that she believed there should have been greater consequences as their sentences did little to address their behaviour. Two boys involved in the incident were charged in connection to the Rehtaeh Parsons case. One male was charged and plead guilty to two counts of distributing child pornography, and the other male was charged and plead guilty to making and distributing child pornography (Chronology, 2013). Both males were charged under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act,* and eventually received a conditional discharge which would result in the boys having the conviction removed from their record if no additional offences are committed within a particular period (Chronology, 2013). Parson's mother did not believe that jail time was the answer for the boys involved but instead their sentences should have "hit them where it hurts, take away their devices, not allowed on social media, not allowed to have phones for a period of time" (Pace, 2017).

Even though the voice and perspective of Rehtaeh's mother was primarily highlighted throughout the articles, Rehtaeh's father shared many of the same frustrations related to the legal system (Taylor, 2018). In addition, there were many people within the community that also shared these same frustrations. After the family went public about what had happened to Rehtaeh an online petition demanding that an inquiry be conducted on the police investigation related to Rehtaeh's case received over 2,000 signatures in less than a day (Rape, bullying led to). This highlights the fact that it was not only the family of Rehtaeh that shared frustrations related to the legal system, but so did many within the community. It should be noted that these were the perspectives of the family and various community members and not that of the authors of the various articles. However, it is also important to understand the perspectives of Rehtaeh's family

and what they believe were some of the issues related to the case with regards to the legal process.

It is essential to recognize that the authors of the articles clearly chose to interview the family of Rehtaeh and ask them particular questions to showcase their views in comparison to other individuals such as the boys involved in the case or the police and schools that were aware of what was happening to Rehtaeh. The family of Rehtaeh provided an integral perspective of the Rehtaeh Parsons case and contributed to the greater discussion of what went wrong in relation to the case. Their voices were showcased throughout the various articles in relation to the problems associated to the case and made up most of the discussion connected to this theme. In comparison to discussions with police, legal professionals, and school administrators, the voices of Rehtaeh's family were continually highlighted throughout the articles.

Theme: Connection to the case of Amanda Todd
Based on the analysis, connection to the case of Amanda Todd was a reoccurring theme throughout the various articles and appeared in almost a quarter (n=6) of the newspaper articles. Despite this being a minor theme, this was a noteworthy theme as several articles discussed the connections between the Rehtaeh Parsons case and the Amanda Todd case, and highlighted the fact that the Rehtaeh Parsons case was not the first of its kind within Canada. The HuffPost Canada article "How the RCMP failed Rehtaeh Parsons" (Huffington Post, 2013) discussed the similarities between these cases by stating "this repetitive tale is exhaustingly familiar: young guys do something terrible to a teenage girl, in person and cyber-bullying ensue, then the guys get away with it unscathed." The article went on to explain the issues that both girls experienced with regards to the distribution of explicit photos and subsequent bullying and the inability of police to properly assist the girls, stating "so both the Parsons and the Todd families are left

without any justice." Another article echoed the similarities between the cases by stating "the tragic story, with elements of sex, bullying and suicide, echoes that of Amanda Todd, the 15-year-old British Columbia girl who took her life last October after suffering years of torment that began when she showed her breast online" (Hamilton & Visser, 2013).

Articles highlighted that similar to the Rehtaeh Parsons case, the Amanda Todd case also attracted major media attention after her death. One of the articles explained that "the issue of bullying was propelled into the public spotlight last fall over the suicide of British Columbia teen Amanda Todd, whose heart-wrenching video about bullying and cyber-stalking was seen worldwide. In addition, both the Rehtaeh Parsons case and the Amanda Todd case have sparked conversations related to cyberbullying and violence against women. The article titled "A chronology of the Rehtaeh Parsons case (Global News, 2013) explained federal efforts aimed at combatting cyberbullying were "prompted by the case of Parsons and British Columbia teen Amanda Todd, who took her life in 2012 after being sexually exploited online."

Lastly, even the mothers of both girls recognized the similarities in the cases and joined together to bring awareness of what had happened to their daughters. Rehtaeh's mother stated that "Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh shine a light on the dangers of social media and profound impact" (Dickson, 2016). The mothers have brought attention to the many issues related to their daughters' cases such as online bullying; lack of support and violence against women have demanded change in the form of education; and changes to laws, greater awareness, and support so this does not happen in the future (Dickson, 2016)

Theme: Institutional and societal inequalities
Institutional and societal inequalities was not a major theme discussed throughout the articles and appeared in 8 (n=8) newspaper articles, but due to the literature and approach of this

research project it was important to highlight and discuss this theme. This theme will be further highlighted and reviewed in relation to the second research question in the following section of this chapter.

The second section of this chapter discusses the two research questions that guided this research project. Using quotes from the various articles this section will address these research questions in connection with the themes previously discussed in the first section of this chapter.

In general, the data revealed the case what conceptualized as one of immense tragedy and loss, and many family and community members saw this as an opportunity from which to create change. The themes discussed above highlight the main components of the Rehtaeh Parsons case. It is evident that the articles primarily discussed the concepts of bullying and cyberbullying. The articles primarily discussed Rehtaeh's experiences of extreme torment and bullying from her peers, and highlighted the negative consequences associated with such behaviour. In addition, these articles were also used as a platform for change, and highlighted various areas such as education, awareness and increased campaigns which could be implemented to combat issues of bullying within schools. The categorization of articles further explains the main focus of the various articles. As previously stated, articles categorized as "incident of the case" consisted of articles that primarily discussed the facts of the case. These articles were predominantly centered around the initial incident of the alleged sexual assault of Rehtaeh Parsons and subsequent distribution of photos, and the death of Rehtaeh. For the most part these articles provided a synopsis of what happened. These articles predominantly relied on legal language and terminology and used terms such as sexual assault and very rarely referred to the incident as "rape." For example, the only time the term "raped" was used in relation to the case was when the family of Rehtaeh discussed the incident and what had happened to her.

