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## **READING BETWEEN THE LINES: IS NEWS MEDIA IN FIJI SUPPORTING OR CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES?**

A frame analysis of local news media coverage of violence against women during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign of 2017.

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## ABSTRACT

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Violence against women is recognised as a global public health issue and an obstacle to development, as ending it is inextricably linked with achieving gender equality. The public relies on and believes in the capacity of news media to present them with a 'true' picture of reality and the news media are therefore treated as valuable allies in changing the norms, beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women. In the production and consumption of news, however, journalists employ frames to condense complex events into interesting and appealing news reports, in turn influencing how audiences view particular events, activities and issues, especially when it comes to attributing blame and responsibility. This study employs a frame analysis to identify whether, and to what extent, episodic or thematic framing is used in news articles on violence against women published in the Fiji Sun and Fiji Times during and around the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign of 2017. It showed that episodic framing was overwhelmingly used in the sample, thereby divorcing the violence from its social roots and encouraging audiences to blame the individuals involved, both for the violence itself and for remedying it. This directly contradicts the campaign's central principles positioning violence against women as a social and development issue that requires every member of society to play a part in ending it. The results, therefore, suggest that changes are needed in how organisations engage with the news media to ensure that coverage of violence against women improves in both quantity *and* quality.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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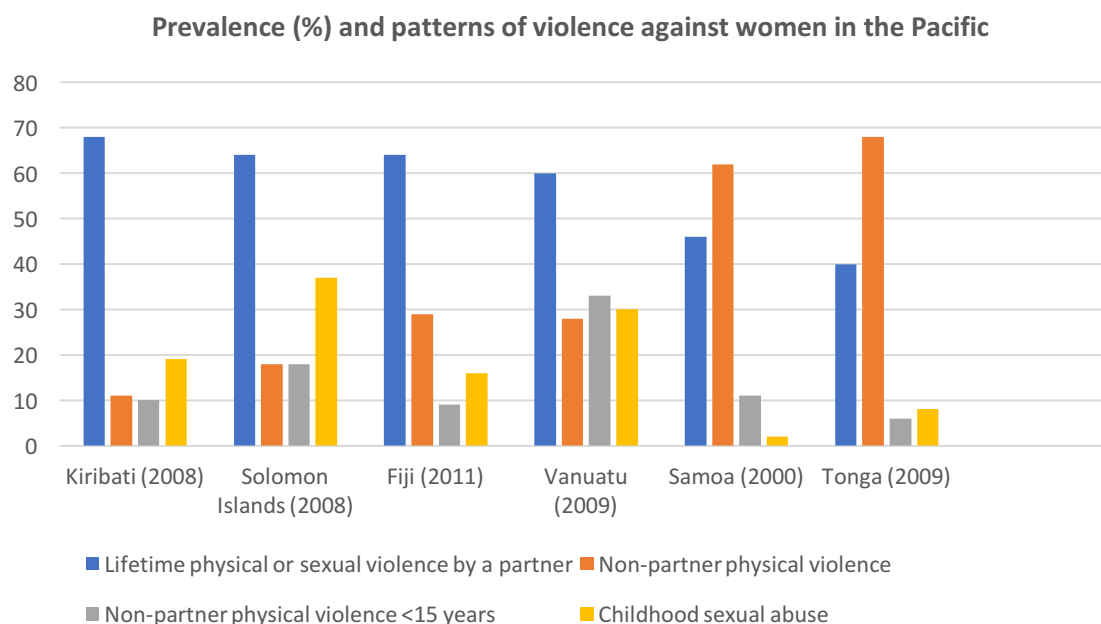
### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research topic of the relationship between news media coverage of violence against women and the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns that aim to eliminate such violence. It provides the rationale behind the research and introduces the research question and objective. Ending violence against women is critical for international development and the media can and must play a crucial role in making it happen. As such, news media are increasingly relied on to boost the potential efficacy of campaigns that seek to change social norms that reinforce violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs, and replace outdated stereotypes of the roles women and men play in society. This chapter ends with an outline of the structure of this research report.

### 1.2 Rationale

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as: “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (Article I). While it covers a broad range of abuse – from rape to forced marriage, female genital mutilation to human trafficking – this definition emphasises that this type of violence is rooted in gender inequality, differentiating it from the violence that men face in terms of both its historical motivations and necessary responses (Hunnicut, 2009; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

Globally, it’s estimated that one in every three women experiences physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, most of it at the hands of the people in their lives who profess to love them the most – husbands, partners and family members (World Health Organisation, 2016). The statistics in many Pacific countries, however, are much higher. A series of prevalence studies using a World Health Organisation methodology designed for its Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women reveals that in four countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) the percentage of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner is 60 per cent or higher (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013; Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2010; Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009; Vanuatu Women’s Centre, 2011). In Samoa and Tonga, the rates of physical violence against women by someone other than an intimate partner are 60 (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2006) and 68 per cent (Ma’a Fafine mo e Famili, 2012) respectively.



*Graph 1: Prevalence and patterns of violence against women in the Pacific (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2010; Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009; Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013; Vanuatu Women’s Centre, 2011; Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2006; Ma’a Fafine mo e Famili, 2012).*

While, traditionally, violence against women has been seen as a private issue occurring – and therefore needing to be solved – behind the closed doors of the household, feminist theories in particular place it within a wider social context. Feminist scholars point to society’s gendered arrangements that privilege men, allowing them to dominate women as a group through formal and informal institutions, both structurally and ideologically (Hunnicut, 2009; Yodanis, 2004). Gender-based violence is one of the tools used to maintain that unequal balance of power (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002) and, as such, is inextricably linked with gender equality. This view places the responsibility for ending violence against women on the shoulders of society as a whole, rather than only the individuals directly affected by it. Violence against women has been recognised under the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 as an obstacle to development (UN, 2015; UN Women, 2015) and, driven by a variety of international commitments, governments, international organisations and civil society are increasingly making eliminating such violence a priority.

Community education and advocacy campaigns are central to ending violence against women (Flood & Pease, 2009). Such campaigns look to influence the attitudes of women, men, boys and girls that perpetuate and reinforce violence against women, and rely on the support of influential socialising agents such as schools and media (Carlyle, Slater & Chakroff, 2008; Sutherland, McCormack, Pirkis,

Easteal, Holland & Vaughan, 2015; Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). This recognises that the words and images that media outlets use to describe and explain issues and the actors within them can help shape and transform values, beliefs and attitudes at every level of society.

Feminist analysis of media coverage of violence against women is a relatively recent topic of inquiry, and while there have been a number of studies conducted on media coverage of violence against women, the majority of them have been carried out in 'developed' countries with largely well-resourced and trained news media companies. Sutherland et al (2015) identified 48 primary studies published in or after the year 2000 that analysed the way news and information media represent violence against women and their children. This list included studies from 16 countries, with the United States accounting for a third of them; none of the studies were from the Pacific (Sutherland et al, 2015). The high levels of violence against women in the Pacific, and the corresponding levels of violence-supportive beliefs, have provoked an increase in donor, government and civil society focus on interventions to eliminate violence against women, including through awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns. If the local news media is being consciously courted as an ally for these interventions, it is critical that we understand the messages that Pacific outlets are disseminating and how they are, or could, impact on those campaigns.

### **1.3 Personal motivation**

My work with UN Women in the Pacific and Afghanistan underscored the importance of the role that media can, and should, play in bringing about gender equality. Studies such as the Global Media Monitoring Project look at the representation of women in the media precisely because they recognise the substantial role media coverage plays in shaping society's perceptions of social issues (Gillespie, Richards, Givens, & Smith, 2013). For example, portraying women in submissive roles promotes the view that women have more limited abilities and interests than men (Buthelezi, 2006). It is for these reasons that we were increasingly directed to regularly engage with local media to ensure that our advocacy messages reached as wide an audience as possible, thereby supporting our other activities on the ground.

While the reasoning behind this was sound, it became clear to me through my media monitoring activities that the quality of this coverage was not necessarily supporting our transformative aims; in fact, the language, headlines and images used often reinforced the very same harmful gender stereotypes we were working to overturn. The 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project shows that while the quantity of coverage on the issue of violence against women has increased in the Pacific, women are most often featured as victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and discrimination. Not only does this ignore the role gender inequality plays in such violence, but it also reinforces the

gendered stereotype of women as powerless, silent victims of violence by dominant men (Buthelezi, 2006). Despite this we continued to largely focus on the quantity of media coverage we had managed to provoke, rather than what that coverage was saying. Support for capacity building within the newsroom was initiated, however, it was ad hoc and its effectiveness largely unmeasured.

Together, these experiences led me to ask whether our current methods of working with the media are leading to increased media coverage of a type that undermines rather than supports our aims of transforming gender norms. I'm hoping this research can influence how development agencies and organisations such as UN Women, engage with the media; ensuring they are simultaneously working to increase the quality *and* quantity of coverage of women and gender issues in the Pacific.

#### **1.4 Research outline**

The aim of this research, therefore, is to explore the ways in which local news media representations of violence against women impact the effectiveness of ending violence against women awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns in the Pacific.

In particular, the specific research question I will be looking to answer is: To what extent does local news media coverage of violence against women in Fiji during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign undermine or support the campaign's aims?

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (16 Days of Activism) campaign runs from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (World Human Rights Day) every year, aiming to raise awareness and understanding of violence against women, and mobilise action to end it. The global campaign is increasingly becoming the key advocacy campaign on this issue across the Pacific, bringing together governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organisations, service providers, the private sector, and activists around a common purpose. This makes it an ideal focus for exploring my research aim. Fiji has an active civil society and a recent violence against women prevalence study, there is outward political commitment to ending violence against women and a number of steps have already been taken to shift the statistics.

I have chosen to employ a news frame analysis to answer my research question as it allows for an examination of the entire structure of an article, including inherent meanings between the lines and what is missing from the narrative (Sutherland et al, 2015; Van Zoonen, 1994; Van Gorp, 2010). Further, this approach allows for an interrogation of the role of ideology and gendered power relations in the framing process, in turn integrating feminist theory (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010).

Using a deductive strategy, this frame analysis is looking for the presence of episodic or thematic framing, and the extent to which either is used. This approach reflects the fact that one of the major criticisms of news media coverage of violence against women in general is the overwhelming use of episodic framing, thereby divorcing the violence from its wider social context, and relieving society of its responsibility for eliminating it (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Easteal, Bartels & Bradford, 2012; Sutherland et al, 2015; Carlyle et al, 2008; Iyengar, 1996).

## **1.5 Report structure**

### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

Chapter 1 introduces my research topic, taking the reader through the rationale behind the selection of this topic, including my personal motivations for pursuing it, before outlining the overall aim of the research and how the report will be structured.

### *Chapter 2: Feminist theories, news media and violence against women*

Chapter 2 examines the basics of feminist theory and applies a feminist lens to violence against women and the news media, as well as the role media can, and are, playing globally in shaping the attitudes and behaviours that promote violence against women.

### *Chapter 3: News, gender and power in the Pacific*

Using a literature review, Chapter 3 examines the shape of news media as an industry in the Pacific, how gender concerns shape and are shaped by news coverage and production, and the specific challenges undermining the Pacific media's ability to fulfill its role in transforming social norms.

### *Chapter 4: Frame analysis and methodology*

An outline of the research approach I have taken, the methods I have chosen and why I have chosen them is covered in Chapter 4. This includes an exploration of news framing, frame analysis and episodic versus thematic framing, as well as a consideration of researcher subjectivity, an explanation of my sample selection and the sliding scale I have developed to analyse Fiji media coverage of violence against women.

### *Chapter 5: Examining local news media coverage of violence against women in Fiji*

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the key findings from the frame analysis of news media coverage published in the Fiji Sun and Fiji Times online during and around the 16 Days of Activism period of 2017.

### *Chapter 6: Local media news coverage in Fiji – challenging or supporting gender stereotypes?*

Chapter 6 analyses the results from the news frame analysis and identifies to what extent local media coverage is challenging or supporting the gender stereotypes, misconceptions and myths that

support violence against women, and therefore whether it is undermining or supporting the 16 Days of Activism campaign's aims.

#### *Chapter 7: Effective media engagement for ending violence against women in the Pacific*

Bringing all evidence from previous chapters together, Chapter 7 focuses on the implications of this study's results, including recommendations for further study and, ideally, for shaping future engagement with local media in the Pacific.

In addition, Appendix One offers the frame analysis matrix with links to all the articles included in the sample, and the results under each of the sub-areas

### **1.6 Chapter summary**

Every year millions of women and girls experience violence simply because they are female, a phenomenon that not only has devastating physical and emotional consequences for the individuals involved, but also has staggering social, economic, development and intergenerational repercussions that cross geographic and social borders (Garcia-Moreno, Heise, Jansen, Ellsberg, & Watts, 2005). Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, in particular the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, are valuable tools when it comes to shifting attitudes at all levels towards the roles women and men play in relationships and in society at large, as well as the social norms around sex, sexuality and decision-making (Paluck, Ball, Poynton, & Sieloff, 2010; Flood & Pease, 2009). The success of such campaigns, however, relies on the support of socialising agents such as the news media.

The research question I have posed reflects the importance of understanding the messages that media outlets are disseminating while purporting to support campaigns such as the 16 Days of Activism, not only so we know how the media are, or could, impact on the campaigns themselves, but also so we can effectively engage with news media as allies. Applying a feminist lens means it would be impossible to answer my research question without also interrogating the role of power, gender, and patriarchal norms in processes of news production and distribution, including their influence on the journalists themselves, hence the use of a frame analysis.

