

## Using Theory to Understand and Reduce the High Rates of Sexual Violence in South Africa\*

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### Introduction and Scope of Sexual Violence

Gender based violence (GBV) is endemic on a global scale (UNODC 2017). It manifests in various forms of sexual violence, of which rape is the highest form of GVB (Ricardo *et al* 2011), the least visible and least reported (Corrigan 2013: 3-5). Sexual violence against women exists in all cultural and socio-economic contexts (Ricardo *et al* 2011: 9). It does not discriminate between geographical, cultural or social boundaries. Global estimates indicate that about one in three women (approximately 35 percent) worldwide have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime (UN 2016).

The figures are even more shocking in South Africa (SA). Statistics indicate that SA has among the highest rates of GBV (Stats SA 2016/2017) and is considered the 'rape capital of the world' (Interpol 2014; Stanton 2017). Some researchers allege that a woman is raped every 26 seconds (Kapp 2006: 719), while other statistics claim that it is every 17 seconds that a women is raped.<sup>1</sup> The problem remains that irrespective of which statistic one looks at the bleak outcome is that rape has reached such proportions as to indicate that one in three South African women will be raped in her lifetime (Moffat 2006: 129).

SA's latest report on crime statistics indicate that there has been a decrease in the occurrence of sexual violence (Stats SA 2016/2017). However, the non-reporting of this type of violation as a direct result of the shame and stigma attached to rape has been identified as the major reason for the decline in the data (Mapombere 2013: 48). Reports suggest that only one in nine attacks are actually reported (Rape Crisis 2015) and that

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/south-africa-progressive-lgbt-rights-gays-still-battle-social-reform-1471213>>

these reduced statistics should therefore be approached with caution. Sexual violence therefore remains a serious concern and violation of a woman's human rights (UNODC 2017; UN 2016).

Recognising that the foremost perpetrators of sexual violence are boys and men whilst girls and women remain the victims (Ricardo *et al* 2011; UN 2016), this paper will focus on sexual violence against women by men.

### **Problem Statement**

The scale of sexual violence in SA suggests that there are aspects of society that is creating an enabling environment for the perpetuation of such acts. Since rape is considered "a socially constructed concept" that is "shaped by society", a common reason for the high rates of sexual violence can be attributed to a general misperception on what actually constitutes rape (Shannon 2004: 3). Whilst acknowledging that countries like SA have clear guidelines and definitions of rape within its country's legal system there does not seem to be a universally accepted cultural definition of what constitutes rape. What has become known as the "culture of rape" (Corrigan 2013) is allowed to seemingly fester - whether for reasons based on misogynistic values, denial or self-preservation- it is clear that this so-called "culture" endorses male violence (CSVR 2009).

The recent media responses around instances of violent sexual assault have brought to the fore the pervasiveness of sexual violence in all cultures across the world. Some of the most disturbing of these incidences include cases from the Steubenville, Ohio incident in 2012; where a high-school girl who was incapacitated by alcohol, was publicly and repeatedly sexually assaulted by her peers, several of whom documented the acts on social media;<sup>2</sup> to Delhi, India; where a young female student was gang-raped, beaten and sexually assaulted with an iron rod;<sup>3</sup> to the Anene Booysen case in Cape Town SA; where a young girl was gang-raped and disemboweled by having her abdomen slit open.<sup>4</sup>

These acts of violence have exposed the need for society to take responsibility for and become more self-aware about the role that they play in

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/18/us/teenagers-found-guilty-in-rape-in-steubenville-ohio.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012\\_Delhi\\_gang\\_rape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Delhi_gang_rape)

<sup>4</sup> <http://ewn.co.za/2013/10/31/The-Anene-Booyesen-Story>

proliferating a “culture” that allows and justifies pervasive sexual violence against women. Taking into account that SA has recently attained freedom from apartheid and racial discrimination, a need therefore arises to investigate the reasons for the continued high rates of sexual violence.