Articles that were categorized as "Legal Process" mainly discussed the legal components of the incident. These articles were mostly focused on the legal case against the boys involved and also the legal charges associated with the case. Articles categorized as "Legal Changes" consisted of articles focusing heavily on the legal changes that have occurred or legal suggestions that have been put forward since the death of Rehtaeh. Five articles were categorized under the legal process category. This exemplifies that the main source for the media to address issues of structural inequalities and incidences of gender inequality and misogyny is related to the law and how the law is carried out in relation to these concerns. These articles primarily explain changes to the law in areas such as cyberbullying and ways to protect victims of cyberbullying. Lastly, articles categorized as "call to action" consisted of articles focused on this sense of change that has been a result of the death of Rehtaeh. These articles were predominantly centered on communicating a lesson about what went wrong in the Rehtaeh Parsons case in order to create change. A large quantity of these articles discussed the various failures in the ways in which the police, school system, and mental health supports dealt with Parsons. Numerous articles discussed the ways in which these institutions could have better served Rehtaeh during her time of crisis, and perhaps if these institutions were better equipped to deal with such incidences the death of Rehtaeh could have been avoided. For example, several articles identified the need to address sexualized violence towards women, and the importance of men also being involved in these conversations, which was highlighted through the 'Man Up' campaign.

Overall, most of the newspaper articles reported the "facts" of the case and relied on both legal professionals and the family of Rehtaeh to help elaborate on the surrounding circumstances. Throughout the research process, I had to be mindful of what those who were being interviewed were saying in comparison to what the author was saying. At times, it was evident that there was

a bias when it came to certain people being interviewed, however the reporters in the various articles were able to remain neutral in their reporting styles. For example, in the article titled 'Christie Blatchford: Boy in notorious Rehtaeh Parsons photo talks for first time about what happened' (Blatchford, 2015), the mother of the boy being interviewed continuously tried to assert that he was a good kid, all kids make mistakes, and nobody is perfect. Understandably, she felt the need to present her son in a positive light and tried to take the focus away from what he had done to Parsons and instead tried to display his good qualities, despite pleading guilty. Nevertheless, it should be noted that few articles addressed an alternative perspective on the Parsons case by presenting the view by a family member of the accused.

Secondly, Christie Blatchford supported the accused in the Rehtaeh Parsons case, often presenting the boy in a positive light despite him being guilty of distribution of child pornography. The author described the boy as bright, well-spoken, brave, and thoughtful (Blatchford, 2015). The author focused more on the negative consequences that the boy had experienced because of being charged in comparison to the consequences Rehtaeh was faced with after the incident. For example, the author stated that the boy "had to leave school under threat; his father's computer hacked; his sister was harassed by a local woman, who once called and described the family as "rapists and murderers." In addition, the author also discussed statements made by Rehtaeh's mother, and often stated that these were not accurate claims about what had happened to Rehtaeh. I was also mindful that these articles presented a slight bias towards the case, but still believed these articles were engaging with the Rehtaeh Parsons case and should not have been excluded from the analysis.

The article "How the RCMP failed Rehtaeh Parsons" (Huffington Post, 2013) was also flagged as an article that presented a bias towards the case. The author made several statements

which made it evident that they believed that the legal system completely failed Rehtaeh. Some

of the statements made by the author included "unfortunately Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh

Parsons share a seeming failure on the part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to properly

serve and protect them." The author went on to state, "a lot of us in Canada like to think we're

spared from events like Steubenville, but we're not, and it appears we're even worse than the

Americans at prosecuting teenage rapists." It was very clear that the author believed the RCMP

did little to support Rehtaeh Parsons and ultimately played a part in her death.

Research Question #2: To what extent was the Rehtaeh Parsons case constructed as a

case of bullying, harassment and sexual assault in comparison to broader social inequalities

within society?

In general, the case of Rehtaeh Parsons was primarily conceptualized as a case of

bullying despite research that suggests these cases are often the result of broader social

inequalities within society (Payne & Smith, 2013). As previously highlighted, a dominant theme

throughout the articles was related to bullying, cyberbullying and the negative consequences of

both actions. A large proportion of the articles analyzed discussed components of bullying and

cyberbullying in connection to the case, and primarily conceptualized the case as one of

immense bullying torment at the hands of Rehtaeh's peers. Despite a small proportion of articles

that discussed aspects related to social inequalities many articles were framed around the issues

related to bullying, harassment, and sexual assault. Almost all the articles that were analyzed for

this research project discussed some form of bullying, cyberbullying and harassment in relation

to the Rehtaeh Parsons case. It was clearly seen as a core component of media reporting.

Despite the fact many of the articles (n=15) discussed the case in relation to the concepts

of bullying and cyberbullying, some articles touched on broader social inequalities that may have

played a role in the case. The theme of institutional and societal inequalities will now be discussed to further answer the research question. This theme was found in just over a quarter (n=8) of the newspaper articles and was discussed primarily in relation to gender inequalities that were at the root of the Rehtaeh Parsons case. Social inequalities were presented in discussions about rape culture, lack of support for victims and youth in general, and gendered violence among females. Rehtaeh was labelled a "slut" for being with other boys and experienced slut shaming as a result. Rehtaeh's mother explained "she walked into school and everyone started calling her a slut" and further stated "her friends turned against her. People harassed her. Boys she didn't know started texting her and Facebooking her asking her to have sex with them" (Hamilton & Visser, 2013). The family of Rehtaeh believed that the advice given by police on how women can protect themselves from such incidences came mostly in the form of victim blaming. Rehtaeh's mother stated "time and time again she's been told officials are telling women to stay off the internet who are fearful of harassment and advise them to stop sharing images. But this advice is not the answer, said Parsons, it's victim blaming" (Dickson, 2016).

Furthermore, there are immense inequalities with regards to how females are viewed with regards to sex and their experiences with sexual violence. The brother of a friend of Rehtaeh's discussed sexual violence and consent in an article that explained "he still remembers with deep regret his high school days when he would drink, party and "get laid." Consent? Never discussed. Having sex with girls who didn't say yes? Definitely (Chiu, 2018). He goes on to explain the "boys club" mentality that is still very present especially on the construction site where he works. He explained that discussions concerning consent and treating women with respect are often laughed at and pushed to the side in replacement of discussing sports and catcalling women (Chiu, 2018). This also highlights the fact that taking advantage of girls is

something that boys learn to do through their interactions and socialization growing up. These are actions that begin young and continue into adulthood and is not simply something that young boys do and then eventually mature out of. In another section of the article the author discussed a support group, that was a result of Rehtaeh's death, which aims to deal with some of the many inequalities that young female women face within our communities. Within the group these girls are "examining the same heavy issues of consent, self-esteem and suicidal thoughts" all issues that we see increasingly present among young women.

There was also discussion throughout the six articles related to the inequality's women face when they report incidences of sexual assault. It often comes down to "he said she said" and females often feel as if their reports are not taken seriously by police or that they are not believed by the authorities (CBC, 2013). Another article further highlighted the inequalities that females are faced with in relation to their experiences with sexual violence. The article stated "how can our society provide a safe haven for young girls? Why do young men feel that young girls are but objects for their sexual fantasies and pleasure?" (Huffington Post, 2013).