Through a literature review, the next chapter explores the basics of feminist theory and its foundational concepts of gender and patriarchy, before continuing with a brief overview of the shifts in feminist critiques and approaches to development. It then applies the feminist lens to violence against women and the news media, and concludes with a more in-depth analysis of the role media can and are playing globally in shaping the attitudes and behaviours that promote violence against women.

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter One introduced violence against women as an obstacle to development and the increasing reliance on news media to support advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, in particular the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign. It outlined my personal motivations driven by experience working in the gender equality space in the Pacific region, before summarising the main content in each chapter.

Chapter Two dives deeper into exploring the theories and concepts that form the foundations of my research question. It begins by looking at the basics of feminist theory and its foundational concepts of gender and patriarchy, before continuing with a brief overview of the shifts in feminist critiques and approaches to development. It then applies the feminist lens to violence against women and the news media, and concludes with a more in-depth analysis of the role media can, and are, playing globally in shaping the attitudes and behaviours that promote violence against women.

### **2.2 Feminist theory, gender and patriarchy**

The fundamental goal of feminist theory is to analyse gender relations – how they are constituted and experienced, and how we think or do not think about them (Flax, 1987). Gender is a complex, multilevel cultural construct (Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Bedggood & Oosterman, 2006); a package of interconnected elements that defines what a society expects of a woman or a man in any given context, simultaneously conferring power and status, and shaping how we interact with other people and the world (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). While the rules around expected behaviours and roles associated with gender change with time, vary between communities and throughout one's lifespan, historically they have benefited men, giving women less power, privilege and resources (Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Kimmel, 2013; Flax, 1987). This is demonstrated for instance in the perception that men should be dominant in the household and intimate relationships, have the right to enforce that dominance, and that marriage therefore guarantees sexual consent (Flood & Pease, 2009).

Patriarchy refers to the systems of social structures and practices that are used to maintain this status quo, allowing men as a group to dominate, oppress and exploit women as a group (Walby, 1989; Hunnicut, 2009; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). It is a foundational concept in feminist theories, which see it as the main driver behind women's inequality (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). When men dominate the institutions that shape our societies, the policies and practices of these institutions are likely to embody, reproduce and legitimate male domination over women, ensuring that men's power is considered right and natural not only in those institutions but throughout society in general

(Yodanis, 2004; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). This in turn means that while intersections with other forms of difference such as class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation mean that not every man benefits and not every woman suffers equally under patriarchy, upholding it does not rely on every person using all the tools it provides (Russ & Pirlott, 2006; Walby, 1989). For example, gendered violence can be used by men to exert power and control over women, however, not every man has to be violent against every woman for it to control women's behaviour (Walby, 1989; Yodanis, 2004).

The key lies in a complex web of formal and informal enforcement mechanisms driven by social norms that legitimise patriarchy, rewarding compliant behaviour with social acceptance and punishing violations – including speaking out against the status quo – with social sanctions such as shaming, shunning or other forms of ostracism (Yodanis, 2004; Bandura, 2001; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). In some cases, these norms have given birth to laws that explicitly support men's power. For example, 100 countries have formal restrictions on women's economic participation, 30 states have legislation that formally designates men as the head of the household and 19 countries, by law, require wives to obey their husbands (World Bank, 2015).

Recognition at the global level of gender inequality as an obstacle to sustainable development has led to a reduction in the number of laws and formal mechanisms that explicitly enforce patriarchy (UN Women, 2015). However, the powerful human need to belong means that social norms reach into all corners of people's private and public lives, potentially even more so than laws or commercial incentives (Paluck et al, 2010; Bandura, 2001). Stigma and, in particular, the associated emotion of shame, combine to become a powerful form of social control. Enforcing this stigma relies on social, political and economic power and therefore intervening in this process requires fundamental changes in attitudes and beliefs, or changing the power relations that enable dominant groups to act on those beliefs and attitudes (Russo & Pirlott, 2006).

### **2.3 Gender equality and development**

It has been more than 45 years since Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* was released and in that time the development sector's approach to ensuring its effects are felt as equitably as possible by men, women, communities and states have changed significantly.

The Women in Development (WID) approach that Boserup's seminal text helped inspire was the first to consider women as more than just passive recipients of welfare, instead prescribing that development needed to increase women's productive capabilities and their employment opportunities so that they could compete with men in the labour market and therefore share in the benefits it promised (Moser, 1989; Jaquette & Staudt, 2006; Ramamurthy 2000; Rai, 2011b). By the

second conference on women in Copenhagen in 1980, however, feminist critique of the WID approach was gathering momentum. While recognising that Boserup's study had drawn much-needed attention to women and their role in development, it was criticised for not questioning existing gender relations (Rai, 2011a) or the capitalist system that helped shape them (Jaquette & Staudt, 2006), as well as for overlooking the importance of the social and political structures that women lived and acted within (Rai, 2011b). Simply put, it was more focused on changing the *conditions* of women, rather than their *position* within society (Chant, 2011).

A new approach aimed at answering some of these criticisms was the gender and development approach (GAD). Instead of merely including women in existing development processes, GAD questioned, with the ultimate aim of transforming, the political and economic structures that both women and men lived and worked within (Rai, 2011b). There were calls for a deeper analysis of gender based on an understanding that women's and men's roles were socially constructed rather than biologically determined (Jaquette & Staudt, 2006: 98) and that gender inequalities were therefore also collectively constructed and could be changed (Rai, 2011b). In other words, GAD was concerned with reshaping the predominant power relations so that "women have more control over their own lives and men have less control over women's lives" (Kabeer cited in Sharma, 2000: 23).

In theory, this focus on power relations meant that GAD was free to recognise that other factors such as class and race were also at play, therefore allowing for the fact that not all men experienced the same level of advantage within the existing structures and that not all women were disadvantaged by them, however, many contemporary writers have since contested that this did not play out in practice (Sharma, 2000; Cornwall, 1997; Tripathy, 2010; White, 1997). Further claims of cultural essentialism and ethnocentric bias were also levelled at GAD theorists (Tripathy, 2010; Sharma, 2000) alongside criticism for focusing on women in isolation to men, treating them as adversaries rather than potential allies for change (Sharma, 2000).

While postmodern feminist approaches have been celebrated for undermining this northern universalism, they have also been criticised for focusing too heavily on the differences between the lived experiences of different groups of women and thereby dismissing the fundamental similarities that can strengthen mobilisation for change (Ramamurthy, 2000). There have also been claims that the development sector has appropriated the language of feminism and human rights in order to advance a patriarchal agenda (Ramamurthy, 2000).

## **2.4 Feminist perspectives on violence against women**

As mentioned in Chapter One, the United Nations definition of violence against women covers a wide range of acts, however, the key point is the gendered nature of such violence. It is not meant

to encompass every violent act a woman may experience, rather those that are shaped by gender roles and status in society (Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Hunnicut, 2009; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Feminist perspectives on violence against women have fundamentally changed the way that researchers conceptualise, define and study gendered violence by taking it beyond the psychological characteristics of perpetrators, victims/survivors or family relationships, to instead focus on the social construction of men's violence against women (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). This recognition of society's responsibility to end violence against women has been reflected through the establishment of, and commitment to, global norms and standards, including recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration for Action (1995), and the 57<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women. Violence against women is also explicitly mentioned as an indicator under Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

Walby (1989) identifies men's violence as one of six structures of patriarchy, pointing out that men use violence as a form of power over women and that it is available as a tool because of the relative lack of intervention by the state. This in turn helps shape women's expectations of what will happen if they step out of line, leading them to modify their behaviour regardless of whether they experience violence personally (Walby, 1989). As such, violence against women is a manifestation of gender inequality that also serves to maintain this unequal balance of power (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; Hunnicut, 2009). Women's unequal status helps create their vulnerability to violence which in turn fuels the violence perpetrated against them (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

Ending violence against women is inextricably linked with achieving gender equality. The more unequal women are, the more likely men are to be violent towards women (Yodanis, 2004; Kimmel, 2013); the more egalitarian people's gender attitudes are, the more likely they are to see violence against women as unacceptable, the wider their definition of what acts it refers to, and the more likely they are to reject victim-blaming and to hold perpetrators and service providers accountable (Flood & Pease, 2009). Because violence against women is rooted in patriarchal social structures and attitudes towards gender roles (Flood & Pease, 2009; Russo & Pirlott, 2006), feminist theorists point out that it's essential to change societal attitudes at every level, making it vital to deal with the media (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015).

## **2.5 Feminist explorations of media**

The socially constructed nature of gender and the role that media play in shaping social realities mean that media issues are central to feminism (Steiner, 2014). As a central institution in a patriarchal society, media reflect existing gender differences and inequalities, as well as helping to

construct those differences and reproduce existing gender inequality by making those differences seem 'natural' rather than socially produced (Kimmel, 2013; Steiner, 2014). While journalism is built around a public expectation and institutional promise of balanced, unbiased reporting focused on facts, patriarchal norms have helped define key journalistic precepts such as newsworthiness, accuracy and credibility, as well as the allocation of status to 'hard' news at the expense of more 'female-oriented' 'soft' news (Alat, 2006; Steiner, 2014; van Zoonen, 1994). Subtle processes of rewards and punishments ensure journalists are not only aware of the unwritten rules, norms and values of journalism but also follow them, despite the tensions this may cause with personal value systems (van Zoonen, 1994).

This manifests in the number of women in the newsroom and media boardrooms, how many and what type of female sources are quoted, and how different issues are covered (van Zoonen, 1994; Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998; van Zoonen, 1998; Allan, 1998). Despite progress, only 37 per cent of news stories on radio, television or newspapers are reported by women and women fill only 27 per cent of decision-making positions in the news media (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). Furthermore, just 24 per cent of people heard, read about or seen in news media are women and just 4 per cent of news stories challenge gender stereotypes (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). While early feminist media theorists were criticised for assuming that simply having more women reporters and decision-makers would lead to better coverage of gender equality and violence against women (Steiner, 2014), there is evidence that it does make a difference. The latest Global Media Monitoring Report (2015) shows that 14 per cent of stories by female reporters focus centrally on women in contrast to 9 per cent of stories by male reporters, and 29 per cent of sources used by female journalists are women, compared to 26 per cent used by men. This provides us with evidence that narrowing the gender gap in the newsroom and board room are important steps, however, care must be taken not to lionise women as naturally and automatically more sympathetic to gender-sensitive coverage.

A key area for concern for feminist theorists is the amount of discernible gender bias in the ritualised practices of 'objective' news reporting. The public relies on and believes in the capacity of the news media to present them with a 'true' picture of reality (van Zoonen, 1994) and it is accepted that journalists are able to do this by following certain codified professional methods (van Zoonen 1998; Allan, 1998). This approach, however, relies on a conception of 'truth' as something that belongs to no one and that can only be affirmed or repudiated, without acknowledging the androcentric nature of 'knowledge' within a patriarchal society; where masculine discourses (seen as objective, rational, abstract, coherent, unitary and active) are privileged over feminine discourses (seen as subjective, irrational, emotional, partial, fragmented and passive) (Allan, 1998). As Allan (1998) points out:

“What counts as the ‘truth’ in a given instance is determined by who has the power to define reality” (pp122).

## **2.6 Violence against women and news media**

The news media has the potential to influence what the public knows and understands about violence against women as well as implicitly identify various causes and consequences (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Carlyle et al, 2008). Transformative coverage can provoke people to question the fundamental norms of female-male relationships that contribute to violence against women, while framing it as a pervasive social and development issue could lead to public resources being directed to mitigating and ending it through education, prevention, protection and support services (Carlyle et al, 2008). On the flipside, skewed representations of violence against women can discourage victims/survivors from seeking help because they don’t recognise that what they are experiencing is violence or because they don’t know where to turn for help; a lack of coverage gives policy-makers an opportunity to argue that violence against women is not a priority for the public and therefore they don’t need to prioritise tackling it (Carlyle et al, 2008; Carll, 2005; Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Sutherland et al, 2015).

### *2.6.1 Framing*

Framing refers to the practice of highlighting some actors, motivations and issues while marginalising others in an effort to influence how audiences view particular events, activities and issues (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). Studies have shown that news media coverage of violence against women overwhelmingly uses episodic framing, focusing on the details of individual acts of violence – and the individual perpetrators and victims/survivors – divorcing it from its social roots (Sutherland et al, 2015; Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Carll, 2005; Carlyle et al, 2008). This is particularly important because in doing so, the news media shifts the responsibility for preventing and ending such violence from the shoulders of the public to the individuals involved (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Sutherland et al, 2015; Carll, 2005).

Carll (2005) points out that this episodic portrayal is tied to an ideology reflecting cultural myths and patriarchal assumptions about the proper role and behaviour of women. Studies show that news media stories are constructed in such a way as to either indirectly or directly attribute blame for the individual acts of violence, in general suggesting a mutuality of blame by proffering excuses for perpetrators and suggesting ways women could have prevented it (Sutherland et al, 2015; Carll, 2005; Alat, 2009). For instance, mental illness, jealousy, provocation and the use of drugs and alcohol are some of the most common factors used by news media to excuse men who are violent

towards women, and yet those same factors are used to shift at least partial responsibility for the violence to women themselves (Sutherland et al, 2015).

### *2.6.2 Sensationalism*

In terms of news, sensationalism is often defined in terms of its capacity to provoke attention or arouse certain emotional responses in its audiences; it has a lot in common with newsworthiness (Sutherland et al, 2015). Therefore, the news media's quest for the most newsworthy stories means that they focus on the cases that provide the most salacious details or provoke the most shock (Carll, 2005). Whereas violence in the home may not be accepted, from a news perspective it is deemed ordinary, while 'real violence' involving strangers in a public space or homicide attracts prime coverage (Carter, 1998). Focusing on the most abhorrent crimes provides generous scope for the use of language that further typifies both the crimes and perpetrators as inexplicable and unimaginable deviations rather than indicators of a wider societal pattern. This includes using words such as 'beast', 'predator', 'shocking', 'bizarre' and 'unspeakable' (Sutherland et al, 2015; Carll, 2005; Carter, 1998). Once again, this feeds back into the episodic news media narrative.