### **Aim of the Study**

Bearing in mind that a solid legal framework remains the foundation to approaching societal problems, this paper starts with a brief discussion of the legal structure for dealing with sexual violence. The purpose is to show that despite a progressive legislative framework, SA remains unsuccessful in implementing rights that have thus far remained significantly hindered (Clarke 2015). Despite the strength of various legislations, this paper will show why legal development alone can be limiting in comprehensively dealing with sexual violence against women.

Accordingly, various theoretical viewpoints have been identified to better understand sexual violence in society (Buss and Schmitt 2011). This paper will present three main theories in order to understand the root causes for the high rate of sexual violence in SA: the social learning theory, the social norms theory and the feminist theory. Examining rape not as a matter of sexuality, but rather as an expression of or as a direct result of certain “other” factors may provide a clearer understanding of the high prevalence of rapes in society. It is submitted that since these theories can successfully be used to identify the root causes of rape (Nusanti 2014), it will have the concomitant effect of affecting the most appropriate prevention and treatment programmes for victims and perpetrators of sexual violence.

In reinforcing sexual violence against women as both a legal and a societal problem, the critical links between the law, public policy and service provision can be determined. This article will provide recommendations in changing attitudes, beliefs and to improve services to victims of sexual violence.

### **Research Methodology**

The incidences and consequences of sexual violence is well documented so through a literature review this paper will look at several learning theories to better understand the high prevalence of rape in SA. This paper will therefore analyse the causes and responses to sexual violence in a largely South African context.

### **Definition of Sexual Violence and Rape**

Sexual violence takes different forms and ranges from unwanted sexual comments to rape and murder (Krug *et al* 2002: 148). In 2007, amendments made to the *Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957* allowed for the broadening of the definition of sexual violations and rape in SA. South Africa's definition of rape is contained in the *Criminal Law Amendment (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act 32 of 2007* and is very broad aiming to covering a wide range of sexual abuse. The Act defines rape as "any person ('A') who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant ('B'), without the consent of B, is guilty of the offence of rape". This includes the oral, anal or vaginal penetration of a person with a genital organ, anal or vaginal penetration with any object and the penetration of a person's mouth with the genital organs of an animal. The *Sexual Offences Amendment Act* has created a number of 'new' sexual offences and expanded the definition of rape that references 59 different sexual offences (Vetten 2014: 1). This broad definition of rape will be adopted for this paper.

### **Legal Framework**

The importance of law in society lies in the fact that no society can exist without some legal framework. Laws and policies are crucial as it places violent behavior, like sexual violence, within a legal framework setting the basis for clearly defined acceptable and unacceptable conduct within society. Without a solid legal framework rights cannot be legally enforced and policies and programmes aimed at protecting society and reducing unacceptable behavior becomes meaningless. Laws provide the basis for the sustainment of a society, but laws alone are not enough to protect the rights of people.

The high rates of GBV and specifically sexual violence, has consequently led SA to implement a comprehensive legislative framework aimed at addressing issues of violence in all its forms.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this paper is not to discuss the effectiveness of the various legislations but it will suffice to mention the legal framework within which these acts fall. The legislative framework that is aimed at combating, preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women are extensive and includes but is not limited to the following; *The Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1997* and its

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<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.anc.org.za/docs/discus/2014/genderz.pdf>>

*Amendment Acts 75 of 1995 and Act 85 of 1997; The Film and Publications Act 65 of 1996; The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998; The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 and most recently, The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 5 of 2015.*

Despite this comprehensive legislation, the laws response to violence against women has been limited (Mapombere 2013). Reasons for this ineffectiveness can be attributed firstly, to the lack of a theoretical understanding around the causes of sexual violence and therefore any consequent intervention programmes become inappropriate. Secondly, the laws aimed at addressing the very people it is meant to assist do not have access to the relevant information, so they are unaware of their rights and as a result cannot take advantage of it (Andrews 1999). The last reason for the purpose of this paper relates directly to the fact that the ability of the law to eradicate sexual violence is largely restricted by the boundaries of the law, cultural attitudes and other factors.