Furthermore, several articles highlighted some of the many issues related to how females of sexual of assault are treated in comparison to their perpetrators, and issues related to reporting of sexual assault cases. In an article that interviewed the boy in the notorious photo of Rehtaeh that was distributed, the author described the boy as "such a slight young man, bright, well-spoken and even capable, albeit in that awkward-bordering-on-ghastly way of the young man, of being thoughtful." The article goes on to state that the boy was on the football team and "by his own shy admission, a "pretty popular" kid" and "he is also brave" (Blatchford, 2015). The boy involved goes on to state "I feel like if she didn't want it, it wouldn't have happened," further highlighting the issues related to consent and much greater inequalities faced by women. The

article also touched on the concept of support for those accused in the case. Many people supported the boys that were accused of distribution of pornography and believed "that they were unfairly vilified" and at one point during the legal proceedings "posters defending her alleged assailants were nailed to utility poles in the neighbourhood" (Ha, 2013).

In addition, it is important to understand how age was conceptualized throughout the various articles, and how the youth involved in the incident were portrayed. Age primarily played a role in how the boys involved in the case were discussed by the media. This can be witnessed in the ways in which the mother of one of the boys involved in the incident tried to represent her son. The mother of the boy involved indicated, "I don't sit here as a parent and say he's perfect. He's not. He's made mistakes. Tell me a teenager who hasn't" (Blatchford, 2015). This demonstrated how the mother of the boy involved described the incident of one in which as a youth who is developing and maturing, her son had made a mistake, something that all teenage boys do. Her explanation did not represent a much deeper issue related to structural inequalities or his socialization and upbringing. In addition, there were also incidences where the case was framed as one in which kids were just fooling around and having fun, and things just got carried away. This can be seen in the way in which one of the boys involved in the case explained the night and what had happened between himself and Rehtaeh. One of the boys described that during the night of the incident they "were kind of laughing about the night" and went on to further say "I felt like if she didn't want it, it wouldn't have happened" (Blatchford, 2015). The boys involved in the case showed their inability to recognize that what they had done was wrong. Furthermore, the boys involved made it very clear that they would not be blamed for the death of Rehtaeh and only accepted responsibility for the distribution of the photo. The boy explained "I will not live with the guilt of someone passing away but will live with the guilt of sending the

picture" (Blatchford, 2015). This further emphasizes how the boys involved in the case continuously felt that they needed to explain their side of their story and ultimately showcase themselves in a positive light.

Overall, these findings suggest that the articles primarily focused on aspects of bullying and cyberbullying and how the events that occurred highlighted some of the many consequences of such torment. In addition, the theme of Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities was a reoccurring theme that presented us with information on how we can learn from the mistakes of the Rehtaeh Parsons case to help prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future. The articles analyzed for this research project provided an in-depth synopsis on the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and how the case of conceptualized by Canadian newspapers.

Table 1:

Category	Article Title	News Source	Codes
Legal Changes	Rehtaeh Parson's mother hopes new anti-cyberbullying law will be drafted	CBC	- Legal Changes (cyberbullying laws) - Reaction from family (Rehtaeh's mother) - Lack of support for youth - Support for victims - Cyberbullying law - Death of Rehtaeh - Facts of the Case - Cyberbullying law (law struck down) - Statement from legal professional - Cyberbullying Law (cyberbullying task force) - Cyberbullying - Hope for change (changes to cyberbullying laws) * - Need for change * - Statement from legal professional (reaction to cyberbullying law) - Issues related to protecting victims
Legal Changes	1 year later: What's changed since Rehtaeh Parson's death?	Global News	- Cyberbullying - Sexual assault - Positive change * - Change in justice system (sexual assault victims) - Statement from family (parents) - Statement from family (father) - YCJA (charges) - National concern - Suicide and online bullying - Changes to legal system (laws related to cyberbullying and distribution of intimate images - Positive change related to cyberbullying (education) (awareness) * - Cyberbullying and the law - Positive change (youth mental health) - Mental health in Canada (youth suicide) - Mental health services (youth mental health)
Legal Changes	MPs hear from mothers of Rehtaeh Parsons and	ipolitics	- Sexual assault - Cyberbullying - Death of Rehtaeh - Connection to Amanda Todd case

	Amanda Todd		• Victims of cyberbullying vs victims of sexual assault? • Rape culture • Victim blaming • Slut shaming • Impacts of cyberbullying (negative consequences) * • Need for change * • Legal Changes (cyberbullying laws) • Need for change (education) (awareness about the law)
Legal Changes	N.S. fine-tuning cyberbullying laws prompted by Parsons death, minister says	CTV	• Legal Changes (cyberbullying laws) • Positive changes * • Protection for victims • Changing definition of cyberbullying • Consequences of cyberbullying • Support for victims of cyberbullying • Cyberbullying law (shortcomings of the law) • Statement from legal professional (opinion on cyberbullying law) • Possibility of change (changes to cyberbullying law)
Legal Process	Rehtaeh Parsons case review finds system 'failed'	CBC	• Failure of institutions (police) (prosecution/legal system) * • Legal System • Facts of the case • Errors related to the case (police involvement) (prosecution) • Review of case (review of police/prosecution) • Failure of police • Death of Rehtaeh • Rape culture • Reaction from experts in the field • Sexual assault • Initial case (police involvement) • Issues related to initial investigation (police involvement) • Impact on victims • Lack of urgency (police) • Bullying • Failure of the school

			- Issues within the legal system (issues related to prosecution) (issues related to sexual assault allegations) - Issues related to sexual assault cases - YCJA (legal charges) - Inaccurate legal information (lack of knowledge) - Cyberbullying - Need for action * - Issues related to the school (lack of urgency) (lack of support for victim)
Legal Process	Police arrest two in Rehtaeh Parsons bullying suicide	The Globe and Mail	- Legal case - Sexual assault - Cyberbullying - Making amends - National concern - Response from PM (national concern) - Rape culture - Support for accused vs support for victims - Search for the truth - Emphasis on the opinion of Rehtaeh's mother (showcasing her voice) - Legal changes - Community concern * - Call for change/action * - Facts of the case - Public outrage - Outcry
Legal Process	Rehtaeh Parsons child porn case put over, again	CBC	- National concern - Legal changes - Cyberbullying - YCJA - Death of Rehtaeh - Sexual assault
Legal Process	How the RCMP failed Rehtaeh Parsons	HuffPost Canada	- Failure of authorities (failure of police) - Issues within the legal system * - Facts of the case - Sexual assault - Connection to Amanda Todd Case - Public outrage (reaction from community) - Call for action (education) * - Bullying vs sexual assault - Connection to previous cases - Failure of police *