### *2.6.3 Rape myths*

The term 'rape myth' was coined in the 1970s and defined as being a "prejudicial, stereotyped or false belief about rape, rape victims and rapists" (Sutherland et al, 2015: 15). A multitude of sources combine in the stereotypical construction of sexual violence in the community, however, the media plays an active role (Sutherland et al, 2015) and by positioning violence against women as a series of isolated incidents that fit within specific parameters, news media are reinforcing powerful stereotypes of the 'ideal' victim and 'ideal' criminal, in turn treating victims/survivors who fall outside those criteria as less credible sources of information (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). One study of rape and sexual assault coverage in United Kingdom (UK) mainstream newspapers showed that while 90 per cent of rapes reported to the police in the UK in 2006 were by a known man, the majority of rapes reported in the news media were perpetrated by strangers (Sutherland et al, 2015). This focus on the risk that strangers pose to women reinforces both the perception that violence against women – in particular sexual violence – is an isolated act by a deviant person and that women are somehow partially at fault for putting themselves in a dangerous situation (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Sutherland et al, 2015). This implies that women should be most fearful of an attack by a stranger and should adjust their behaviour accordingly, or that the violence they experienced is not valid because it was perpetrated by someone they know (Carlyle et al, 2008; Carll, 2005).

## **2.7: Chapter summary**

This chapter has outlined the foundations of feminist theory and how it has been applied to analyses of development, violence against women and the media, as well as a more detailed exploration of the role of the media in shaping and changing the attitudes and behaviours that promote gendered violence.

As a structure of patriarchy, violence against women is perpetuated and supported by social norms that position men as the dominant force, giving them tacit social approval for enforcing that dominance – both in the public and private spheres – using violence if necessary (Walby 1989; Hunnicut, 2009; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). The news media are not only part of that social fabric, but also form a social and cultural institution in its own right (Hjarvard, 2008) and when seen through a feminist lens it is clear that at an individual and institutional level, media outlets have historically been subject to the same patriarchal norms that influence our day-to-day interactions and that have moulded other institutions in a way that defends male privilege (Walby, 1989; Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Hunnicut, 2009). An investigation into the role the news media are currently playing in changing the attitudes and behaviours associated with violence against women cannot, therefore, avoid analysing how those influences manifest in the coverage of violence against women and what obstacles they help to create when it comes to the production of transformative coverage.

Chapter Three takes these concepts and explores what they mean, and the relationships between them within the Pacific context, more specifically Fiji. It looks at how concepts of gender and gender equality have been shaped by local experiences of colonialism and by cultural demands, and how those developments in turn have helped shape the local news media landscape.

### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two gave an overview of the relationship between gender inequality, violence against women and the media, in order to elaborate on the foundations for this research. This chapter builds on these concepts to put them in the Fijian context, examining the literature on the development of gender roles in Fiji and the shape of violence against women and the media, as well as the relationship between them. It should be noted at this point that while a study undertaken by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre in 2011 and published in 2013 provides us with a comprehensive picture of the prevalence of violence against women in Fiji, as well as women's coping strategies and the attitudes perpetuating this violence, there is a general paucity of studies on gender and the media in Fiji.

### 3.2 Gender roles in Fiji

The development of perceptions on gender roles in the Pacific has been both shaped and complicated by colonial influences and policies (Leckie, 2002; Gustafsson, 2003). Many historical accounts of gender relations within indigenous communities in Fiji stress men's power and authority over women, however, there is also evidence challenging the view of Pacific women as passive subordinates (Leckie, 2002) positing that what is seen as 'traditional' male dominance in Fijian society has in fact been shaped by more recent changes and influences such as western conceptions of gender roles introduced by missionaries and colonial administrators (Gustafsson, 2003). For example, observations by Charles Wilkes from 1840 refer to women who wielded great power in their own right, but pointed out that their power was eroded by Christianity, codified law and colonial rule (Leckie, 2002). Gustafsson (2003) asserts that the emphasis on the nuclear household imported by the colonial government increased women's exposure to their fathers' and then husbands' authority. Although the husband and father could be described at that time as the head of the household, that did not necessarily give him the right to exercise authority over his wife.

In keeping with their own views on gender stereotypes that were, in turn, supported by Christian teachings on male authority and restricting women to the domestic sphere, the colonial government dealt mostly with men thereby endorsing a male perspective of custom (Leckie, 2002). This reinforced male leadership at the societal level (district, village and clan), control over religious practices, customary hierarchies, patrilineal inheritance of title and land, and the patrilocal residence of women, all of which have been used to justify the extension of male authority over family members (Leckie, 2002). Land ownership in particular is a basis for power and respect, and confers

title and political power within both traditional and state politics (Leckie, 2002). Colonial and post-colonial state policies strengthened these patrilineal transfers of land, thereby formalising a patrilineal and patriarchal system of land management and control despite varying gender relations between communities that included matrilineal patterns in some areas (Leckie, 2002).

These actions translated to further draconian measures taken by the colonial state and male chiefs to constrain the choices, activities and movements of women in Fiji, extending through women's work and mobility, reproduction and hygiene (Leckie, 2002). Much of the literature available refers in general to the experiences of women in iTaukei communities and there is little available that compares the experiences of women in iTaukei and Indo-Fijian communities. However, one of the few specific studies cited is Carswell's (2000) examination of an Indo-Fijian cane-farming district, which showed that a woman's status was based on her being chaste, virtuous, well-mannered and respected and that while women were allowed to participate in religious or fundraising groups, they needed their husbands' consent to travel outside of the home, facing censure by village gossip if they were seen as 'rushing here and there'.

Women gained suffrage in 1963 and the first woman was elected to the national parliament in 1966 (Leckie, 2002). As Fiji prepares for its 2018 national election, 14 per cent of the members of parliament in Fiji are women (Government of Fiji, 2017), just under half way to what the United Nations considers the tipping point for reaching equality in political representation (UN Women, 2017). This percentage is a significant improvement on previous governments, and one of the highest among independent Pacific countries, however, the 2010 Millennium Development Goals progress report for Fiji specifically pointed to customary notions about women's 'true' position in society and the resulting social, political, economic and legal barriers for women's political representation (United Nations Development Programme, 2010).

Modern Fiji ranks relatively high on the gender equality scale, at 87 out of 187 countries (Government of Fiji, 2016). The Bill of Rights set out in Fiji's 2013 Constitution is one of a small handful of constitutions globally that provides explicit protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and disability, and it is also the only one in the Pacific region that expressly prohibits indirect discrimination, including on the basis of gender (Government of Fiji, 2013). However, attitudes are slow to change and evidence shows that Fiji still has a long way to go. About 42 per cent of women participate in the labour force in Fiji, compared with 76 per cent for men, but women do 74 per cent of domestic work, spending 54 hours a week on unpaid work compared to 32 hours for men (Government of Fiji, 2016). About 34 per cent of those working in the non-agricultural sector are women, although women receive lower pay than men and are underrepresented at the

executive decision-making levels in both the government and private sectors (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2015). Gustafsson (2003) points to the discrimination women face when competing for jobs in the formal sector as one of the main reasons for this disparity, adding that this leaves the informal sector as one of their only alternatives to earn money.

### **3.3 Violence against women in Fiji**

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2013 violence against women prevalence study – *Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business!* – replicated the survey method developed by the World Health Organisation for its Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013), a step taken in order to enhance the study's credibility and comparability. The study incorporated a survey of almost 3,200 women aged between 18 and 64 from across the country and drew on qualitative documentation from Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's previous research activities and work with victims/survivors and perpetrators (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013).

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (2013) asserts there is a general public perception – a narrative that researchers claim the local media contribute to – that violence against women in Fiji is a rare or minor occurrence, however, the survey findings show it is one of the biggest risks to women's physical health and mental wellbeing in Fiji. A total of 71 per cent of women in Fiji have been subjected to at least one type of violence from a partner or non-partner in their lifetime, while 72 per cent of women who have ever been in an intimate relationship experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from their husband or partner, many of them experiencing all three forms simultaneously (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). Of those women who experienced violence, 44 per cent have been punched, kicked, dragged, beaten up, choked, burned, threatened with a weapon or actually had a weapon used against them; every day in Fiji 43 women are injured, one is permanently disabled and 71 lose consciousness, while 16 women are injured badly enough that they require healthcare (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013).

The most common form of violence when it comes to lifetime experience in Fiji is physical (61 per cent), however, when it comes to current violence, emotional violence is most common (29 per cent) (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). Emotional violence covers a variety of controlling behaviours aimed at restricting women's freedom of action and choice (Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013), and is a type of violence that continues – and often intensifies – throughout a woman's lifetime, even as the frequency of acts of physical or sexual violence tends to diminish (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). As an indication of the shape of emotional violence against women in Fiji, 39 per cent of women must ask permission from their husbands or partners

before seeking healthcare for themselves and 57 per cent are expected to tell their husband or partner where they are at all times (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013).

When violence against women is seen as legitimate within a community, then it is more common (Paluck et al, 2010) and the more that women believe in violence-supportive attitudes, the more likely they are to blame themselves, the less likely they are to report the violence and the more likely to experience negative psychological and emotional effects from it (Flood & Pease, 2009). It is therefore concerning that the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre survey (2013) shows 43 per cent of women agree with at least one 'justification' for a man to beat his wife, 60 per cent agree that a good wife obeys her husband even if she disagrees, 55 per cent of women believe it is important for a man to show his wife or partner who is the boss and 53 per cent do not agree that a woman has the right to choose her own friends. In addition, almost 60 per cent of women believe that people outside of the family should not intervene if a man mistreats his wife, and just over half of women living with violence in Fiji have never told anyone about it, in fact only 24 per cent have ever gone to an agency or formal authority for help (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013).

### **3.4 Violence against women as a development issue in Fiji**

Violence against women is recognised as a global public health and development issue (Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). It has devastating physical and emotional consequences for the individuals involved, as well as repercussions that cross generations, geographic and social borders (Garcia-Moreno et al, 2005; Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Sutherland et al, 2015). According to research by Biman Prasad, current Member of Parliament and former Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of South Pacific, in 2011 the estimated cost to the Fiji economy of violence against women was FJD498 million a year, or around 6.6 per cent of its gross domestic product (Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, 2015). This figure reflects the direct costs to the health system – despite the fact that many women do not receive the healthcare they need for their injuries (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013) – police, welfare and prison services. It does not, however, include indirect costs such as loss of earnings, legal fees and medical costs, which are largely borne by victims/survivors and their families.

Increased gender equality is a major protective factor when it comes to violence against women – the more unequal women are the more likely men are to be violent towards them (Yodanis, 2004; Jewkes, 2002) and, according to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (2013), attitudes in Fiji are changing. Thanks to long-term and persistent efforts by the women's movement, other organisations and the government, there is considerable support within the community in favour of women's rights and in opposition to the use of violence (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). The Fiji National Gender Policy

was approved by parliament in 2014 and looks to “promote gender equality in all aspects of Fiji’s development, and to eradicate or modify institutional and social barriers to such equality” (Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation, 2014: 2). Five decrees relating to violence against women and children have been passed since the 2006 coup (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013), including the Domestic Violence Decree of 2009, which defines and criminalises domestic violence, as well as providing for protection orders (Government of Fiji, 2009). These decrees have improved the legal framework for criminalising and prosecuting cases of sexual and domestic violence, however, Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre’s experience with clients points to significant problems with the implementation of all aspects of the law (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013).

### **3.5 Media landscape**

Informed journalism and research can contribute to economic, political and social development in the Pacific region, (Papoutsaki & Harris, 2008). Singh and Prasad (2008) assert that the media’s primary responsibility is to the people and journalists are, therefore, duty-bound to educate themselves about the real problems that the local population faces so that they can report on them in an in-depth and compelling fashion. However, poor working conditions, low pay and a lack of time, skills and resources, mean that many journalists in Fiji are solely concerned with practical skills and having a job, giving little thought to the wider social responsibility of the media in a developing society (Robie, 2008b). There are consistent complaints of inaccurate use of data, terms and concepts, sensationalism, a focus on the problem and not on the solution, a general lack of interest in development issues, and prejudice against stigmatised groups (Papoutsaki, 2008).

The first newspapers and printed materials in the Pacific were produced mainly in indigenous languages by religious missions in the early 1800s, before control of the main media outlets moved to the colonial governments and then the independent governments that succeeded them (Crocombe, 2008). In some of the smaller Pacific countries and territories this is still the case, with no privately owned or commercial media products, and in others, governments have been slow to relinquish this culture and legally recognise press freedom, including the right to criticise the government itself (Robie & Perrottet, 2012).

In Fiji, the situation has been complicated by four military coups since 1987, the most recent of which, in 2006, resulted in the implementation of Public Emergency Regulations that rolled over on a monthly basis until the Media Industry Development Decree of 2010 was passed. Among other things, this legislation allowed for the punishment of individual journalists as well as media outlets for publishing information that was ‘not in the public interest’ (Robie & Perrottet, 2012). While the Decree has been modified after objections raised in the United Nations Second Universal Human

Rights Periodic Review, former Fiji Broadcasting Corporation news director, Stanley Simpson, points out that this was the longest period of censorship and public emergency regulations Fiji had ever experienced (cited in Robie & Perrottet, 2012). For many commentators this situation has led to a lack of confidence among journalists and high levels of self-censorship (Robie & Perrottet, 2012; Robie, 2008b; Morris, 2016). When taken together, these elements have contributed to the development of what Molnar (2008) and Robie (2016) describe as a culture of ‘unquestioning’ journalism where little ‘digging’ or background research is undertaken beyond the initial answers provided by the original source. There is an overwhelming reliance on government sources and government-sourced news stories, with the majority of articles relying on a single source (Molnar, 2008).