The various theoretical viewpoints that have been developed and which lends itself to better understanding the struggle to identify the root causes of rape, as well as effective interventions for preventing sexual assaults and the treating of victims, will be discussed below.

### **Theorising Sexual Violence**

The different theories that will be discussed have been advanced around sexual offending that helps to provide some insight into why sexual offenders perpetrate such crimes (Sigsworth 2009: 6). It should be noted that these theories may not be mutually exclusive of each other and the interventions included in this paper are drawn directly from them.

#### ***Social Learning Theory***

The social learning theory describes rape as part of men's aggressive behaviour toward women (Ellis 1998). The use of violence is increasingly becoming understood as a learned behavior, deeply rooted in the ways that boys and men are socialised leading to the acceptance of unacceptable "norms" (Wegner *et al* 2014). Indeed, research has found that incidences of rape are often more common in settings where harmful social norms condone or ignore attitudes towards sexual violence or men's sexually aggressive behaviours (Katz 2006). The application of social learning the-

ory to rape determines that repeated exposure to almost any type of behavior has the tendency to stimulate positive feelings toward it (Ellis 1989). This theory emphasises the concept of rape supportive attitudes that perpetrators use to justify their behaviour (Wegner *et al* 2014).

### *Contextualising Social Learning Theory*

An example of this type of attitude is found in gang rapes and which is highly prevalent in SA. Studies show that more than one third of women who reports being raped have been gang raped (Abrahams *et al* 2004). The reasons for the high rate of gang rapes is due firstly; to a sense of masculine aggression, which is seen as a defining characteristic of manhood, and secondly; to a sense of masculine entitlement (Vogelman 1990b). Gang rapes generally occurred in response to women saying “no” to sexual demands or to the way a woman dressed (Wegner *et al* 2014). Gang rapes demonstrate the complexity of sexual offences as each offender has their own psychological makeup and therefore has different motives for committing the offences (Lawrence and Rensburg 2006). Gang rapes are distinctive because it is a situation in which no harshness or even threat may be needed in order to subdue the victim, however, the sadistic nature of the offence points to a different reason for this crime other than sexual gratification (Vogelman 1990a). It serves to cement the power issue that is at the root of rapes.

“Jackrolling”,<sup>6</sup> another form of gang rape, is a South African term for leisure gang rape (Mokwena 1991). A peculiar characteristic justifying this type of sexual violence is that jackrolling is seen as a sport of the tough gangsters in the townships. It has been recorded that there is a common township saying “jackroll is not a crime it is just a game” (Mathiane 1990).

A further dominant understanding under the social learning theory relates to “rape myths”. Rape myths are defined as “attitudes and generally false beliefs about rape that are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald 1994: 133). Justifications for rape myths include: “women ask for it”; “corrective rape” which is “performed” to “cure” lesbians of their homosexuality” and “any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to” (Burt 1980: 217).

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<sup>6</sup> The word “Jackroller” was coined to refer to the forceful abduction of women in Soweto by a specific gang called the Jackrollers.

Rape is also perceived as a learned behaviour within a patriarchal culture. It is a culture where men dominate and have the final say in most important things. Within this societal environment men feel entitled to possessing or violating females and their bodies (Vogelman 1990a). It was found that the men who strongly subscribe to traditional sex roles are more likely to behave aggressively toward women (Scully 1990). Due to the cultural endorsement of this type of behaviour, sexual violence becomes an acceptable part of life for the women. It is consequently often seen as 'deserved' or part of a role that they must accept.

Supporting such attitudes either implicitly or explicitly make societies complicit in the high rate of rapes (Jewkes *et al* 2005). These rape supportive attitudes have a direct impact on the perception of perpetrators leading them to believe that the commission of rape is an insignificant offence that does not lead to major consequences and can therefore continue to be perpetrated with relative impunity.