			• Failure of the school • Failure of institutions (police) * • Lack of action
Legal Process	Rehtaeh Parsons suspects in court to face child porn charges	CBC	• Facts of case • Death of Rehtaeh • Legal charges • Cyberbullying • YCJA • Support from Rehtaeh's family (court appearance) • Family reaction to case • Failure of police (view from family) • Lack of faith in police (view from family) • Reliance of legal professional (emphasis on legal language) • Legal changes • Legal process (fair trial) (timely process) • Public outrage (support from community) * • National concern * • Public outrage (concern about the legal outcome of the case) * • National concern (concern about the case) * • Assumption of guilt vs innocence • National concern (PM response) • Support for accused vs support for victim • Review of case • Community outrage (protesting in support of Rehtaeh)
Incident of Case	A chronology of the Rehtaeh Parsons case	Global News	• Facts of the case • Death of Rehtaeh • Suicide • Sexual assault • Bullying • Cyberbullying • Statement from mother • Failure of police (view of mother) • Remembering Rehtaeh • Remembering Rehtaeh (Vigil for Rehtaeh) • Violence against women • Reopening of case • Independent review of case • Response to case from institutions (police) (school) (health centre) • National concern (response from PM)

			• National concern (PM involvement) • Social media • Changes to the law (cyberbullying law) • Combatting cyberbullying * • Connection to Amanda Todd case • Investigation of cyberbullying • Lack of support for Rehtaeh • Need for change (improvement to schools) • Independent review (mental health programs) • Changes to the law (distribution of intimate images) • Changes to law (protection for victims) • Charges laid (making and distributing child pornography) • Independent review (review of police and prosecution)
Incident of Case	Rehtaeh Parsons Funeral Held In Halifax Today	HuffPost Canada	• Suicide • Bullying • Societal problems • National concern • Funeral • Death of Rehtaeh • Consequences of social media * • Youth mental health (depression) • Societal concerns/problems * • Rape culture • Youth mental health (avoidance of help) • Support from community • Kindness • Support • Tribute to Rehtaeh * • Investigation of sexual assault • Cyberbullying • Lack of evidence (sexual assault) • Lack of police resources? • Lack of urgency? • Community support • Remembering Rehtaeh * • The legacy of Rehtaeh * • Connection to Amanda Todd case
Incident of Case	Rape, bullying led to N.S. teen's	CBC	• Rape • Bullying • Tragedy

	death, says mom		- Incident of case (party) - Incident of case (alleged assault) (photo) - Distribution of photo - Cyberbullying - Slut shaming - Impact on victims * - Rape culture - Issues related to sexual assault cases - Police investigation - Youth mental health (depression) - Harassment - Youth mental health (suicide) - Death of Rehtaeh - Failure of justice system (reaction of mom) - Cyberbullying among youth - Public outrage (concern for victim) - Public outrage (call for change) * - Investigation of incident - Review of case - Youth mental health (greater support for youth) - Cyberbullying (social media) * - Social media and the increase of cyberbullying - Parental involvement (social media supervision/education) - Responsible social media use (education) (parental involvement/support and education)
Incident of Case	'Those people took my beautiful girl': Mother hits out over bullied daughter's suicide after alleged gang-rape	National Post	- Blame - Death of Rehtaeh - Response from family - Assault - Cyberbullying - Explicit photo - Bullying - Harassment - Torment - Failure of the justice system (response from mother) - Connection to Amanda Todd case - Changes to law (cyberbullying law) - Issues related to sexual assault cases - Investigation of sexual assault

			- lack of evidence - support for police - Impact on victim * - night of incident (alleged assault) (explicit photo) - Slut shaming - Suicide - Youth mental health - Bullying (never-ending) - Support for victim (therapy) - Social media and bullying * - Social media as an outlet for the victim - Drug use - Drug use and mental health - Youth mental health (depression) - Blame - Condolences for the family - Tragedy
Incident of Case	Rehtaeh Parsons Suicide: Halifax Teen Kills Herself After Alleged Rape, Online Bullying	HuffPost Canada	- Death of Rehtaeh - Cyberbullying - Tragedy - Cyberbullying (negative consequences) * - Facts of the case - Bullying and mental health - Incident of rape - Rape culture - Investigation of case (police) - Harassment - Victim blaming - National concern (public reaction to case) - Connection to Amanda Todd case - Distribution of explicit photos - Connection to similar cases - Family reaction - Remembering Rehtaeh
Incident of Case	Christie Blatchford: Boy in notorious Rehtaeh Parsons photo talks for first time	PostMedia	- Explicit photo - Alleged sexual assault - YCJA (charges) (child pornography) - YCJA (protection for youth) - Consent * - Perception from the boys involved (saw it as a joke) (laughing) - Distribution of photo * - Female involvement in bullying

	about what happened		• Support for male perpetrators • Rape culture • Support for accused • Need for accused to defend himself • Guilt • Bullying • Suicide • Death of Rehtaeh • Reaction from mother of Rehtaeh • Blame (reaction from mother) • Debate around who was involved in the incident • Slut shaming • Night of incident • Reaction from mother of boy involved (need to protect) (support for accused) • Sexual encounter • Alcohol involvement (night of incident) • He said she said (rape culture) • Night of incident (friend involvement) • Lack of concern for what happened • Sex culture among teens • Harassment • Night of incident (lack of concern for Rehtaeh) • Death of Rehtaeh as a tragic consequence
Call to Action	Mother of Rehtaeh Parsons brings anti-bullying message to corner Brook	Canadian Press	• Loss of Rehtaeh • Suicide • Negative consequences of bullying * • Need for change (education) • Cyberbullying • Bullying • Incident of case • Distribution of photo • Cyberbullying laws • Youth mental health • Negative consequences of the incident * • Connection to similar cases • Issues related to sexual assault cases • Alcohol involvement and consent • Need for change (changes to laws related to consent and sexual assault) • Consent (issues related to consent) • Education (consent)