Self-censorship and government regulation or intimidation are not the only influences on the journalistic culture in the Pacific, with another regular criticism being a lack of education and specialist reporting skills (Molnar, 2008; Papoutsaki & Harris, 2008; Robie, 2016). Fiji in particular has been facing a brain drain of journalists since the first two coups in 1987, with many senior journalists leaving for larger markets with more freedom and better paying jobs, while new university graduates are constantly being poached for more highly paid regional roles and jobs with international non-governmental organisations (Robie, 2016). Fiji’s newsroom population is small but largely ethnically balanced (Crocombe, 2008; Molnar, 2008). It’s estimated that there are between 180 and 220 journalists across print, broadcast and mainstream internet media outlets, depending on who is included in the definition of ‘newsroom worker’ or journalist (Morris, 2016). Journalistic careers in Fiji are short, however, so the high turnover means the majority of those journalists are unlikely to have the training and experience that could meaningfully contribute to improving the standard of reporting (Papoutsaki & Harris, 2008). As Robie (2016) points out: “This continual loss of staff makes it difficult to achieve stable and consistent editorial standards and policies” (pp 100).

### **3.6 Media and gender**

As established in Chapter Two, media is not an entirely independent source of power, authority or ideology, influenced as it is by the forces of the socio-economic and political frameworks, and the community or country, it exists in (Devi & Chand, 2008). In terms of gender equality, while media stories and broadcasts can reinforce prejudices against women, they can also open people’s eyes to the importance of women’s contribution to development (Middleton, 2008). In general, however, media coverage tends to reflect and advance the dominant ideology and development paradigm (Devi & Chand, 2008). In the Pacific, many people accept the cultural patriarchy that condones violence, believing it to be legitimised by men’s general domination of society, their right to control

and their right to expect complete submission from their wives and children (McManus, 2008; Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). These beliefs in turn have an effect on everyone involved in sourcing, producing and consuming local media coverage, and, as a result, influence what is deemed newsworthy and what sources are most credible. A 2007 student analysis in Papua New Guinea looked at 113 stories on family violence during a three-month period and 86 per cent of those stories included only a single source, usually the police (McManus, 2008). Another journalist in Papua New Guinea explained: "A common domestic situation where a husband and wife are fighting is not worth reporting because from the paper's point of view it won't sell. But if the father or brother rapes the daughter or sister, that's news and it will definitely sell" (McManus, 2008: 231).

There is a growing argument that nascent media sectors in Pacific countries should be shaping news values and reporting principles to reflect their own unique situation. In particular, there are calls to focus more on 'development' journalism, a form of reporting that looks to contribute to a country's economic, social, cultural and educational progress through a more in-depth, less adversarial approach (Robie, 2008b; Robie, 2008a; Papoutsaki, 2008). Put simply, development journalism looks beyond the who, what, when, and where, to explore the how, why and what now? (Robie, 2008a). Development journalism tasks reporters with identifying key issues and exploring their relationship to the poor, middle class and the rich, thereby involving more community reporting instead of relying on press releases from urban centres (Robie, 2008b). When it comes to gender equality and violence against women, this approach would encourage coverage that analyses the root causes of violence against women, challenges its social acceptance and engages in advocacy for victims/survivors, while also pointing to possible solutions (McManus, 2008). However, to do this, journalists need to know how to report on these topics and editors need to have a clear policy on how to approach them (McManus, 2008). Unfortunately, in the Pacific there are currently very few codes of ethics and standards and those outlets that do have such a code in place rarely have the resources or mechanisms to enforce it (Molnar, 2008).

Internationally there is a recognised lack of female voices inside the newsroom, with only 37 per cent of stories worldwide being reported on by women (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). By contrast, there are many women journalists working in the Pacific, although not many are in decision-making positions (Middleton, 2008). In Fiji, approximately 42 per cent of journalists are women; within that, the numbers of newspaper and radio reporters are reasonably balanced but only 30 per cent of television reporters are women (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). What is interesting is that the majority of television *presenters* are women (Global Monitoring Project, 2015, emphasis added), perhaps reflecting the value placed on women's looks rather than their skills. Other regional figures for the Pacific included in the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project

incorporate both New Zealand and Australia – media landscapes that are considerably larger, more diverse and better trained – however, they still make for concerning reading: women were covered as subjects or sources in 20 per cent of stories; only 14 per cent of stories included women as experts or commentators while 48 per cent of stories included women for their personal experience; only 1 per cent of stories in the Pacific made reference to gender equality, women’s rights and/or human rights policy; and 1 per cent of stories in the Pacific clearly challenged gender stereotypes.

### **3.7 Chapter summary**

By summarising the information available about the context and shape of violence against women in Fiji, this chapter shows that not only are women experiencing frequent and serious physical, emotional and sexual violence, but that the violence is underscored by a general belief in the primacy of male needs and authority at all levels of society and that men are therefore justified in defending that power (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013). Changing these beliefs, and the resulting attitudes, is therefore essential in preventing violence against women, and in mobilising the resources, political will and actions needed to provide victims/survivors and their families with effective protection services and access to justice.

It also confirms that Fiji is no different from other countries in that its journalists are not immune from these beliefs and social norms, and they therefore influence how media is sourced, produced and consumed, including when it comes to violence against women. However, the efficacy of Fiji’s media in changing violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs is further complicated by other, more practical challenges, such as a lack of training, poor working conditions and high turnover of staff. Press freedom is a particular concern in Fiji, which is relevant because freedom of expression brings into view marginalised groups, power inequalities and particular needs stemming from the struggles that accompany gender, class, race, sexuality and other identities (Devi & Chand, 2008).

Chapter Four outlines my methodology for this study, further exploring the concept of framing and frame analysis and how it fits with feminist theories and news media practices, before explaining my sample selection and the sliding scale I developed to implement my frame analysis. It also introduces the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign and identifies my own subjectivities.

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter three explored the foundational concepts of news, power and gender in the Fijian context, charting the historical influences on what are now seen as ‘traditional’ gender roles, as well as the modern media landscape.

In Chapter Four I outline my methodology for determining whether local media coverage of violence against women in Fiji is supporting or undermining the aims of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (16 Days of Activism) campaign. Since I will be undertaking a frame analysis of a sample of news articles, this chapter begins with a more in-depth exploration of news framing and frame analysis and how they both interact with feminist research perspectives and news media production, before defining the specific pair of frames – episodic and thematic – that I will be looking for and why I have chosen them. I will then introduce the 16 Days of Activism campaign and identify my own personal subjectivities and ethical considerations, before concluding with an explanation of how I developed the sliding scale research tool that I will be using.

### 4.2 News framing, frame analysis and the news media

#### 4.2.1 *Frames, news media and feminism*

Frames define problems. By highlighting some actors, motivations and issues while marginalising others, frames invite audiences to see issues, events and activities in a particular way by diagnosing the cause, making moral judgements and suggesting remedies (Entman, 1993; Van Gorp, 2010; Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). As natural “cognitive misers” (Nisbett, 2010: 51), individuals rely on mental short cuts, values and emotions to make sense of complex issues and frames feed into this need, acting as socially shared organising principles that symbolically help people structure their social world in a meaningful way (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Reese, 2010; Nisbett, 2010). In short, frames help shape not only what people think about an issue but also how they discuss the world around them; frames become attached to particular issues or events reflecting the power of certain actors and the very basis of the culture we live in (Druckman, 2010). It is for these reasons that Entman (1993) asserts that the power of a frame can be as great as that of language itself.

The creation and dissemination of frames is neither a fixed nor a one-way process. A multitude of frames can be found in the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture, many of which will directly conflict with each other (Entman, 1993; Nisbett, 2010). When deciding what to say, the communicator makes a conscious or unconscious judgement guided by the frames that organise their own belief systems; the frames that guide the receiver’s thinking and conclusion may or may

not reflect the frames in the text or the framing intention of the communicator (Entman, 1993). All of these judgements and frames are couched within, and influenced by, the surrounding culture, which is itself a stock of commonly invoked frames; in fact, culture may even be defined as a set of common frames exhibited in the discourses and thinking of most people in a social grouping (Entman, 1993).

In terms of the production and consumption of news media, frames are used by audiences to make sense of and discuss an issue, by journalists to condense complex events into interesting and appealing news reports, by policy-makers to define policy options and reach decisions, and by experts to communicate to other experts or to broader audiences (Nisbett, 2010). At a cultural level frames are conceptualised as a toolkit journalists draw on to do their job, much as individuals use news stories as a toolkit to understand their social and political environments (Van Gorp, 2010). Journalists are both an audience for the framing behaviours of other social actors, and an actor in their construction as they use framing elements to create their news stories (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Gamson & Mondigliani, 1989; Reese, 2010).

The framework of news values itself contributes to the construction and reinforcement of particular frames as journalists cannot tell stories effectively without relying on preconceived notions about how to order story elements and what meanings they could or should impose on them (Van Gorp, 2010). From a feminist perspective, the pursuit of objectivity and professional journalistic standards validate statements by official sources such as government officials over comments from individuals in non-official social locations, which in turn allows those in power to continue shaping the news agenda (Alat, 2006; Steiner, 2014; van Zoonen, 1994; Hardin & Whiteside, 2010).

#### *4.2.2 Constructionist paradigm*

D'Angelo (2002) identifies three paradigms of news frame analysis – cognitive, constructionist and critical – and for this research I have chosen to follow the constructionist paradigm.

This approach looks at framing as a dynamic process where frames can evolve and be restructured by journalists to match changing social and political conditions, which in turn means frames can potentially be useful or even tied to the visibility of social movements (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010). This approach looks at media producers as information processors who rely on the frames that resonate with themselves and media consumers because they are part of the same cultural system as the public they are communicating with (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010; D'Angelo, 2002). This differs from the critical paradigm, which sees media producers as part of an elitist mechanism supporting the status quo, and the cognitivist focus on a process of negotiation between news frames and

individual media receivers, disregarding both the meaning-making process and sites of resistance involved in producing media content (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010).

Hardin & Whiteside (2010) assert that the constructionist paradigm allows for an interrogation of the role of ideology and gendered power relations in the framing process, integrating feminist theory. It is also a more hopeful approach, emphasising the possibilities we have to change the world by providing an opportunity to advocate for individual and institutional change; allowing us the freedom to recognise the progress that has been made, while also acknowledging the resilience of traditional gender ideology (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010).

#### **4.3 Episodic versus thematic framing**

The public tends to make decisions on political issues by reducing them down to questions of responsibility and blame (Nisbett, 2010) and these questions tend to fall into one of two areas: causal responsibility – who or what is responsible for the problem – and treatment responsibility – who or what has the ability to alleviate it (Iyengar, 1996). In the case of violence against women, feminist definitions focus on the social construction of violence against women (Russo & Pirlott, 2006), thereby positioning it as a problem that requires collective action at all levels of society. Transformative media coverage of the issue therefore needs to be framed in a way that assigns causal responsibility to gender inequality, supported by harmful social norms, collective attitudes and behaviours, as well as discriminatory legislation and institutions, while assigning treatment responsibility to all levels of society.

The majority of existing studies, however, found that media coverage of violence against women employed largely episodic framing – portraying incidents as isolated crimes divorced from the overarching social context in which that violence occurs (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Easteal, Bartels & Bradford, 2012; Sutherland et al, 2015; Carlyle et al, 2008; Iyengar, 1996). Research shows that episodic framing encourages individualistic attributions of responsibility, with national issues traced to private actions and motives rather than deep-seated socio-economic or political conditions, in the process shielding society and the government from responsibility (Iyengar, 1996).

Thematic framing on the other hand is a broader and more abstract depiction of issues that puts them in context, for instance, by including statistics on the extent of the problem, pointing readers to local resources, incorporating expert analysis, exploring risk factors, and unpacking existing myths and stereotypes (Iyengar, 1996; Sutherland et al, 2015). While core values encourage people to hold specific views on responsibility, Iyengar (1996) asserts that exposure to thematic framing of issues can and does override these dispositions.

#### **4.4 The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign**

The importance of changing attitudes towards women and harmful gender roles in preventing violence against women has made community education and social norms change campaigns using mass media popular with organisations and states (Paluck et al, 2010; Flood & Pease, 2009). The 16 Days of Activism campaign is one such effort.

Started in 1991 at the first Women's Global Leadership Institute, the campaign looks to build awareness around gender-based violence and facilitate networking among women leaders working in this area (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2017). The campaign runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) through to 10 December (World Human Rights Day) each year, dates that were chosen specifically to emphasise that this kind of violence is a violation of human rights (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2017).

The campaign is a platform for raising awareness of violence against women as a human rights issue, strengthening local work around violence against women, sharing new and effective strategies, demonstrating the solidarity of women, men, boys and girls, and creating tools to pressure governments to implement their promises around eliminating violence against women (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2017).

#### **4.5 Ethical considerations and personal bias**

Research cannot be deemed 'successful' or credible if it ignores the needs and concerns, dignity and wellbeing of its participants (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014) and this is one of the main reasons I chose to focus on documents rather than interviewing journalists in Fiji. A series of interviews would arguably have given me insight into media producers' attitudes and beliefs and the challenges they face, however, it was also important to consider the personal risks for any journalist I talked to as a result of documented concerns about government censorship and intimidation in Fiji (Singh & Prasad, 2008; Robie & Perrottet, 2012; Robie, 2016; Robie 2008b), as well as how those concerns could influence the information the journalists gave me. To avoid this I would have had to rely on a range of external observers, each with their own agenda, and the voices of those most closely associated with what is happening on the ground in Fiji would not have been included.