### *Lessons Learned from the Social Learning Theory to Assist in Reducing Sexual Violence*

The principles of the social learning theory, whereby people learn by observing what others do, mimic others behaviour and then confirming it as their own, emphasises the point that people both influence and are influenced by the environment around them. This principle, that people can then learn new behaviours by observing others, must be applied to any social and behaviour change programmes that are aimed to influence behaviours, especially those acts involving one-on-one or group interactions. These principles can be used to change perceptions of the social environment whilst at the same time providing support for persons considering a behaviour change. Through demonstration or modelling of behaviours, the social learning principles can be used to show how a person can overcome barriers in achieving healthy relationships and behavioural patterns.

### *Social Norms Theory*

This theory is aimed at understanding the environment and the role that interpersonal influences (like peers) play in certain behaviour. It looks at ways to change behaviour in general, rather than focusing on the individual to change behaviour. This theory theorises that people are often neg-

actively influenced by erroneous ideas of how other members of their social group act or think (Berkowitz 2003). When making decisions about their behaviour, people consciously or unconsciously take into account what “most people” in their same social position “appear” to be doing (Ricardo *et al* 2011: 15).

Importantly, this theory sees a direct link between the social norms of a society and commodification (Ertman and Williams 2005: 413). It has been argued that young men are “being bombarded by a culture that sexualizes commodities and commodifies women's sexuality” making them regard sex as a commodity and not one of intimacy (Katharine 1997: 603). This has the tendency to objectify talks around sex leading young people to commodify women's sexuality. This “cultural endorsement ..... of sex as a commodified good leads to an increased desire for, and sense of entitlement to, sex” (Katharine 1997: 604). This imparts to men that they can satisfy a desire for sex without having to ask for it and they can just take it when they want it.

This theory further suggests that despite men knowing that taking sex without the persons consent is wrong it is considered less morally reprehensible than other serious crimes. An example where this point is demonstrated is discussed below.

*.....teenagers get drunk and go get sex in the same way that they get high and go to the 7-11 to shoplift candybars. They know it is wrong, but it is not that bad. Most adolescents do not get drunk and go rob banks. They do not get drunk and commit murder. They do get drunk and break little rules. They shoplift and joyride and vandalize. The rule against raping, ..... is like the rule against shoplifting - it is a little rule”. (Katherine 1997: 605).*

Reports indicate that there is a direct relationship between the use of alcohol and rape (Gidycz *et al* 2007) since alcohol has the effect of decreasing inhibitions against taking that to which one has no right.

### *Contextualising Social Norms Theory*

Alcohol consumption in SA is the highest within the African continent (Maluleke *et al* 2017) with South African drinkers consuming an average of 20 liters of alcohol per year, a rate considered among the highest in the world (Pitpitan *et al* 2013). Studies on alcohol abuse indicate that 64 per-



cent of GBV cases reveal that the worst incidences of interpersonal violence occurred whilst perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol (Maluleke *et al* 2017) and more than a quarter (27 percent) of these, were perpetrators of sexual assault (Leoschut and Burton 2006). The reason for the high rate of drinking is attributed to the history of alcohol in SA when alcohol was used as a form of currency to trade cattle and as payment to the indigenous workers (Parry 2005). Apart from legitimate establishments, alcohol is consumed in shebeens, taverns or informal drinking venues, often run out of people's homes or garages (Pitpitan *et al* 2013). Research indicates that alcohol-serving establishments represent an intersection of women's risk for relationship violence and specifically sexual violence (Pitpitan *et al* 2013).

Finally, the case of sexual violence against women lends itself to a discussion on the effect of the media on social norms, as existing evidence points to a link between the two (Arias 2016). The media has been shown to play a role in providing information about new norms and persuading individuals to accept them. Researchers have noted the media's power to influence even the illiterate (Roy and Smith-Speck 2008). An example would include a television or radio programme portraying relationships between spouses that have the tendency to reinforce descriptive norms of spousal abuse by showing a husband abusing his wife. This type of exposure to sexual violence, in especially popular movies, lead men to become less bothered by sexual violence against women and behave more aggressively toward them (Cooper 2012: 9).