			• Impact of socialization and these issues • Education (consent) (teaching children early) * • Need for change (speaking out for change) • Bringing attention to the problems
Call to Action	Rehtaeh Parsons Society to address cyberbullying, youth sexual violence	CTV	• The legacy of Rehtaeh * • Issues related to the case (cyberbullying) (sexual violence) (distribution of photos) • Impact of the loss of Rehtaeh • Community support • Cyberbullying and suicide • Death of Rehtaeh • Remembering Rehtaeh • Support for victims of sexual violence • Support for victims (therapy) • Need for education * • Education on cyberbullying *
Call to Action	Georgian College redefining what it means to 'Man up'	CTV	• Incident of case • Legacy of Rehtaeh • Remembering Rehtaeh * • Positive change * • Prevention and education * • Education (redefining masculinity) • Toxic masculinity • Call to action (standing up for what's right) • Prevalence of sexual harassment • Educating young people • Redefining masculinity • Learning from our mistakes • Moving forward through positive action and change • 'Man Up'
Call to Action	Rehtaeh Parsons walk highlights slut shaming	CBC	• Legacy of Rehtaeh • Incident of case • Prevention • Slut shaming • Social media and cyberbullying • Negative consequences of social media • Education for young people • Support for victims of slut shaming • Sexual bullying • Cyberbullying • Support for victims • Positive change and action

Call to Action	'They knew what they did was wrong': Mother of Rehtaeh Parsons speaks out on Bridgewater teens sentencing	Canadian Press	- Opinion of Rehtaeh's mother - Sentence for boys involved - Consent - YCJA (protection of accused) - Lack of support for victims - Incident of case - Changes to the law (distribution of photos) - Need for education * - Education and social media * - Consequences for their actions - Education (consequences of cyberbullying)
Call to Action	Rehtaeh Parsons' mother shares story to spark conversation	Thunder Bay Newswatch	- Remembering Rehtaeh by sharing her story* - Importance of sharing her story - Learning from what happened to Rehtaeh - Issues impacting young people (mental health) (bullying) (sexual violence) - Incident of case - Need for discussion on these issues - Youth mental health - Need for support - Distribution of photos of Rehtaeh - Negative impact - Death of Rehtaeh - Suicide - Social media and the impact on mental health * - Support for victims - Platform for women (sharing their stories) - Education among young people - Failure of institutions (police) (health care facilities) - Changes to the law - Male involvement in these conversations related to sexual assault
Call to Action	Father of Rehtaeh Parsons calls for action on violence against women		- Call to action (violence against women) - Gendered violence - Gendered violence (challenges faced by women compared to men) - Suicide - Death of Rehtaeh - Pain of losing a child - Incident of case - Extreme torment - Distribution of photo

			• Call to action (ending gendered violence) (speaking up) * • Loss of daughter • Greif and loss • Impact on mental health • Putting an end to gendered violence • Speaking up about issue related to gendered violence • Involving men in the conversation • Ending toxic masculinity • Male involvement • 'Man Up' campaign • Redefining masculinity • Positive change • Police involvement (protecting women) • The impact of such tragic events • Prevalence of gendered violence • Call to action (addressing gendered violence) *
Call to Action	The legacy of Rehtaeh Parsons	CBC	• Remembering Rehtaeh * • Tragedy • Remembering Rehtaeh (classmate perspective) • Cyberbullying • Bullying • Photo of Rehtaeh • Distribution of photo • Community outrage • Failure of institutions • National concern • Changes to law (cyberbullying laws) • Changes to law (distribution of photos law) • Independent review of case • Failure of school (independent review) • Failure of hospital (independent review) • Boys charged in case • Issues related to consent • Lack of consent • Consent among youth * • Gendered violence • Difficulties related to discussing sexual violence and consent • Making positive changes

			- Increased discussion about consent and sexual violence - Female empowerment groups - Issues of concern among female youth (consent) (self-esteem) (depression) - Support for victims - Legacy of Rehtaeh * - Support for females - Focusing on positive change - Death of Rehtaeh as a tragedy - Abuse - Importance of speaking up - Learning from what happened to Rehtaeh - Negative consequences of the incident (switching schools) (ongoing harassment/abuse) - Issues related to staying silent - Youth mental health (depression) - Negative consequences of incident (impact on friends) - Remembering Rehtaeh (refusing to stay silent about what happened) * - Legacy of Rehtaeh (changes to mental health awareness) - Issues related to cyberbullying law - Remembering Rehtaeh (memorial walk) - Sharing the story of Rehtaeh * - Social media and metal health - Discussing gendered violence - Speaking up Positive change *

Table 2

Category	Article Title	Themes Associated with Article
Legal Changes	Rehtaeh Parson's mother hopes new anti-cyberbullying law will be drafted	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Frustrations related to the legal system • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Legal Changes	1 year later: What's changed since Rehtaeh Parson's death?	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community • Frustrations related to the legal system • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Legal Changes	MPs hear from mothers of Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd	• Connection to the case of Amanda Todd • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use • Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community • Frustrations related to the legal system • Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities
Legal Changes	N.S. fine-tuning cyberbullying laws prompted by Parsons death, minister says	• Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use • Frustrations related to the legal system • Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities
Legal Process	Rehtaeh Parsons case review finds system 'failed'	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community • Frustrations related to the legal system • Institutional and societal inequalities
Legal Process	Police arrest two in Rehtaeh Parsons bullying suicide	• Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Legal Process	Rehtaeh Parsons child porn case put over, again	

Legal Process	How the RCMP failed Rehtaeh Parsons	- Connection to the case of Amanda Todd - Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community - Frustrations related to the legal system - Institutional and societal inequalities - Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities
Legal Process	Rehtaeh Parsons suspects in court to face child porn charges	- Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community - Frustrations related to the legal system
Incident of Case	A chronology of the Rehtaeh Parsons case	- Connection to the case of Amanda Todd - Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities - Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community
Incident of Case	Rehtaeh Parsons Funeral Held In Halifax Today	- Connection to the case of Amanda Todd - Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities - Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use - Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community - Frustrations related to the legal system - Institutional and societal inequalities
Incident of Case	Rape, bullying led to N.S. teen's death, says mom	- Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use - Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community - Frustrations related to the legal system
Incident of Case	'Those people took my beautiful girl': Mother hits out over bullied daughter's suicide after alleged gang-rape	- Connection to the case of Amanda Todd - Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use - Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community - Frustrations related to the legal system
Incident of Case	Rehtaeh Parsons Suicide: Halifax Teen Kills Herself After Alleged Rape, Online Bullying	- Connection to the case of Amanda Todd - Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use - Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities

Incident of Case	Christie Blatchford: Boy in notorious Rehtaeh Parsons photo talks for first time about what happened	
Call to Action	Mother of Rehtaeh Parsons brings anti-bullying message to corner Brook	• Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use • Institutional and societal inequalities • Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities
Call to Action	Rehtaeh Parsons Society to address cyberbullying, youth sexual violence	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Call to Action	Georgian College redefining what it means to 'Man up'	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Institutional and societal inequalities
Call to Action	Rehtaeh Parsons walk highlights slut shaming	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Call to Action	'They knew what they did was wrong': Mother of Rehtaeh Parsons speaks out on Bridgewater teens sentencing	• Frustrations related to the legal system • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use
Call to Action	Rehtaeh Parsons' mother shares story to spark conversation	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities • Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use • Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community • Institutional and societal inequalities
Call to Action	Father of Rehtaeh Parsons calls for action on violence against women	• Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community • Institutional and societal inequalities • Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities
Call to Action	The legacy of Rehtaeh Parsons	• Remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities

		- Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use - Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community - Institutional and societal inequalities

Discussion

The present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. This research project, using an intersectional framework and qualitative content analysis method, explored the Rehtaeh Parsons case from the perspective of 23 Canadian newspaper articles. The findings section of this paper revealed the presence of six main themes throughout the articles: (1) frustrations related to the legal system, (2) negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use, (3) remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities, (4) connection to the case of Amanda Todd, (5) sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community; and (6) institutional and societal inequalities. All these themes were discussed throughout the articles, however negative consequences of youth bullying; remembering Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities; and sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family and greater community were the most dominant themes identified throughout the various articles. The framework of this research project was rooted in a systematic literature review consisting of four main areas of research which included literature on bullying, critiques of bullying, gender inequalities and sexualized violence and literature on crime and the media. All four areas of literature were important to understanding the case of Rehtaeh Parsons and were subsequently discussed within the articles and highlighted throughout the various themes identified within this project.

The articles highlighted issues related to cyberbullying and social media use, cyberbullying laws, consent, gendered violence, and lack of support for victims. As research emphasized, issues of bullying continually impact teenagers at alarming rates, which was repeatedly highlighted and discussed throughout the various articles. Research shows us that approximately 1 in 3 adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied and 47% of

Canadian parents report having a child victim of bullying (Government, 2012). The case of Rehtaeh sheds light on these alarming statistics and brings forward questions about how we prevent such tragic issues from occurring again within our communities. A large portion of articles discussed the Rehtaeh Parsons case in relation to the bullying aspects of the case. Fifteen of the twenty-three articles discussed the case in relation to bullying and more specifically the negative consequences of cyberbullying. Research on bullying and its consequences come largely from a developmental psychological perspective with an individual level focus. Research has highlighted the various negative consequences of youth bullying such as withdrawing from school and social groups, depression, increased drug, and alcohol involvement, and in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons, suicide (Cheng, 2012). The articles analysed for this research project showcased bullying as being at the forefront of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and continually discussed components of bullying and bullying prevention within schools.

Research also touched on the issues related to consent, gendered violence and lack of support for victims which was also a reoccurring concept highlighted throughout the articles. The Canadian Women's Foundation (2019) explained that "sexual assault and harassment are persistent forms of gender-based violence that are rooted in gender inequality" (p. 1). Research on the wider issues of gender stemming from the Parsons case is illustrative of a social and intersectional perspective in which social inequalities are embedded within the social world. The case of Rehtaeh stressed the importance of focusing on the issues of gender-based violence and inequality that are impacting young females and calls for increasing action to address these issues. Even though the boys involved in the case were never charged with sexual assault, it is evident that what Rehtaeh experienced the night of the incident is largely related to sexual assault. Rehtaeh woke up the next morning unable to remember portions of the night in question,

which brings in the component of consent. Rehtaeh was under the influence of alcohol and was taken advantage of by several boys in which she did not consent to these actions. In addition, the incident was photographed and subsequently distributed to Rehtaeh's peers without her consent, another gross violation and example of gendered-based violence.

In addition, this research is relevant as it further highlighted and explained research conducted in the area of media constructions of crime. It exemplified how we simply cannot rely on the media as our sole focus to understand occurrences of crime within our community. This aligns with the research conducted by McCormick (2020) who provided a noteworthy and powerful argument that perhaps as a society we should not expect the media to provide a truth-worthy snapshot any more than any other measure of crime, including official statistics, victimization studies and self-report surveys. Instead, we should understand that each of these measures of crime provide us with a different "window into the world", and no one of them can provide us with an accurate and complete representation of crime occurring within our society (McCormick, 2020). This is true in relation to the case of Rehtaeh Parsons and serves as a reminder that the media is unable to provide us with a complete explanation of the case and what happened, and instead only provides us with a glimpse of the case. Even though I believe the articles included within this research project provided a noteworthy understanding and perspective of the case, it must be noted that these articles are unable to provide a complete explanation of the case of Rehtaeh Parsons, and instead only provide a snapshot of the entire story.

Furthermore, the ways in which females in comparison to males are portrayed in the media and with respect to crime was also represented through the various articles. Research has shown that female victims of crime are often misrepresented in the media (Anastasio & Costa,

2004; Marsh & Melville, 2019). Female victims of crime are often represented as being responsible for the actions against them and are blamed for the victimization (Marsh & Melville, 2019). This can be seen in the ways in which newspaper articles discussed how Rehtaeh was under the influence during the incident, as if this is supposed to excuse what had happened to her that night. Violence against women is often not taken seriously and female victims of crime are "depersonalized, objectified, and dehumanized" (Anastasio & Costa, 2004). Throughout some of the articles Rehtaeh was represented as a willing and consenting participant in the actions that occurred that night. Despite debate surrounding consent, the distribution of the photo was certainly not consensual, and is greatly related to issues of gendered violence. The case of Rehtaeh Parsons also aligns with how the media portrays sexual assault and rape, including how the media perpetuates rape myths. With regards to sexual assault against women, it is often represented in the media that victims of sexual assault are dishonest about the crimes committed against them (Anastasio & Costa, 2004). Once again, there was much debate within various articles about consent, and if Rehtaeh had agreed to participate in sexual activities during the night in question. In addition, the discussion around alcohol involvement often served as a way to excuse what had happened that night, as if they were 'just kids' that had gotten too drunk and made a mistake that night, and not a girl who experienced immense torment and sexual assault. The ways in which the media report on sexual assault and violence against women often results in the public disbelieving women who report being sexually assaulted, ultimately resulting in the negative social construction of women (Stabile, 2011).