In saying that, everyone is a product of their society and, therefore, as researchers we need to recognise and appreciate that there are multiple perspectives and realities that shape our interpretations of data and events (O'Leary, 2014). Furthermore, the nature of frame analysis means there is always some level of subjectivity because it requires a certain level of interpretation by the person doing the analysis (Van Gorp, 2010). The aim, therefore is to identify and negotiate my

subjectivities, rather than assume that it is possible not to be influenced by my personal prejudices (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014).

In that vein, while I am integrating feminist perspectives into this research, it is important that I recognise my own largely privileged background as a white, middle-class, university-educated woman and the expectations and subjectivities that come with that, especially when compared to the lived experiences of women in the Pacific (Van Zoonen, 1994).

My experience with journalism has been in largely well-resourced newsrooms, staffed by university-trained journalists following Western notions of 'objectivity' and 'news values'. These experiences will unavoidably colour my expectations of what all newsrooms – and the resulting coverage – 'should' be like. It was for this reason that in my literature review I researched and discussed the development of region-specific news values and development journalism, as well as the culture of censorship and self-censorship, and practical obstacles when it comes to training, skill levels and industry trends.

While my experiences as UN Women's Regional Communications Specialist with the Fiji office sparked my interest in studying the media's role in ending violence against women in the region, it also gives me a pre-existing opinion of the quality of local media coverage in this area. This is one of the reasons I have chosen to be so specific in my marking criteria within my frame analysis, in order to ensure as much as possible that my analysis is based on what is in front of me, rather than my prior knowledge.

## **4.7 Analysis framework**

### *4.6.1 Why frame analysis?*

The use of frame analysis in media-related research has been criticised as not being based on a commonly shared theoretical model because researchers have used so many different operationalisations and methods (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 1993; D'Angelo, 2002). However, as Hardin and Whiteside (2010) point out, it can also be embraced as a multiparadigmatic research programme that can facilitate various agendas and theoretical frameworks. Considering the basis for my research lies in feminist theory around news media and violence against women, it is also necessary that I bring this through into my choice of research tools. Feminist perspectives point to the unconscious patriarchal bias embedded in the traditional 'rules' of research (O'Leary, 2014) and, unlike content analysis which focuses on the presence of specific words, text and images (Van Zoonen, 1994), frame analysis allows for the examination of the entire structure of a news media article, including inherent meanings between the lines and what is missing from the narrative

(Sutherland et al, 2015; Van Zoonen, 1994). Indeed, by inviting the audience to see issues, actions and events in a particular way, most frames are defined as much by what they omit as by what they include (Entman, 1993).

In many ways the focus of this research is not what the stories are about, but how those stories are told, which in turn shines a light on the choices that have been made in creating them (Van Gorp, 2010).

The focus of frame analysis in media research is often on determining the *effects* of certain frames when it comes to shaping a receiver's opinions and actions. While there is disagreement over the extent of a media frame's effects once it comes into conflict with existing personal, cultural and institutional frames, there is largely a consensus that news media frames do have *an* effect (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 1993; Reese, 2010; Van Gorp, 2010; Scheufele & Scheufele, 2010; Van Zoonen, 1994; Hardin & Whiteside, 2010; Iyengar, 1996; Gamson & Mondigliani, 1989; Nisbett, 2010). According to critical feminist approaches, the *presence* of frames that reinforce patriarchal ideology in news media is in itself a reason for activism (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010) as this not only reflects persistent, harmful attitudes held in society at large, but also directly undermines efforts to create new frames associated with gender equality.

Therefore, in this research, I am using a deductive strategy, in that I am looking for the presence of a pair of pre-defined, mutually exclusive frames – episodic and thematic – in local news media coverage of violence against women in Fiji, rather than exploring the effect those frames have on the audience. In this way, my empirical aim is to decide to what extent these frames are applied in the news media coverage and therefore to what extent the media is helping or hindering the efficacy of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. From a change perspective, because I am focusing on something journalists and media organisations can control, the results of this research can help lead to specific actions that can be taken to improve media coverage of violence against women.

#### *4.6.2 Sample selection*

To keep my research contained I have chosen to concentrate on online media coverage through Fiji's two largest print media publications – the Fiji Times and the Fiji Sun. Each of these newspapers is published daily and has a well-established online presence. From a theoretical perspective I have focused on print media because newspapers are still considered a highly trusted and credible source (Sutherland et al, 2015); from a practical perspective I am focusing on print media as much of the local radio and television news coverage is not reliably captured online.

The date range I have chosen is from 17 November 2017 to 17 December 2017. This runs from a week before the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism campaign until a week after it ends and is to account for stories in the lead-up to the campaign launching and for those published in the immediate aftermath. It may also provide limited insight into whether there was a shift in the amount and type of coverage of violence against women outside of the campaign dates.

To collect the sample, I set up a series of Google Alerts so that links to potential articles would be sent directly to my email inbox.

*Table 1: Google alert key words from 17 November 2017 to 17 December 2017*

Fiji Times and violence against women	Fiji Sun and violence against women
Fiji Times and rape	Fiji Sun and rape
Fiji Times and sexual assault	Fiji Sun and sexual assault
Fiji Times and gender based violence	Fiji Sun and gender based violence
Fiji Times and 16 Days of Activism	Fiji Sun and 16 Days of Activism

When going through the results of the Google Alerts, I only included articles where the main angle was covering violence against women and/or the campaign, rather than articles that mentioned it in passing.

#### *4.6.3 Sliding scale for analysis*

Few news reports are purely episodic or thematic but existing analyses suggest that in most cases one frame predominates (Iyengar, 1996). It is for this reason I have created a sliding scale against which I can measure each news article in order to determine the level of episodic or thematic framing displayed. I have also separated the marking into two sub-areas – sources and context – in recognition that, depending on the quality of the source, a single source story may be more transformative than one with multiple sources that all reinforce problematic themes and stereotypes. The sliding scale goes from 1 (purely episodic framing) through to 5 (purely thematic framing) and within each of the two sub-areas I have created marking criteria to keep the analysis as comparable as possible. Each article will receive a mark under each of the two sub-areas and the overall mark will be the average between the two.

For ease of marking I have decided on three categories of sources:

**Official:** Any source that is part of the establishment and therefore seen as authoritative. For

example: police, judiciary, official records, government agencies, medical leadership.

**Non-official:** Individuals representing independent entities. For example, non-governmental organisations, regional organisations, foreign embassies, and research studies.

**Advocate:** Individuals with direct involvement and knowledge of violence against women, including advocates, service providers, victims/survivors and their family members.

*Table 2: Sliding scale marking criteria*

Sources		Context and causes	
Mark	Criteria	Mark	Criteria
1	Single source story using only Official sources.	1	No effort to place the article in context of the wider issue of violence against women.
2	More than one source, but only Official sources included OR single Non-official source	2	Minimal attempt to put the content in context, including, for example, one of the following: statistics; linking to an appropriate campaign; directing readers to where they can get help.
3	Mixture of Official and Non-official sources OR a single Advocate source.	3	Good attempt to place in context including at least two pieces of additional information, for example: statistics, aggravating factors, causes and consequences, collective responsibility.
4	Mixture of all three types of sources OR more than one Advocate source.	4	At least two pieces of contextual information, plus references to the links between violence against women and gender inequality.
5	4+ sources incorporating a mixture of source types.	5	Analysis of all of the above, specifically discussing power relationships and the role of social norms.

#### 4.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined the methodology and tools I am using to complete a frame analysis of local media coverage of violence against women in Fiji. Frames are important tools that help shape not only what people think about an issue but also how they discuss the world around them. They form a toolkit journalists draw on to do their jobs and one that audiences use to understand their

social and political environments. By identifying the frames being used in media coverage of violence against women, it is possible to identify whether it is supporting or challenging violence-supportive beliefs, especially when it comes to attributing blame and responsibility. For this frame analysis I will be following the constructionist paradigm, as identified by D'Angelo (2002), focusing on a deductive strategy to identify the presence and extent of episodic and thematic framing. To do this I have developed a sliding scale using criteria based on two of the most important defining characteristics of episodic and thematic framing – the number and diversity of sources, and the level of contextualisation.

Chapter five discusses the key findings from this frame analysis, using examples from articles included in the sample to elaborate on the general results in terms of the use of sources and contextual information, as well as highlighting other problematic material and themes identified during the analysis.

## CHAPTER 5: EXAMINING LOCAL NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN FIJI

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### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four further explored the concept of news framing and frame analysis, and outlined that I would be following a constructionist paradigm in creating my analysis framework – hence my focus on the number and diversity of sources, and the use of contextual information – and employing a deductive strategy in that I am looking for the presence and extent of episodic or thematic framing. The chapter also outlines the sliding scale and associated marking criteria that I have developed to make this news frame analysis as comparable as possible.

In this chapter, I will be discussing the findings using examples from articles included in the analysis, beginning with a description of the sample and the overall results, before moving into more detail under each of the two sub-areas – sources and context. The chapter concludes with a discussion of other problematic themes and information that emerged during the analysis, and that conflict with the aims of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (16 Days of Activism) campaign.

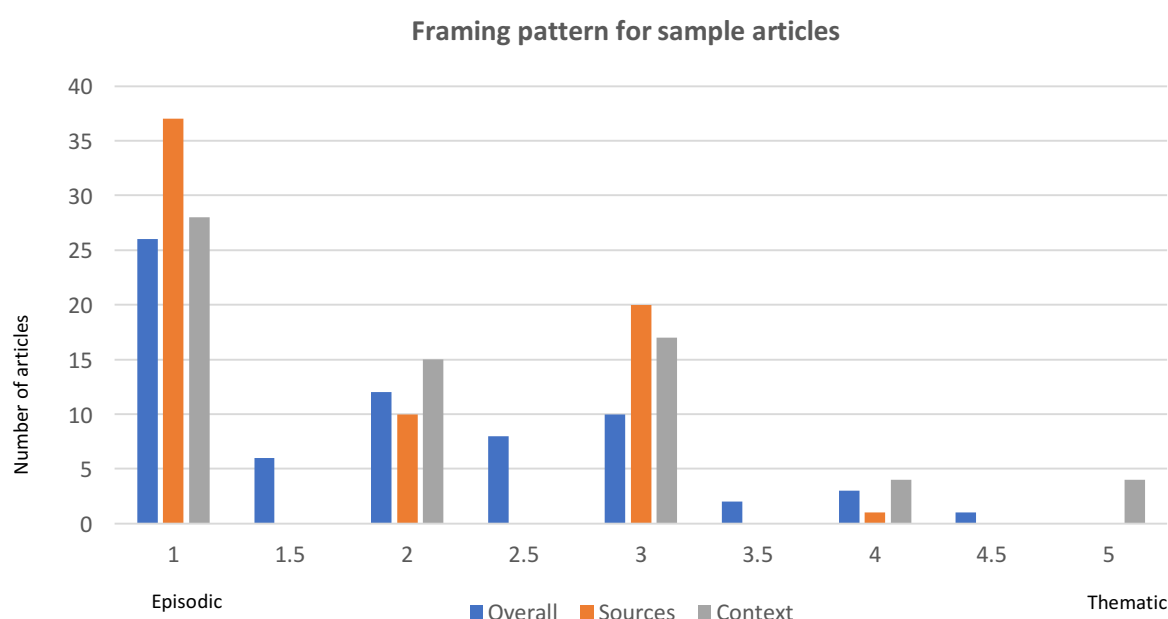
### 5.2 Sample description and overall results

By following the selection criteria detailed in Chapter 4, my final sample included 68 articles focused on violence against women or the 16 Days of Activism campaign that were published online by the Fiji Times and Fiji Sun between 17 November 2017 and 17 December 2017. A total of 50 of those articles were published by the Fiji Times compared to 18 by Fiji Sun. The article topics fell into three broad categories: 1) coverage of specific cases or charges; 2) coverage of events held in conjunction with the 16 Days of Activism campaign; 3) external editorials on the issue of violence against women. This meant that only 15 of the articles appeared outside of the campaign dates, 10 of which focused on current court cases. The rest were published between 25 November and 10 December 2017.

All but five of the articles were classified as news stories, with 21 focused purely on specific sexual abuse and rape cases making their way through the justice system. The other five were opinion pieces written by: Aleta Miller, Country Representative for UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office; Prashneel R Goundar, author; Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; regional organisation Pacific Community; John Rossi, a Nadi-based marketing and advertising specialist; and the Fiji Sun editorial team. This is important because thematic framing – focusing as it does on more abstract presentations of a larger social issue – lends itself more towards features or editorials where there is space for exploring broader themes and quoting a larger, more

diverse pool of sources. Traditional news stories, on the other hand, are more likely to cover discrete incidents or events, focusing on answering the traditional journalistic questions of who, where, what, when, where and how.

The news frame analysis of the sample of articles showed an overwhelming presence of episodic framing. The average score for the entire sample was 1.96 out of 5, with 1 being purely episodic and 5 being purely thematic. There was a slight difference in the averages when it came to the two sub-areas – sources and context – with the average for the number and diversity of sources sitting at 1.78 and the average for use of contextual information at 2.13.