### *Lessons Learned from the Social Norms Theory to Assist in Reducing Sexual Violence*

It is clear that perceptions of peers' attitudes and behaviours have a great influence on an individual's own attitudes and behaviours. The social norms approach can be applied to the prevention of sexual violence by correcting these misperceptions of group norms to decrease problem behaviours or increase healthy behaviours (ACHA 2008: 8). Social norms campaigns are perhaps best conceptualised as culture change interventions which would involve longer-term initiatives in order to realise the behavioural change effects. The effectiveness of social norms interventions can be undermined if the overall community supports and promotes unhealthy behaviours. Therefore, the social norms approach must focus on positive messages about healthy behaviours and attitudes.

Literature has shown a clear association between sexual violence and alcohol (Haines 1997). Alcohol abuse in SA is common due to its availability and its social acceptance (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002). Recognising that GVB is an important link to alcohol abuse remains imperative. Sexual violence prevention services and interventions in SA must directly address the availability, legality and social acceptance of its use in order to effectively reduce recalcitrant behaviour.

The media has a profound effect on the behaviours and social identity formation of young people. One of the strongest routes by which the media appears to influence attitude change is through persuasion (Roy and Smith-Speck 2008) and this can have an immediate effect on one's perceptions of what is acceptable and what is not. The media must be involved as a partner in changing the social norms of a community. An example of how the media informs perceptions will be discussed later.

### ***Feminist Theory***

The feminist theory suggests that gender inequality including political and economic powerlessness and patriarchy in societies play an important role in understanding sexual violence (Kelly 1999). This theory focuses on the wider picture of women living in a society that is dominated by men. Therefore, a major strength of the feminist theory is its recognition of the relationship between rape and power/dominance structure between the sexes (Ellis 1989). This is evident from studies that show that rape is often used as an act of punishment and as a means to demonstrate power over the victims (Jewkes *et al* 2005). Rape is also seen as a mechanism of social control, reflecting a man's sense of entitlement. This theory holds that rape and the fear of rape consequently serves as a mechanism of social control in a system of male supremacy. This type of conduct manifests itself when women restrict their movements, behaviour and dress in order to elude being raped (Vogelman 1990a).

### ***Contextualising Feminist Theory***

#### ***Apartheid***

The years of apartheid in SA has led to an erosion of African masculinity leading to what has been referred to as "masculinity in crisis" (Vogelman 1990a) since apartheid legislation had the effect of emasculating African men (Vogelman 1990b). With the advent of democracy, women were

granted equal status and their roles legitimated. This granting of equality posed a threat to male power within the family and has eroded traditional notions of masculinity. Women's rights developments under the new dispensation happened without an equivalent development of a programme to help men cope with these changes. Thus, rape is understood as being an attempt by men to reassert their authority and "put women in their place" (Petersen *et al* 2005).

### *Culture*

Culture determines "definitions and descriptions of normality and psychopathology" (Gurvinder and Bughra 2013: 225). Culture, steeped in patriarchy, plays an important role in how societies perceive sexual violence. In a highly traditional society like SA, perceptions of what is acceptable and unacceptable in law and culture is blurred. What is evident is that in a male dominated environment it becomes very difficult for women to negotiate their sexuality.