This research was grounded in an intersectional framework, which allowed for an effective understanding of how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was depicted by Canadian news and media. As previously highlighted an intersectional theoretical framework places emphasis on the

significance of recognizing how multiple interlocking factors such as gender, age, race, sexuality and various other social categories of marginalization and oppression create structural inequalities within our society (Gueta, 2017; Tyyska, 2006). In turn, institutions such as the media and criminal justice system serve to reinforce the marginalized positions. This framework allowed me to recognize that there is no one component that contributed to the Rehtaeh Parsons case; instead, it was the intersection of many factors. The purpose of this research was to apply an intersectional approach to understand how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian newspapers outlets, specifically with a focus on examining how the case was constructed in relation to bullying and broader social inequalities within society.

In addition, an intersectional analysis stresses the importance of both micro and macro levels of society, which allowed for research in this area to facilitate structural-level interventions in comparison to interventions that solely focus on an individual-centered approach (Bowleg, 2012). This approach helped to uncover the various structural inequalities within our society that may have contributed to the occurrence of the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and perhaps what can be done to prevent this from occurring again. An intersectional approach calls attention to looking at inequalities from several different viewpoints, and in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons it allowed us to understand how multiple levels of oppression and inequalities contributed to the experiences of Rehtaeh. Using an intersectional framework this research project uncovered that the Rehtaeh Parsons case was one that brought attention to several societal inequalities, specifically gendered-based violence involving white, middle-class teenagers. Despite the case being one involving underlying social inequalities, there was little discussion throughout the articles of the impact of such inequalities on the occurrence of the incident. From an intersectional perspective this case would be viewed as one that incorporated various structural

inequalities, and to remedy such issues, there must be greater focus on addressing such

inequalities (Crenshaw, 2019). Surface level remedies such education and awareness, which

were proposed throughout the various articles will do little to prevent such occurrences from

happening in the future. Instead, an intersectional approach would stress the importance of

addressing much deeper and structural level issues of gender inequality and continued power

inequalities in relation to sex and gender (Bowleg, 2012).

Likewise, an intersectional framework stresses the importance of looking at how the

criminal justice system itself is an institution that has been socially constructed so that it

contributes to immense structural inequalities within our society, such as the case of Rehtaeh

Parsons (Crenshaw, 2019). This was witnessed in the ways in which the Rehtaeh Parsons case

was dealt with by both the police and the legal system as a whole, which ultimately failed to

recognize how greater forms of systemic oppression and structural inequalities contributed to the

Rehtaeh Parsons case. Not only do marginalized categories allow us to understand sexualized

violence, but the law and criminal justice system continually reinforces and contributes to

sexualized violence by being unable to address the underlying structural inequalities that lead to

sexualized violence. Despite the public perception of believing that the law and punishment

through corrections is the answers to these problems. Intersectionality places emphasis on going

beyond surface level remedies such as corrections and policing and looking deeper into

understanding the root level causes of these issues, and how these institutions serve to contribute

and reinforce such inequalities (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). For change to be implemented

we must understand how issues such as gender, class, race, age, and many other inequalities

impact the lived experiences of individuals in connection with the justice system (Crenshaw,

2019; Thorne, 2004). For this to happen we must first understand how societal institutions such

as the legal system, policing and corrections perpetuate underlying issues of oppression and inequality, before we can truly remedy such concerns (Crenshaw, 2019). This was highlighted in the ways in which both the family of Rehtaeh and the general public called for action in forms such as education, awareness and understanding of the root issues to help prevent this from occurring in the future. However, by encompassing an intersectional framework, we must go beyond remedies such as education and awareness and understand how the intersections of various forms of oppression and inequality create disadvantage for certain individuals within our society (Crenshaw, 2019).

In addition, the findings of this research project call attention to both the changes and progress that have been made since the death of Rehtaeh, but also the changes that are still to be made to help prevent this from happening again in the future. Various initiatives have been created in memory of Rehtaeh and focus on some of the many issues that were at the forefront of this case. Articles highlighted changes made with respect to the legal system, mental health support for youth, and educational programs. All these initiatives strive to make significant changes within our community all in the hopes of making sure that a tragedy like this does not occur again. Articles also highlighted the work that still needs to be done to prevent such a tragic event from occurring again. As research highlighted, sexualized violence often occurs due to the perpetrator perceiving the victim as unequal (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). This inequality often results in the ability for the perpetrator to take control over their victim and cause humiliation, intimidation, and abuse (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2019). These consequences of humiliation, intimidation and abuse were continually discussed in relation to what Rehtaeh experienced both the night of the incident and because of the distribution of sexualized photos. The existence of gender inequalities within our society is the result of

misogyny that has been present throughout history. This calls for action in addressing the root causes of gender inequalities within our society and understanding how this negatively impacts females, especially in relation to young high school females. Remedies that aim to address the underlying issues of gender inequalities must also focus on the significance of recognizing how multiple interlocking factors such as gender, class, age, race, sexuality, immigration status and various other forms of marginalization and oppression create structural inequalities within our society (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013).

Additionally, this research project allows us to reflect on policies and programs that have been implemented to help prevent such tragedies from occurring again, and perhaps why these policies may or may not be effective. Implementing a sociological approach would provide better resources and strategies to address bullying issues, especially in relation to the experiences of individuals who are left out of mainstream bullying research. Research in this area calls for the need to focus on broader social inequalities that often-bullying literature fails to recognize and acknowledge. Research suggests that policies and strategies aimed at preventing bullying should view bullying as a broader social and public health problem which requires comprehensive strategies to aid in preventing bullying from occurring within schools (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Strategies that aim to combat bullying should be research-informed and created in coordination with parents, teachers, health care providers, policy makers, school administrators and others involved with the care of children (Ober, 2020). Gerald Walton (2011) highlighted the importance of reframing the ways in which we understand bullying and prevention and adopt a new way of conceptualizing bullying that moves away from practices that focus on the behavioral and developmental perspectives. As we saw in the introduction a substantial amount of literature and research around bullying is primarily focused on individual-level, psychological

perspectives (Breuer & Elson, 2017; Dollard et al., 1939; Kuykendall, 2012). We must move away from this perspective and take a more sociological approach that encompasses looking at various factors that could be contributing to bullying behaviour. In addition, we must consider the perspectives of individuals in various fields and create a more wholesome approach to understanding and preventing bullying behaviour. The ways in which we understand and define bullying is clearly limiting and must be reframed and reconceptualized around the ideas of social difference and structural inequality and take into consideration the structural level inequalities that may be contributing to incidences of bullying within schools.

The case of Rehtaeh Parsons showcased how simply focusing on issues of bullying and how to prevent bullying may not be the sole remedy to stop such occurrences from happening again, and perhaps we must adopt a new way of thinking and dealing with issues of bullying and look much deeper into understanding the root causes of such behaviour. By implementing an intersectional framework, we can better understand how various intersections such as race, class, sexuality, and various other factors impact the occurrence of bullying, and better understand the underlying causes for such behaviour.