*Graph 2: Pattern of scores for articles included in the frame analysis*

Four articles scored 4 or above, three of which were external opinion pieces that discussed the issues, causes and consequences in detail. The fourth (‘Pacific talanoa: use men and communities’, 6 December 2017, Fiji Times) covered a discussion panel held as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign and quoted knowledgeable sources with direct experience of ending violence against women programmes, thus including much more contextual detail than any other news article. In contrast, 27 out of the 68 articles scored 1, indicating the use of purely episodic framing.

### 5.3 Sources

A total of 59 of the 68 articles relied on a single source. The quality of that source varied from court records to well-known women’s rights activists, however, more than half of the articles in the

sample – 36 – relied solely on one official source. In fact, 21 articles do not involve any kind of interview, instead using only released statistics or court records/what the journalist heard in court.

Even where sources were directly quoted, in the vast majority of cases, these quotes were obtained through attending events rather than seeking and undertaking independent interviews, whether off-site or at the event itself. This adds an extra element to the decision on what information to include and what to leave out, as there is a certain level of reliance on the skill level and attention span of the attending journalist. It also means that only what is discussed at the event is included, ignoring the opportunity to include more in-depth background, explanatory or analytic information that the source may be able to share.

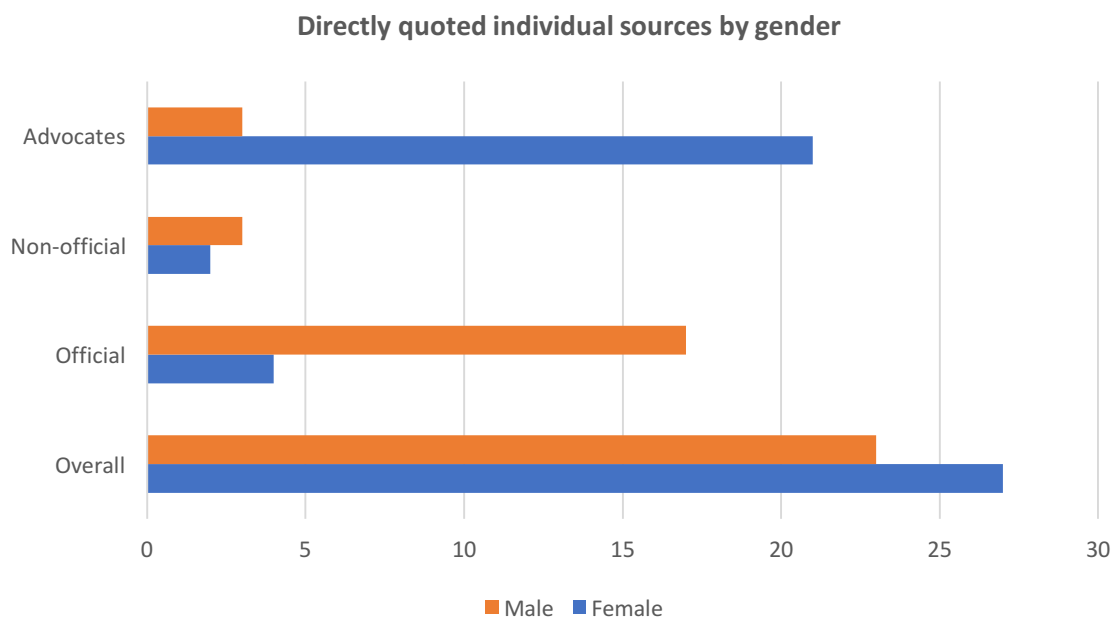
In the case of ‘Sex crimes’ (Fiji Times, 22 November 2017), taking this approach meant that while the article was nominally covering the launch of the ‘Balancing the scales: Improving Fijian women’s access to justice’ report, the article only directly quoted Chief Justice Anthony Gates and Director of Public Prosecutions Christopher Pride. It therefore took on the focus of their words, which was largely to do with media responsibilities when covering sexual offences:

*I know the problem is that you can’t be everywhere and you certainly can’t be in all the courts but be very cautious about what you say and who you ask. There are copies of rulings, the summing ups, judgements and sentencing remarks available and the courts are ready to give copies to journalists.* (‘Sex crimes’, Fiji Times, 22 November 2017)

Meanwhile a limited account of the report’s content and authors, Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, was relegated to the last few paragraphs of the article. Not only does this approach obscure the results of the report and its recommendations, but it also favours official sources over non-official sources and explicitly tells journalists and the public that any other source should be viewed with suspicion. A follow-up article was published in the Fiji Times on 24 November, however, it once again directly quoted the Director of Public Prosecutions at the expense of anyone involved in the report itself.

In the case of the Fiji Times, the lack of diversity in sources was intensified by the tendency to break event coverage into a number of short, single-sourced stories. For example, the Fiji Times covered a workshop on sex crimes held by the Fiji Women Lawyers Association through six single-source articles published over three consecutive days, despite the fact that three of those articles (two of which were published on the same day) quoted the same source, Justice Salesi Temo (‘Temo: People ‘shy to talk’; ‘What is rape’; ‘Rape tops list’; ‘Having rape victims examined not easy, says doctor’; ‘Underage sex crimes’; ‘142 accused rapists seek legal assistance’), and that five of them dealt exclusively with the subject of rape. This approach dilutes any opportunity to provide more

contextual information, while at the same time making it more difficult for people to identify links between some of the topics raised during the workshop.



*Graph 3: Directly quoted sources sorted by gender*

Existing studies show that an emphasis on relying on official, authoritative sources goes hand in hand with a similar prevalence of male over female sources (Carter, 1998; Sutherland et al, 2015). However, when looking at sources directly quoted in this sample, female sources outnumbered male 27 to 23, a trend that continues even when looking at unique sources (18 female sources and 16 male). Where the results correspond with previous studies is that when official sources were quoted directly, the majority were men, while when advocates were directly quoted, the majority were women.

The voices of victims/survivors and their families were largely absent from the articles in the sample. Exceptions were in some of the articles covering ongoing court cases, which focused on victim/survivor testimony, however, these articles often focused on the most salacious details of the testimony, while leaving out any information about the impact the incidents had on the victim/survivor's life. For example, the article 'Girl, 14, takes stand' (Fiji Times, 30 November 2017) – part of the daily coverage of the case of a former head teacher charged with multiple counts of rape and sexual assault – includes details such as "...the accused had touched her private parts, thighs and breasts, winked at her and told her not to tell anyone of the alleged act" and "...he then told her to pull her dress up before he allegedly touched her private parts while he was sitting at his desk and she was standing beside him". In contrast, there is only a cursory mention of the fact that she had

felt scared, and no further details about the psychological or physical effect of the abuse, or how it had impacted her schooling or home life. Focusing almost exclusively on the testimony of a victim/survivor reduces the accused's responsibility for the act by making the accused largely invisible, an abstract concept rather than a human being who has inflicted harm (Alat, 2006). Both of these findings further illustrate the limitations of relying solely on official documents – the journalist can only include what happens that day in court.

#### **5.4 Contextual information**

The simplest method of including basic contextual information about a larger issue is using statistics to illustrate its size and shape. Despite the existence of multiple respected studies on the prevalence and types of gendered violence in Fiji, the attitudes and beliefs that support it, and what happens when victims/survivors try to access the justice system, statistics were only included if the story source brought them up. For example, in 'FWRM, ICAAD raise awareness on combatting sexual harassment' (Fiji Times, 29 November 2017) only one statistic was included – that one in five women in Fiji had said they were sexually harassed in the workplace – which was attributed to Fiji Women's Rights Movement board chair Makereta Waqavonovono. 'Three police officers charged for sexual offences' (Fiji Sun, 5 December 2017), however, listed multiple statistics released by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, while no statistics at all were mentioned in '16 Days of Activism' (Fiji Times, 26 November 2017), an article about the empowerment of young girls that otherwise included an unusually high level of contextual information around causes and consequences. In addition, when statistics were included they focused largely on prevalence, ignoring those that illustrate the shape of attitudes and behaviours that support such actions.

Raising awareness on an issue such as violence against women helps people recognise that what they are going through is abuse and is illegal, however, they must then also know what to do about it. Unfortunately, only two articles included any information on practical steps readers could take to get help for themselves or for someone they care about ('Child Helpline receives fake calls', Fiji Sun, 12 December 2017; 'Speak up, people urged', Fiji Times, 29 November 2017). In both cases the numbers to call – for the Child Helpline and Fiji Women's Crisis Centre line respectively – were included as part of a direct quote rather than highlighted as part of a call to action at the end of the article.

While it is important to acknowledge the extent of the perpetration of violence against women, any journalist wishing to contribute to violence prevention and the protection of victims/survivors needs to also acknowledge the causes and consequences of violence against women, including the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate it. Unfortunately, this was rare in this sample of articles, and

where such information was included, the quality of it was directly dependent on the source used. For example, in 'What is rape' (Fiji Times, 4 December 2017), Justice Salesi Temo discusses the changes made to the legal definition of rape with the introduction of the Crimes Act of 2009:

*A lot of people in Fiji still do not realise that the definition of rape has been extended. This is perhaps why some of those coming to courts don't understand what they did was rape. It used to be indecent assault but now it's rape ... It was a gender biased offence in that only males could only [sic] be prosecuted for that offence. So it was in fact gender biased against men. ('What is rape', Fiji Times, 4 December 2017)*

While these quotes raise the issue of how gender-biased laws can be an obstacle for victims/survivors looking to access the justice system, it is done in a highly problematic way in that it provides mitigating circumstances for perpetrators and suggests that the legal rape definition was extended in order to be fair to men, rather than to victims/survivors, who are mostly women. The fact that these quotes come from a Chief Justice, without any attempt by the journalist to analyse or correct them, is not only an illustration of the kind of issues faced by advocates, but also gives the statement an authority that less 'newsworthy' sources lack.

On the other hand, in '18 Women lose lives to domestic attacks over three years' (Fiji Times, 28 November 2017), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Coordinator Shamima Ali, a well-known women's rights activist, highlights the number of women killed in Fiji as a result of gendered violence. In doing so she specifically links the murders and violence with gender inequality:

*It's about men thinking they are our bosses so a man thinks it is OK for him to resort to violence every time he is angry... Beating up or murdering women are criminal assaults, the highest risk is when they decide to leave a bad or horrible relationship, a lot of men can't take that, and they feel that they own these women forever. ('18 Women lose lives to domestic attacks over three years', Fiji Times, 28 November 2017)*

Once again, the journalist makes no effort to analyse or expand on Ms Ali's comments, however, because of her in-depth understanding of violence against women and gender equality, the article exhibits thematic framing.

One of the stories that received extensive coverage was the workshop on sex crimes held in Suva by the Fiji Women Lawyers Association with six articles appearing in the Fiji Times and one in the Fiji Sun. There was little, if any, attempt to make an explicit link between the crime of rape or sexual assault, and the development and social issue of violence against women. In fact, the majority of the information included was made up of direct quotes from the single source quoted – regardless of

whether they were sharing statistics, their own experiences or expert analysis – with very little effort to link the issues that had been raised or to analyse what was said. For example, in the article entitled ‘Temo: People ‘shy to talk’’ (Fiji Times, 3 December 2017), Justice Salesi Temo explains how many rape accused have been acquitted because prosecution lawyers cannot get past the taboo of speaking about penetration and genitalia, while in ‘Rape tops list’ (Fiji Times, 3 December 2017) Justice Temo says that there are 79 rape cases pending in Suva compared to 24 aggravated robbery cases, the next highest statistic. Meanwhile, in ‘Having rape victims examined is not easy, says doctor’ (Fiji Times, 5 December 2017), gynaecologist Dr Vasiatia Talatoka Cati talks about how important it is that doctors examine a survivor of a sexual crime within the first 72 hours. Taken together, the information included in these three stories offered an opportunity to clarify for the reader why so many cases are still outstanding, the difficulties victims/survivors have in accessing justice and what needs to be, is being, or can be done to change the situation. Instead, readers must make those leaps and assumptions themselves, which would in turn be informed by their own predispositions towards women, sexual violence and the justice system; that is assuming they saw and read all three of the articles.

## **5.5 Other problematic findings**

### *5.5.1 Language*

The language we use filters what we see and what we choose to see (Easteal, Bartels & Bradford, 2012) and in terms of news media coverage of violence against women, the linguistic choices journalists make can perpetuate existing stigmas against rape and rape survivors (Nagar, 2016). When it comes to covering criminal cases, the words ‘alleged’ and ‘allegedly’ are practical tools that help journalists and media organisations protect themselves from charges of libel and defamation. When it comes to cases of violence against women – rape and sexual assault in particular – the overuse of such words can feed into existing, deeply held historical biases and myths around women, sex and rape (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). The article ‘Teacher testified in trial’ (Fiji Times, 22 November 2017) is made up of only eight sentences and yet mentions ‘alleged’ or ‘allegedly’ six times; three of those times the word is used to describe the victim/survivor. Similarly, ‘Girl, 14, takes stand’ (Fiji Times, 30 November 2017) has 14 sentences and uses ‘alleged’ or ‘allegedly’ 10 times. Describing the victim/survivor as the ‘alleged victim’ while not referring to the perpetrator in the same way immediately casts doubt on the victim/survivor, and by extension her testimony (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015). In this case, the alleged perpetrator is labelled ‘the accused’, which puts distance between him and the crimes he is accused of.