### *Lessons Learned from the Feminist Theory to Assist in Reducing Sexual Violence*

The feminist theory sheds light on the fact that the unequal power relationships in society feeds a culture of rape. In this theory, sexual violence is understood as a continuum of behaviours instead of an isolated act. It therefore interprets sexual violence as a foreseeable consequence of the culture of rape. This understanding plays a significant role in sexual violence prevention strategies. Feminist models of sexual violence hold that such behaviour is not inevitable and can therefore be prevented by making changes to societal norms surrounding sexuality, violence, gender and oppression (ACHA 2008: 7)

### *An Example of How Communities, Culture, Patriarchy and the Media Influence Attitudes on Sexual Violence*

The importance of the media should not and cannot be underestimated towards the achievement of these goals. Media campaigns have been shown to intensify awareness, change attitudes and build support for successful implementation of prevention policies (Jernigan and Wright 1996). Media coverage can foster public support by reflecting community involvement and activism. A prime example of where these theories intersect and where communities and the media working together to bring about change is discussed below.

In February 2013, President Jacob Zuma, after five years as President, “was forced” to make more than just a “passing reference” to rape in his State of the Nation address (Lewin *et al* 2013: 22). Until then, he had quite successfully steered clear of what experts have called a “crisis in our country”. The change, to finally say something about the prevalence of rape, came about because of the brutal rape of Ms Anene Booysen on 1 February 2013. Ms Booysen was gang-raped, murdered and mutilated at a construction site in Cape Town.<sup>7</sup> She was last seen leaving a local pub at around 3:00am with someone known to her.

In February that year, South Africans echoed the outrage of the world over Indian rape victim Jyoti Singh-Pandey’s death two months earlier. The gruesome nature of the assaults led to both cases receiving major media attention and incited declarations of public outrage. The difference was that in India the outcry was accompanied by significant, unprecedented mass protest against sexual violence in a way that simply failed to materialise in SA.<sup>8</sup> The social and political response to the Booysen case is very significant.

Before these girls became victims of a heinous sexually violent crime, they had little in common. Pandey was a 23-year-old living and studying physiotherapy in New Delhi, India and Booysen was a 17-year-old living in Bredasdorp, a small rural town about 130kms southeast of Cape Town, South Africa. Booysen did not complete school and found work as a cleaner at a construction company where she lived. These two young women became connected in the minds of many South Africans after each was repeatedly brutally raped by a group of men who were under the influence of alcohol. Both victims were disemboweled and died from the wounds that were inflicted upon them by their attackers.

For a while there were some similarities in the public reaction to the two attacks, but though India erupted, South Africa’s response to Anene’s rape was subdued by comparison. Looking at the various news reports, it showed a unified voice of thousands of protesters holding candlelit vigils for Pandey in front of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi; protests and vigils started the day after the attack occurred and, during the weeks to

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<sup>7</sup> <<http://mg.co.za/article/2013-02-15-00-will-anene-booySENS-brutal-rape-and-murder-shake-the-nation-into-action>>

<sup>8</sup> <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/gallery/delhi-gangrape-protest-at-india-gate-rash-trapati-bhavan/1/8474.html>>

come, protest action spread not only to other Indian cities but also across the border to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh (Davis 2014). The people of India used posters, songs, music and street plays to convey the message that something in India had to change. After a week of protests, on 22 December 2012, protesters clashed violently with police. On that day, violent protests also took place in other Indian towns and cities, refusing to allow rape to become a culture that is acceptable. People refused to stop protesting until something was done. These protests and mass media campaigns eventually led to the changing of laws and harsher sentences for perpetrators of rape.

In comparison, the Booyesen's case failed to lead to the kind of mass protests witnessed in India after Pandey's murder. In SA, the turnout in support of Booyesen was not quite the same. Despite widespread condemnation of the attack, the few vigils that did take place were on a relatively small scale by comparison.<sup>9</sup>

Notably, neither President Zuma nor any other national or ANC leaders were reported to have been in attendance at Anene's funeral. By contrast, at approximately 3.25am on December 30, then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the president of the ruling Indian National Congress party, Sonia Gandhi, were at the New Delhi airport to receive Pandey's body when it arrived from the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore, where Pandey died. The ambulance transporting her body to the funeral was escorted by more than 20 police vehicles carrying riot police. This act was a positive sign of the condemnation and unacceptability of sexual violence that was perpetrated against "one of its own". These acts further exhibited and cemented political intolerance towards sexual violence.