Lastly, the articles used throughout this analysis highlighted the importance of going beyond simply looking at one or two articles, but instead incorporating a wide range of articles to better help explain and understand various phenomenon. By incorporating several different articles from various news sources, I was able to capture a wide array of views and opinions on the Rehtaeh Parsons case. The categorization of the various articles demonstrated the different areas of the case that this analysis captured. The findings of this study would not have been possible if the researcher decided to limit the articles to one or two main news sources. Overall,

the present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by

Canadian news sources.

Conclusion

  The case of Rehtaeh Parsons attracted major media attention worldwide and resulted in many people asking questions about what went wrong and demanding change to prevent similar cruel and devasting circumstances from happening again. Rehtaeh Parsons experienced extreme torment from her peers which resulted in the teen suffering various negative consequences, the most tragic being the attempted suicide by Rehtaeh and subsequent death. There was major debate over the case, and many have attributed the death of seventeen-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons to both the alleged gang rape and subsequent distribution of photos but also the failure of the justice system and the school the youth attended in Nova Scotia to properly address the extreme bullying and torment that the youth experienced after the incident. Sex crimes have also become increasingly complex in parallel with growth of access to digital evidence that both supports and hinders investigative processes for police (Dodge, Spencer, Ricciardelli, Ballucci., 2019). Despite criticism of the ways in which the justice system and school that Rehtaeh attended dealt with the case, it is evident that at the time of this case they lacked the resources and information to deal with such an incident.

  The widespread media attention this case attracted made it a viable topic to conduct a content analysis to better understand how the case was portrayed by the media. The researcher was able to conduct an in-depth content analysis of the Parson case to better understand how the case was socially constructed by news outlets in Canada. Through the use of an intersectional framework and content analysis this study examined twenty-three selected Canadian newspapers articles that discussed the core components and issues surrounding the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

  More specifically, this study sought to address two major research questions:

1. How was the Rehtaeh Parsons case conceptualized by Canadian news outlets?

2. To what extent was the Rehtaeh Parsons case constructed as a case of bullying, harassment and sexual assault in comparison to broader social inequalities within society?

This research explored the Parsons case to uncover how the media socially constructed the case with specific focus on how the issues of bullying and harassment were depicted in comparison to broader social inequalities within our society. Overall, the findings of this research project suggest that the articles primarily focused on aspects of bullying and cyberbullying and how the events that occurred highlighted some of the many consequences of such torment. As it has been previously discussed 'bullying' is a social construction, in which we have categorized certain behaviour and actions as bullying. This researcher is aware that bullying does occur but often, categorizing bullying simplifies the behaviour and ignores many of the underlying issues and structural inequalities that may have contributed to such behaviour. Despite evidence that suggests that the case was depicted as one of bullying, it is clear that the case presents much deeper structural inequalities within our society. Social inequalities were presented in discussions within the articles about rape culture, lack of support for victims and youth in general, and gendered violence among females. Rehtaeh was labelled a "slut" for being with other boys and experienced slut shaming as a result. Through an intersectional framework we can see the importance of understanding how the various structural inequalities within our society contributed to the occurrence of the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

The Rehtaeh Parsons case was one that involved immense tragedy for not only the family of Rehtaeh Parsons but also the community as a whole. Despite the enormous sorrow that resulted due to this case it also brought a sense of change and a drive to make sure this does not happen within any communities in the future. This case brought attention to issues that for far

too long were often not discussed and resulted in many demanding changes. This study explored

the Rehtaeh Parsons case through the analysis and exploration of 23 Canadian newspaper

articles. Through the use of qualitative content analysis, the research uncovered how the Rehtaeh

Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. The chosen articles for this research

provided a snapshot of the reporting on the Rehtaeh Parsons case. The research process

identified various themes throughout the newspaper articles related to the Rehtaeh Parsons case.

The themes identified throughout the research process consisted of: Frustrations related to the

legal system, Negative consequences of youth bullying and social media use, Remembering

Rehtaeh through continuing her legacy and creating positive change within our communities,

Connection to the case of Amanda Todd, Sense of failure among the Rehtaeh Parson's family

and greater community and Institutional and societal inequalities. The articles analyzed for this

research project provided an in-depth synopsis on the Rehtaeh Parsons case, and how the case of

conceptualized by Canadian newspapers.

In general, the data revealed the case was conceptualized as one of immense tragedy and

loss, and many family and community members saw this as an opportunity from which to create

change. The themes discussed above highlight the main components of the Rehtaeh Parsons

case. It is evident that the articles primarily discussed the concepts of bullying and cyberbullying.

The articles primarily discussed Rehtaeh's experiences of extreme torment and bullying from her

peers, and highlighted the negative consequences associated with such behaviour. In addition,

these articles were also used as a platform for change, and highlighted various areas such as

education, awareness and increased campaigns which could be implemented to combat issues of

bullying within schools. But it is important to understand that for real change to occur we must

address the underlying issues that contributed to the occurrence of the case, as surface level remedies will do little to address the structural inequalities that were at the root of this case.

The present study provides insight into how the Rehtaeh Parsons case was conceptualized by Canadian news sources. The findings suggest that the articles related to the case provide a significant snapshot of the case and highlight various important areas surrounding the Rehtaeh Parsons case. The analysis conducted by the researcher allowed for a thorough understanding of the case as a whole and highlighted several predominant and important themes that were observed throughout, the various articles. Despite being presented as a case of high school bullying this research highlights that this case was so much more than this. It is clear that this case was much more than a case of bullying and instead involved much deeper structural level inequalities, and by simply reducing the case to an incident of bullying we only serve to reinforce the ongoing gender inequalities and misogyny within our society.

Limitations of Research Project

This research project aimed to analyze and discuss the Rehtaeh Parsons case through the analysis of Canadian newspaper articles. This research project was able to uncover how the case was constructed by news sources in Canada and provided explanation on the main themes discussed through the chosen articles. One of the main limitations was the fact that the researcher chose to only include Canadian news sources which excluded any articles that were not Canadian. This was decided due to the fact that the incident occurred within Canada and the majority of articles on the case were Canadian. However, there were a limited number of articles found from both British and American sources, but the researcher decided to limit the inclusion of articles to strictly Canadian articles. This may have resulted in losing out on varying perspectives of the case which may have differed from Canadian news sources. However, these exclusions were necessary due to the both the nature of this research project and time constraints for conducting this research.

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