### *5.5.2 Minimisation and mitigating circumstances*

One of the criticisms of media coverage of violence against women – and indeed a characteristic of rape myths in general – is the suggestion of a mutuality of blame between perpetrator and victim/survivor, including by spending a considerable amount of time discussing mitigating circumstances for men (Sutherland et al, 2015; Carll, 2005; Alat, 2006). While the articles in this sample made no attempt to explicitly place any level of blame on the shoulders of victims/survivors – potentially helped by the fact that the majority of victim/survivors in the cases covered were children – the information included often inferred at the very least diminished culpability. For instance, ‘Parental negligence in alleged rape case’ (Fiji Times, 20 November 2017) focused on police efforts to “establish negligence on the part of the parents” for letting their 8-year-old girl go to a shop alone, where she was allegedly raped by a 30-year-old man. The article ‘Ex-teacher jailed 14 years for rape’ (Fiji Sun, 8 December 2017) covered the sentencing of a man convicted of raping and sexually assaulting nine female students and quoted the sentencing judge – Justice Salesi Temo – calling the man a “model teacher to most of his colleagues” and specifying that the accused was “said to be a hardworking well-dressed teacher”. In ‘Police: Victims, perpetrators of sexual abuse getting younger’ (Fiji Sun, 8 December 2017) it is stated that “Negligence by parents, drugs and technology are three factors giving rise to sexual abuse in this country”. Not only does this undermine the personal responsibility of the perpetrator for what they have done, but it focused on other social excuses without also looking at links with gender inequality.

One particularly problematic article covering a man convicted of sexual assault but acquitted of rape opened with: “A man who was alleged to have raped his four-year-old daughter walked out of the High Court in Suva yesterday a bit relieved” (‘Man convicted of sexual assault’, Fiji Times, 30 November 2017). The journalist’s or editor’s choice to frame the story in this way put the focus on the man rather than what he has been convicted of, while simultaneously undermining the seriousness of the acts he has committed.

While the main angle of ‘Victims of crimes’ (Fiji Times, 9 December 2017) was to use recently released statistics to show that iTaukei women are common victims of crimes, in particular rape, sexual offences and domestic violence, this was undermined by the second sentence: “Reports received by the Fiji Police Force from January to October this year indicated that women were also offenders of sexual offences.” Despite the fact that no further evidence or discussion on this point was included in the article, the positioning of this statement gave it prominence and put it on the same level as the statistics and details that followed. Even in a Fiji Sun editorial around sexual harassment the writer included the line “We recognise that men and boys are also at risk of being sexually harassed”. It is important to recognise that as an expression of power, sexual harassment and violence is not only experienced by women, however, it is just as important to point out that

deep-seated gender inequality means that victims/survivors are overwhelmingly women and girls. Equating the two undermines the urgency and shape of actions that need to be taken to end violence against women.

### *5.5.3 Reinforcing traditional gender roles*

Even when the aim of the article was clearly to speak out against violence against women, traditional ideas about gender roles and stereotypes continued to emerge. For example, the article 'Women play a vital role' (Fiji Times, 1 December 2017) focused on the intergenerational effect of violence against women and the importance of growing up in a home and community free of violence. Its opening sentence, however, provided a different angle: "Women play a very important role in the family, particularly when it comes to raising children". The first line of any news article is crucial in outlining the article's main points and, in this case, by focusing on a woman's role in the family, the journalist has created a lens through which the reader may read and interpret the information to come.

This is even more clearly evidenced in the editorial 'A woman's sacrifice' (Fiji Times, 1 December 2017). The overall message was a good one – that we need to change the way we treat women – however, it was expressed in language that reinforces traditional views on a woman's value being tied to her beauty, honour, good humour, and role as a carer for her children and husband. The writer used the Hindu story of the "radiant beauty" Draupadi whose husband lost her in a game of dice and who was then threatened with a "plight crueler than death" by Duryodhana, only to be saved the indignity when Sri Krishna answered her pleas for mercy by making it impossible for Duryodhana to undress her in front of the court. The writer specified some of the indignities that women experience, from having to move to live with her new husband's family, to having dinner ready for the family, to sacrificing her dreams for her husband and being addressed in a 'devilish' manner in the home. In his efforts to drive his point home, he shared a specific example from his own life: "A lady was trying to get on the bus and she said to the boy in front of her: 'Son, please give me a chance to get on the bus. I need to get home and cook too.' It was said with grace and a smile resulting in everyone smiling and she got on safely." One wonders whether he would be using this example if the woman mentioned had not displayed quite so much grace in asking to jump the queue.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings from the frame analysis of local news coverage of violence against women in Fiji during and around the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The articles in this sample overwhelmingly employed episodic framing, with far too many of them focused

explicitly on individual cases or incidents making their way through the justice system, without any journalistic attempt to link them to the broader issue of violence against women or the campaign itself. In other cases, while the article focused on the broader issue of violence against women, there was an absence of analysis or any attempt to correct or explain well-meant but ill-conceived statements by the sources quoted. In addition, the articles in the sample included a number of other problematic themes and information, in particular language that cast doubt on the victims/survivors, incorporating information that provided excuses for perpetrators or minimised their offences, and angles that reinforced traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Chapter Six looks at these findings in more detail, analysing not only how they support or challenge gender stereotypes and existing patriarchal norms, but also how they fit with the 16 Days of Activism campaign's aims. As part of this, the chapter discusses the effect that the shape of the current media landscape in Fiji, traditional news values, and the beliefs and attitudes of local journalists themselves have on the level of episodic framing. The next chapter also explores the limitations of the sample selection and analysis findings with a view to recommending areas for further study.

## CHAPTER 6: LOCAL NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN FIJI – SUPPORTING OR CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES?

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### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five focused on discussing the key findings from the news frame analysis of media coverage of violence against women in Fiji during and around the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (16 Days of Activism) campaign. The analysis showed that articles in the sample overwhelmingly employed episodic framing with far too little journalistic attempt to introduce and discuss the links between violence against women and social norms, gender roles and gender equality, while simultaneously including other problematic themes and information.

Chapter Six looks at these findings in more detail, analysing not only how they support or challenge gender stereotypes and existing patriarchal norms, but also how they fit with the 16 Days of Activism campaign's aims. As part of this, the chapter discusses the effect that the current Fiji media landscape, traditional news values and the beliefs and attitudes of local journalists themselves have on this level of episodic framing. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the limitations of the sample selection and analysis.

### 6.2 Spirit without substance

As stated in Chapter Four, the 16 Days of Activism campaign is not only a platform for raising awareness of violence against women as a human rights issue, but also for strengthening local work around violence against women, sharing new and effective strategies, demonstrating the solidarity of women, men, boys and girls, and creating tools to pressure governments to implement their promises around eliminating violence against women (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2017). Buthelezi's (2006) findings from South Africa, showed that although there was an increase in the coverage of gendered violence during the 16 Days of Activism campaign and that the overall messages from the government and police positioned violence against women as crimes, in general the coverage was still incident-specific and reinforced traditional stereotypes. This news frame analysis shows similar results. While the coverage in both Fiji newspapers conveyed a clear message that violence against women is unacceptable, beyond that, the content supported very few of the campaign's aims, indeed, much of it actively undermined them.

The fact that violence against women is a human rights violation was barely mentioned. Only four of the 68 articles referred to the concept of human rights, and only one of those – 'Targeting Zero', an editorial by UN Women Country Representative Aleta Miller – put violence against women in the context of a human rights framework. Of course, the use of the words 'human rights' is not the only

way to position violence against women as such, however, the lack of thematic coverage reinforced this conclusion, revealing as it did a lack of meaningful discussion of the role discrimination, discrepancies in power and status related to gender roles, and values, beliefs and norms play when it comes to supporting and perpetuating gendered violence (Paluck et al, 2010; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Without this discussion, news media coverage cannot be seen as a meaningful part of efforts to change social norms represented by campaigns such as the 16 Days of Activism.

There was also little exploration of what specifically is being done, or needs to be done, at a global and local level to help prevent violence against women, protect victims/survivors and ensure they have access to justice. The coverage directly associated with the campaign clearly called on everyone to play their part in ending violence against women, however, it provided little direction to readers on what that means at a practical level. Celebrating ongoing work by service providers, government and other organisations, or profiling international success stories, could have helped build a level of hope that progress is being made, while identifying gaps in that work could play a part in provoking calls for more action and holding the government, service providers and fellow Fijians to account.

The 16 Days of Activism campaign is inherently based on the understanding that ending violence against women is inextricably linked with achieving gender equality (Yodanis, 2004; Kimmel, 2013; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; Hunnicut, 2009). Fundamental changes are needed, therefore, in the way women and men are valued, and what roles they are expected to play. Media coverage that supports these aims must also challenge harmful gender stereotypes and roles. Instead, the coverage in Fiji denounced violence against women, while also reinforcing traditional views of a woman's primary role as the family caregiver who deserves better treatment because of all she does for her family rather than the fact she is a human being who, under international law, has a right to "life, liberty and security" (United Nations, 1948: Article 3).

Episodic framing of violence against women is tied to an ideology that reflects these cultural myths and patriarchal assumptions about the proper role and behaviour of women (Carll, 2005). This was reflected in much of the court coverage included in this sample, which continued to minimise the responsibility of men charged with and/or convicted of rape and sexual assault by focusing on what was done to the victim/survivor and positioning the perpetrator as an abstract concept – the accused – or by highlighting information that served to mitigate their culpability, such as their reputation as a good man. All of this serves to protect the power and position of the man in question, and men in general, while also feeding into the patriarchal assumption of mutual responsibility for violence against women (Sutherland et al, 2015; Carll, 2005; Alat, 2006; Walby

1989; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; Hunnicut, 2009). This directly undermines the aims of the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

### **6.3 Ill-equipped to lead the discussion**

As Carlyle et al (2008) point out, a sense of social responsibility for violence against women contributes to more empathy for victims/survivors, more demand for holding government and service providers accountable, and more pressure for the allocation of public resources, all of which could be enhanced by thematic coverage of the issue. Unfortunately, in this sample, the overwhelming use of episodic framing feeds into existing narratives painting violence against women as a collection of unacceptable, but individual, crimes rather than a systemic issue driven by patriarchal norms and values.

Part of the reason episodic coverage is so predominant in general is because producing it does not require specialist knowledge and it is less likely to be labelled biased because there is no need for interpretive analysis (Iyengar, 1996). In Fiji, well-documented concerns about the shallow pool of experienced journalists, the quality of journalism training, a culture of unquestioning reporting and self-censorship (Molnar, 2008; Papoutsaki & Harris, 2008; Robie, 2016), suggest that from a purely skills-based perspective, the local news media is ill-equipped for producing thematic coverage of violence against women. In addition, producing thematic coverage of violence against women involves journalists recognising and challenging not only their own preconceptions around news values, gender, sex and power, but also those of their readers. In Fiji, this includes questioning deep-seated patriarchal norms that manifest in statistics such as the fact that women still do 74 per cent of domestic work (Government of Fiji, 2016), that 55 per cent of women still believe it is important for a man to show a woman that he is the boss (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013), and that half of the women living with violence have never told anyone about it (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013).

Despite the fact that the stories in this sample were published around and during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, the numerous reports on specific sexual violence cases included no attempt to contextualise the incident as part of a broader social and development issue. Any contextualisation in articles that were explicitly linked to the campaign rarely emerged through journalistic intent; instead each article was essentially a collection of direct quotes that relied on the main source's knowledge and understanding of the topic. There was no journalistic exploration of the beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women or the institutional and legal obstacles that might prevent women from reporting it, and no analysis of how gendered violence affects Fiji's development and growth as a society.

Feminist critiques of development have accused those in power of appropriating the language of rights in order to progress their own agendas, while ignoring the underlying calls for structural reform, which, for example has led to the positioning of women as natural peacemakers, natural caretakers of the earth and naturally less corrupt than men (Ramamurthy, 2000; Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2007). In this case, the articles are using the right language – “enough is enough to all forms of violence against women and girls” (‘Solomons Police Chief condemns gruesome murder’, Fiji Times, 23 November 2017), “it is a shared responsibility to fight gender-based violence” (‘Gender-based violence’, Fiji Times, 1 December 2017), “we are taking this opportunity to promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment” (‘Sexual harassment no joke: campaign’, Fiji Sun, 25 November 2017) – without delving into the patriarchal structure that supports gender inequality and the obstacle it therefore poses to creating meaningful change.

While it is easy to label some of the problematic content and themes identified in this news frame analysis as a case of ‘well-meant but ill-executed’ journalism, this would obscure the fact that harmful social norms, assumptions and frames are constantly in play. Even before they enter training, journalists have already become familiar with these frames of reference through socialisation, so much so that they are often not aware they have adopted them and are using and reproducing them in their news stories (Van Gorp, 2010). For example, in attempting to avoid being accused of bias, would a journalist be so quick to resort to ‘alleged’ and ‘allegedly’ instead of some of the many other lexiconic tools available, if they were not already socially programmed to prioritise a man’s reputation over a woman’s? Would a journalist be so quick to rely on the words of official sources at an event rather than individual advocates if they had not been trained to believe that authoritative sources are somehow more credible, regardless of their level of experience dealing with people who are most affected? How would a journalist’s choices about which information to include and which to omit change if they had a deeper understanding of the issue? A skilled journalist can cause as much damage as an unskilled one if they continue to interpret the issue through an outdated lens.

#### **6.4 In support of the development approach to journalism**

A large part of the reason I chose to follow the constructionist paradigm for my frame analysis was because it positions media producers as information processors who are part of the same cultural system as the public they are communicating with, and because it allows for frames to evolve (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010; D’Angelo, 2002). The fact that the Fiji Times published 50 articles focused on violence against women during this period of activism shows a commitment to support the campaign and its aims. On the other hand, the low level of coverage in the Fiji Sun, and the fact

that eight of its 18 articles were purely focused on court cases, shows little evidence of any meaningful commitment to focus on the issue. In many ways, the willingness of Fijian news media outlets to broaden their coverage of violence against women beyond court reporting reflects the increase in general public awareness of the issue and the outward political commitment to take concrete steps to end violence against women, as well as support for the 16 Days of Activism campaign itself. However, awareness and commitment are no substitutes for in-depth understanding of an issue and the subtle ways that myths and stereotypes assert themselves through the choices made around the language, examples and calls to action used wherever and whenever violence against women is addressed.