In SA, the media's reaction to the Booyesen case comes under scrutiny. Researchers have suggested that reports of the case were more focused on the gruesome specifics of what was done to Booyesen, with little attempt to situate the case in the wider context. "Very little attention was focused on the contributing factors to violence against women like gender inequality and the structural roots of violence against women" (Davis, 2014). The author of an article on "Dailymavericks" sums it up best by saying that

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<sup>9</sup> <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-20863707>>

“if Anene’s death teaches us anything at all, it is that notions of masculinity, the underlying gender social order and the sexual entitlement of men are issues that require urgent social attention”.<sup>10</sup>

These different reactions to the gruesome assaults confirm SA’s culture of normalising sexual violence. Any interventions, whether in the form of education or public awareness campaigns, must be supported and championed by the government. Sexual violence against women remains one of the worst forms of discrimination and must be eliminated. Changing ideologies and cultural practices that support sexual violence is a long-term endeavour that requires commitment and strong leadership (Hassim 2009). Commitment to issues is perhaps the most important and the most difficult trait to foster. Commitment to an issue happens when for example, long after the sensational media reports have subsided over a case like Anene Booysen, organisations and persons are still campaigning for changes to social norms and beliefs. Commitment is when one takes the time to educate ourselves about sexual violence and its causes, instead of assuming the problem has been solved or will be solved on its own over time. Long-term endeavours includes a re-evaluation of the socio-economic reconstruction of SA to eliminate the conditions that reinforce much of the violence in our society.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Men as Part of the Solution***

Working with men and boys in finding solutions to confront GBV is very important as most programmes aimed at preventing sexual violence do not target boys and men. When men and boys are excluded from efforts to end violence, it separates them from becoming part of the solution to the problem. This reaffirms gender norms around male violence and ultimately leaves the burden of addressing violence to women alone (Hwenha 2014: 11). It must be reiterated and acknowledged at all times that GBV is not only a women’s issue, but a societal one that includes men. The inclusion of men in all programmes is fundamental to successful interventions.

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<sup>10</sup> <<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-11-15-anene-booyesen-why-india-and-sa-responded-differently-to-two-brutal-rapes/#.U7fmHZXlrIU>>

### ***Changing Attitudes and Beliefs***

Changing social norms and beliefs is a critical prevention strategy because of their power in influencing behaviour.

It is clear that the preservation and perpetuation of patriarchal values and behaviours in communities is a major cause of sexual violence (Hwenha 2014: 10). It also becomes evident that when an environment allows the justification of certain attitudes, men remain at a high risk for future perpetration. Rape supportive attitudes are significant predictors of a perpetrators' use of justifications (Wegner *et al* 2014). Given SA's patriarchal culture and traditional practices, there is a fundamental need to address knowledge, attitudes and behaviours at the community level. Since gender biases are embedded in cultural norms and beliefs, it becomes very difficult to eliminate them without having a holistic view and involving men as a part of the solution.

Society can be taught to counter such social norms with strategies such as challenging these attitudes and rape myths when they are expressed and by refusing to help create a context where alcohol is seen as a weapon to facilitate assaults (Ricardo *et al* 2009). This framework also supports research showing that important causal factors in sexual violence that implicitly and explicitly supports coercion in relationships must be addressed on its own. This role includes intersecting circumstances that could lead to potential assaults or speaking up when an assault does in fact take place so that such offences do not continue with impunity.

Interventions must therefore be specifically targeted for changing attitudes towards gender roles and/ attitudes towards women's rights and roles. Interventions must be aimed at improving boys' and young men's attitudes towards rape and other forms of violence against women, as well as attitudes towards rigid gender stereotypes that condone or allow this violence to occur (Ricardo *et al* 2011).

The legacy of apartheid relating to the erosion of the male masculinity still poses serious issues and is one of the root causes of sexual violence in SA. Intervention measures must address these shortcomings as a matter of urgency to enable boys and men to understand that equality for women does not translate to a threat on their masculinity.

Where violence is reinforced by the media and the community, the likelihood of recurrence becomes very high. Programmes focused on encouraging safe behaviour, supporting healthy, equitable and safe relationships must be developed and implemented. Programmes focused on individual change will not prevent sexual violence unless related norms are changed as well (Davis 2006). Thus, norms change is essential and is best accomplished through a community approach with the involvement of both men and women. By engaging men and boys to be a part of the solution, it is envisioned that a new generation of leaders will be empowered to further prevention efforts (ACHA 2008: 9)

### ***Expansion of Interventions***

There is a critical need to expand the reach of interventions. Efforts must go beyond schools and campuses into wider communities and reach across age, gender, class and race/ethnicity. Communities must be involved in the development of violence prevention strategies because local initiatives can better respond to the needs of a specific community. The involvement of multiple partners ensures that measures can reach more people than education alone (Davis *et al* 2006). The media can play a major role in the diffusion of knowledge amongst communities in matters like the necessity of going immediately to the police after a rape has occurred, to not have a bath, change clothes etc. Effective community education plays a dual role; firstly, it alerts individuals to new information, and secondly helps build a critical mass of support for safer behaviour and norms (Franklin 2005).

### ***Demand Strong Political and Social Commitment***

In addition to support for activists and interventions around education there is an urgent need for strong and responsible leadership. Government actions or inactions are vital to the construction and maintenance of gender roles and power relations. The above-mentioned case of Ms Booyesen has shown that the ways in which those at the highest levels of government speak about, engage with issues relating to sexual violence and the lack of official disapproval of such offences have material effects. Interventions will be more useful if they are designed proactively and not just as a short-term response to a crisis.

Traditional leaders, politicians and educators must make it their moral and legal duty to insist that sexual violence is illegal and unacceptable both in terms of traditional culture and values and in terms of the laws.



### ***Further Research***

There is a dearth of research on the effectiveness of interventions to actually decrease boys' and young men's perpetration of violent behaviours in the long-term. This lack of results regarding effectiveness should act as a stimulant and not a deterrent for further investigation into preventative measures for sexual violence.

### **Conclusions**

This paper has shown that the government of SA has developed one of the most progressive legislative frameworks to protect against sexual violence. Although an essential component in addressing the various forms of violence in SA, the adoption of laws alone is clearly not sufficient to end this scourge.

Sexual violence against women is a complex multi-faceted and multi-layered issue. The multiple ways of understanding sexual violence includes: the feminist theory, where male violence is understood as power, control and domination of women; the social learning theory, where violence or aggression is learned from others, or modelled by others as an appropriate means of dealing with issues; and the social norms theory, where behaviours become normalised through misperceptions of normative behaviour. These theories help provide us with a better understanding of the causes for the continued high rates of sexual violence and offer a theoretical basis for interventions to such offences.

Through these theories, it also becomes clearer that the causes of violence are complex and cannot be attributed to any single factor. In order to effectively address the problem of sexual violence a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling the problem seems to be the best option. This multi-disciplinary approach must include interactions between the cultural, relationship, social, individual and environmental factors. Interventions must be aimed at every level in order to ensure sustained change.

Prevention is the first and most important step to reducing rates of sexual violence. A prevention framework must look at preventative factors and includes zero tolerance for any kind of discrimination towards women. Early intervention and education that emphasises the importance of rights and respect for all persons are critical components. Sexual violence is a human rights violation that cannot be condoned for any reason and must no longer be legitimated by a culture of silence and impunity (Kruger 2013). Eventually, all South Africans should be able to identify with the

vision of a society that is free from gender discrimination and all other forms of oppression (Prinsloo 2006). Only once a culture of respect and equality is achieved will sexual violence stand even a chance of being eradicated. Continued social commitment to these issues remain key to resolving the high rates of sexual violence in SA.

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Proofs