In Fiji, quotes such as “It was a gender bias [sic] offence in that only males can be prosecuted for ‘raping’ a female,” (‘291 rape cases top crime cases pending in court: Justice Temo’, Fiji Sun, 3 December 2017) are evidence of the incomplete knowledge of the source, the journalist quoting them, or, more likely, a combination of both. This illustrates how important it is for Fijian journalists to seek out and incorporate a range of expert analysis and contributions, to help fill in the blanks and provide a more complete picture while everyone else – in particular, journalists and public sources – are upskilled.

While it stands to reason that it will take time to change norms, attitudes and beliefs that have been shaped over generations and that are reinforced both formally and informally across all sectors of society, by enlisting the news media outlets as allies, campaigns such as 16 Days of Activism are asking them to play a part in driving that transformation rather than merely reflecting the progress made so far. A development approach to journalism could play an important role in precipitating this. Thematic framing by its very nature demands coverage that analyses the root causes of violence against women, challenges its social acceptance, and engages in advocacy for victims/survivors while also pointing to possible solutions, all of which aligns neatly with the aims of development journalism (McManus, 2008; Robie, 2008a) and the 16 Days of Activism campaign. Such a shift would, however, necessitate major changes not only in what is expected of journalists in the newsroom, but also in how they are trained in the first instance and how media work is resourced. It is a long-term strategy that is not solely the responsibility of journalism schools and employers, but also of organisations and agencies seeking the news media’s support.

## **6.5 Limitations**

Using Google Alerts as a tool to identify and capture articles during the chosen time period increases time-efficiency and accuracy, however, it is also limited to the presence of particular words and search terms. While terms such as violence against women or gender-based violence are more likely

to be used by journalists during a specific campaign period, they do not always identify crimes such as femicide, intimate partner violence and domestic violence using those particular terms, or even include them under the umbrella of violence against women – in itself an indicator of episodic framing. For this reason, while I made specific efforts to collect a reference sample that accurately represented the overall coverage of violence against women in the Fiji Times and Fiji Sun, it is likely that a number of relevant articles may not have been included.

This news frame analysis focused solely on print media published online and did not look at broadcast media, entertainment or advertising, each of which has an influence on shaping attitudes and beliefs as well as an important role to play in propagating particular frames on violence against women. A study of the frames used across these media would be a useful complement to this research, especially considering Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's (2013) assertion that issues of women's rights are trivialised in local mainstream media and that myths about domestic violence and rape continue to be aired on radio shows. Such a study would also add to the understanding of existing frames at different levels that may come into conflict with any new frames being promoted as part of efforts by news media to effect change.

This study gives limited insight into how coverage of violence against women differs between this four weeks of activism and other periods, in terms of both quantity and quality. A similar frame analysis of news media coverage of violence against women during a different time of year would help build a clearer picture of whether the commitment to covering violence against women is linked solely to the prioritisation of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, or whether it reflects a wider trend. Similarly, research suggests that the topic of violence against women is not alone when it comes to the use of episodic framing (Sutherland et al, 2015), and this study does not look at whether, or to what extent, episodic or thematic framing is used in coverage of other complex topics such as development funding, poverty, inequality, climate change and discrimination.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter posits that despite an encouraging commitment to broaden coverage of violence against women beyond crime reporting, an outward support for the 16 Days of Activism, and a clear message that gendered violence is unacceptable, the coverage included in this sample simultaneously undermined the campaign's aims. The use of largely episodic framing, which divorces violence against women from its social roots, belies the frequent use of language that places responsibility for ending violence against women on everyone's shoulders. Despite outwardly agreeing with the campaign's position that violence against women is intrinsically linked to gender

equality, the language and themes used in the articles largely reinforce the same traditional gender roles and stereotypes that perpetuate gendered violence.

The chapter also explored more practical journalistic obstacles such as skill gaps and a culture of unquestioning journalism that exacerbate the low quality of reporting, while also reinforcing that these cannot, and should not, be used to mask the continual influence of patriarchal norms and news values. News media outlets are engaged in advocacy campaigns not merely so their coverage can reflect changes in norms, values and practice, but more importantly so they can help drive those changes, which is why this chapter raises the possible advantages of a development journalism approach to coverage of violence against women. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the limitations inherent in the sample selection and frame analysis for this research, especially when it comes to painting a broader picture of how coverage of violence against women in Fiji is changing over time and how it compares to coverage of other complex issues.

The next, and final, chapter builds on this analysis to discuss the implications of the findings, including recommendations for further study and for shaping future engagement with local media in Fiji and the Pacific.

### 7.1 Introduction

Through an examination of the news frame analysis findings, Chapter Six concluded that despite outward support of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (16 Days of Activism) campaign, Fiji news media coverage during and around the campaign undermines its aims through the use of episodic framing and language that reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. It also looked at the role that more practical journalistic challenges play in further weakening efforts to produce more transformative coverage, while also reiterating that these challenges should not be used to mask the ongoing influence of patriarchal norms, attitudes and beliefs both inside and outside the newsroom.

This final chapter ties together the evidence found throughout this research, discussing the implications for engaging with news media and recommendations for further study.

### 7.2 Implications

The news media have the potential to influence what the public knows and understands about violence against women as well as implicitly identify various causes and consequences (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Carlyle et al, 2008). Media outlets can therefore be a powerful force in shaping new social norms, beliefs and attitudes that will help end violence against women, while also calling for more public resources to be directed to education, prevention, protection and support services (Carlyle et al, 2008), and holding government and service providers to account – all of which align with the main aims of the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

This study is consistent with previous research in that it shows that even when published during a period of activism to end violence against women, local news media coverage in Fiji extensively uses episodic framing, thereby divorcing violence against women from its wider social and developmental roots, and in doing so encouraging the public to charge the individuals involved with both causal and treatment responsibility (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Easteal, Bartels & Bradford, 2012; Sutherland et al, 2015; Carlyle et al, 2008; Iyengar, 1996). This approach directly undermines the 16 Days of Activism's stated aims, supporting rather than challenging gender stereotypes, misconceptions and patriarchal norms. Despite this, it is encouraging that the level of coverage in the Fiji Times, in particular, indicates a commitment to cover violence against women as a pervasive issue, and to broaden that coverage beyond court reporting. This suggests an openness and willingness for deeper engagement and education between news media outlets and organisations involved in promoting the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

The findings, therefore, also show that enlisting the media as an ally in advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns must involve more than campaign-centred actions such as providing background information, inviting media to cover events and activities, and running short trainings around and during the campaign proper. The media as an institution and journalists as members of Fijian society are not independent of the same patriarchal norms, values, stereotypes and myths that support and perpetuate violence against women in the first place, and cannot be approached as such.

Just as these patriarchal norms and attitudes towards gender equality influence the perpetration of violence against women, victims'/survivors' responses and community responses, they also, often unconsciously, influence journalistic decisions on how and when to cover violence against women (Goward, 2006; Waller & Oakham, 2009; Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015; Easteal, Bartlett & Bradford, 2015). While it is true that changing deeply embedded beliefs, attitudes and norms takes time, the practical obstacles in Fiji that undermine the use of thematic framing, including skill gaps, low resources and an environment of unquestioning journalism, must also be addressed. Once again there is no quick and easy cure. If they are to truly enlist the news media as allies, organisations involved in ending violence against women must work in partnership with training institutions on an ongoing basis in order to integrate gender perspectives into journalism qualifications, and with media organisations to develop practical, accessible resources, trainings and policies that encourage gender-sensitive coverage and gender equality in the newsroom.

The sample of news articles analysed in this research showed that journalists in Fiji rely heavily on external sources to shape the news narrative, with many articles essentially consisting of a collection of direct quotes with little added analysis or interpretation. There was also a particular emphasis on official sources, perhaps also suggesting that they are more easily and regularly accessible for journalists than other less formal, but potentially more knowledgeable, sources. In support of this, Molnar (2008) points out that of the 229 registered non-governmental organisations in Fiji, only 17 were considered regular media producers or contributors at the time of her study. She cites a number of reasons for this, including a lack of appreciation by non-governmental organisations for the value of advocacy (Molnar, 2008). Considering the evident knowledge gaps among high profile official sources consulted in these articles, it is even more important that Fijian journalists have easy access to informed advocacy content that has been shaped to fit news requirements, not only when journalists ask for it or during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, but also as a result of regular interactions initiated by advocacy organisations themselves.

Considering the lack of studies on media and violence against women in the Pacific, this frame analysis provides baseline information on the way local media cover violence against women in Fiji,

especially with regards to the internationally accepted positioning of gendered violence as a social and development issue that requires action from every member of society. In addition, the sliding scale developed for this research provides organisations with a tool that can be used to measure longitudinal changes in the level of episodic framing present in local news media coverage, or for year-on-year comparisons. This type of ongoing analysis is crucial not only to measure changes in journalistic decision-making around, and coverage of, violence against women, but also to help organisations make evidence-based decisions when shaping their news media engagement. It could also provide a platform to help individual organisations take on more of a media watchdog role, feeding the information gathered back through to news media outlets, training institutions, and other ending violence against women organisations to inform their own activities. The use of the sliding scale tool is neither restricted to the Fijian context, nor to examining coverage of violence against women. Episodic framing can undermine and skew public understanding of other complex topics such as development funding, poverty, inequality, climate change and discrimination (Sutherland et al), and the marking criteria would need minimal adaption to be of use in analysing coverage of any of these topics.

### **7.3 Recommendations for further study**

One of the key gaps in the literature is with regards to the online news media space. The way news is produced and consumed has changed rapidly – top stories are broken and updated throughout the day via social media and online media channels, while consumers curate their own news streams from global sources and discuss the topics of the day across multiple platforms. Journalists and media outlets are being encouraged and, increasingly, forced to embrace multi-media reporting, sourcing up-to-the-moment photos and content from ‘citizen journalists’, while also trying to balance concerns around ethics and the veracity of the information received.

The increasing number and sophistication of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, combined with the increasing access to the internet, smartphones and mobile data across the Pacific, allow members of the public without journalism training and journalists outside of mainstream media organisations to contribute to the news narrative, and therefore towards shaping its messages. On one hand, this is providing opportunities for the further perpetuation of violence against women. Easteal, Holland and Judd (2015) point to high levels of ‘e-bile’ – online hostility towards women and any acts of gendered violence they experience, and the frequency and ease with which users resort to threats of sexual violence in their online reactions to general content. The ability for users to select which sources they wish to regularly hear from also increases the potential for reinforcing myths and misconceptions around gender and violence (Easteal, Holland & Judd,

2015; Sutherland et al, 2015). Alternatively, online and social media can also provide a platform from which to advance more nuanced explorations of violence against women that local journalists do not currently have the skills to produce, or articles that do not comply with the more formulaic, incident-based reporting demanded by traditional news values. These platforms also open up the potential for members of the public to act as unofficial media watchdogs, critiquing unhelpful coverage on public forums, filling in knowledge gaps and providing the analysis that is currently missing from traditional media coverage.

The main implications in this area for organisations engaging with news media around violence against women lie in how the usage of online media channels is changing the definition, scope and influence of the 'news media' in Fiji, especially for younger generations. From which organisations, platforms and channels do media consumers in Fiji and the Pacific source their news and how do those habits change according to different economic, social, ethnic, age and gender groupings? How is the increasing use of online channels by journalists changing definitions of newsworthiness and the shape of news articles? What messages and frames to do with gender and violence are facing users of online and social media and how may they interact with any new frames propagated through more traditional media channels? Having a clearer picture of the answers to these questions would help guide organisations in their engagement with news media, thereby potentially greatly enhancing the contribution news media outlets are making towards shifting norms, attitudes and beliefs around gender equality and violence against women.

#### **7.4 Chapter summary**

Understanding the causes and consequences of violence against women is essential to ending it, and news media outlets have the potential to help shape responses at an individual, community and institutional level. However, the extent of episodic framing found in this report reinforces the fact that when engaging news media as allies, organisations cannot ignore the influence that patriarchal norms and values have on how and when violence against women is covered, and the role that practical industry obstacles play in undermining the production of transformative coverage. This chapter, therefore, highlights a number of steps that organisations can take to enable gender-sensitive coverage and gender equality in the newsroom, including working in partnership with news media outlets and training institutions to shape curricula, as well as to develop practical and accessible resources, trainings and policies. It also raises the key role that ending violence against women organisations can play in making advocacy content easily accessible for journalists, to help counter an overall reliance on official sources.

The findings from this frame analysis provide a level of baseline data in terms of the current state of local media coverage of violence against women in Fiji, while the sliding scale could be a useful tool for organisations in terms of updating that data to inform news media engagement activities and fulfil more of a media watchdog role.

A crucial element when it comes to effectively engaging the news media lies in adapting to the changing shape, nature and usage of news media in Fiji and the Pacific, and it is here that additional research is urgently needed. New technologies and platforms are providing new spaces and tools for perpetrating and supporting abuse, but also opportunities for sharing more nuanced explorations of violence against women and for ordinary citizens to play a stronger role in holding the mainstream media accountable. If we are to truly enlist the news media as an active and meaningful ally in ending violence against women, it is vital we understand how social media and online channels are affecting the production, consumption, definition, scope and influence of news media.

When taken together, the news frame analysis findings and the above recommendations could help make the 16 Days of Activism campaign, and others like it, more effective and accelerate progress in shifting violence-supportive norms, attitudes and beliefs.

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