



**“Those who tell the story rule society”: Critically exploring four South African case studies (2008-2018) of online reports on ‘queercide’ and their significance for quality online news reporting through a mixed method approach**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people persists despite a global climate of tolerance for diversity and inclusivity. However, liberal policies in countries like South Africa rarely protect sexual minorities against violence, abuse and rejection. One of the most violent manifestations of the response to the lifestyle of LGBTIQ people is continued oppression that has often resulted in the murder of lesbians without much credence given to this as a crime against human rights by the media in general. Moreover, limited academic research has been conducted to fully engage with the serious issue where LGBTIQ issues intersect with online reporting activity. What is expected from reporters of news if they wish to remain relevant while serving the ideals of honesty, reputable reporting and conscience? And, arguably more importantly, how do online reporters approach issues of concern that impact marginalised communities in a democratic society?

Although South Africa proclaims a liberal Constitution, the policies stemming from it are seldom operationalised concerning the plight of vulnerable groups such as lesbians who suffer daily abuse as a result of a heteronormative patriarchal social context. It may even be said that the perpetrators of violence against lesbians garner more fervent coverage than the victims themselves. If this is true, the quality of online reports on 'queercide' deviates from what is required and this has implications for creating credibility and engaging audiences in a manner that is fair and just. Therefore, what framework for quality journalistic reporting appears or, conversely, does not appear when information on these murders is published?

This study thus aimed to explore these issues using a mixed method investigation that was framed by the queer theory, the standpoint theory, the framing and representation theory, and the newsworthiness theory. These theories were employed to illuminate the technical and ideological frames that are used to report on the murders of lesbians. The sample selected comprised four case studies from the date of murder until the appearance and pleading of the alleged perpetrators. The data that had been obtained were analysed to contribute to information concerning how these cases were constructed for media publication, to establish trends in terms of similarities and differences in reporting among these cases, and to argue why these may have occurred. The findings that emerged significantly revealed how print media and online reporters approach and report the murders of lesbians as a marginalised groups. The findings have implications for gender studies, education, journalism and communication science, particularly in the advent of the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

**Key words:** 'Queercide', online reports, LGBTIQ issues, technical frames, ideological frames, journalism, gender based violence (GBV)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Page

List of acronyms

List of Figures and Tables

1	CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Background.....	2
1.3	Violence against the LGBTIQ community, especially lesbians.....	3
1.3.1	Attitudes against the LGBTIQ community.....	4
1.3.2	Rapes and ‘corrective rape’ cases.....	5
1.3.3	Discrimination against sexual minorities.....	6
1.3.4	Murder cases, trends and laws in South Africa concerning lesbians.....	8
1.3.5	The murder of LGBTIQ people: ‘Queercide’.....	9
1.4	Media coverage of the LGBTIQ community.....	10
1.4.1	Quality media reporting: Laws, regulations, guidelines and industry recognition.....	12
1.4.2	Media coverage of lesbian issues.....	14
1.4.3	Media coverage of violence and ‘queercide’ perpetrated against lesbians.....	15
1.5	LGBTIQ news coverage: Influential global and South African people, events and media.....	17
1.6	News consumption online: Global and South African trends.....	19
1.6.1	Online news reporting.....	21
1.6.2	Quality news reports of LGBTIQ issues online: What is ‘good’? .....	22
1.6.3	The audience as co-creators: Media literacy as important as good news reporting.....	25
1.7	Purpose statement.....	26
1.8	Relevance of the study.....	27
1.9	Research problem .....	28
1.9.1	Circumstances of the research problem.....	28
1.9.2	Anchor.....	29
1.9.3	General research problem.....	30
1.9.4	Specific research problem.....	30
1.10	Methodologies pertaining to the research issues and research questions.....	30
1.10.1	Research issue.....	30
1.10.2	Research Questions.....	31
1.11	Research objectives.....	31
1.11.1	Quantitative descriptive objective.....	31

1.11.2	Research objectives	32
1.12	Research impression	32
1.12.1	What is the research argument?	32
1.12.2	Philosophical foundation	33
1.12.3	Michel Foucault	34
1.12.4	Simone De Beauvoir	34
1.12.5	Paulo Freire	35
1.12.6	Judith Butler	36
2	CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	38
2.1	Framing and representation theory	38
2.1.1	Key contributors and what they contributed to the study	40
2.1.2	Criticisms of Framing and Representation Theory	42
2.1.3	Relevance of Framing and Representation Theory to the research	45
2.2	Newsworthiness	46
2.2.1	Key contributors and their contributions	48
2.2.2	Important criticisms of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) Newsworthiness as a Twenty-First Century paradigm shift	51
2.2.3	Relevance of Newsworthiness to the research	52
2.3	Queer Theory	53
2.3.1	Relevance of Queer Theory to the research	54
2.3.2	Criticism of Queer Theory	55
2.4	Standpoint Theory	60
2.4.1	Key contributors and their contributions	61
2.4.2	Criticisms of Standpoint Theory	63
2.4.3	Relevance of Standpoint Theory to the research	65
3	CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	66
3.1	Violence and femicide	67
3.2	Framing and representation of lesbian murders in the media	72
3.3	Online reporting of news on Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	79
3.4	Standpoints and Queerness: Attitudes towards LGBTIQ people	87
3.5	Coverage of LGBTIQ in South Africa in general, and lesbians in particular	95
3.6	Online consumption of reports: Eco-chambers or fact-checkers?	99
3.7	Conceptualisation	103
3.7.1	'Queercide'	103
3.7.2	Gender Based Violence (GBV)	104
3.7.3	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer community (LGBTIQ)	105
3.7.4	Online reporting	105

3.7.5	Frames .....	106
3.7.6	Social plugins .....	107
3.7.7	“Code driven” media in ideal writing and “user driven” media in real reporting .....	108
3.7.8	Perspectives from sources .....	108
4	CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY .....	110
4.1	Conceptual design .....	111
4.1.1	Research paradigm .....	113
4.1.2	Research design .....	115
4.1.3	Justification .....	117
4.2	Online reports on ‘queercide’ as journalistic and social artefacts .....	118
4.2.1	Population .....	118
4.2.2	Sampling .....	121
4.3	Method and instrument .....	122
4.3.1	Data collection method .....	122
4.3.2	Data collection instrument .....	123
4.3.3	Data analysis .....	132
4.4	Limitations of the data collection method .....	133
4.5	Pilot study .....	135
4.5.1	Details about data collection .....	146
4.5.2	Intercoder and intercoder reliability .....	146
4.5.3	Changes and implications .....	147
4.5.4	Analysis .....	147
4.6	Research ethics .....	147
5	CHAPTER FIVE: DATA COLLECTION, DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS .....	150
5.1	Quantitative data presentation: Content coding .....	151
5.1.1	Quantitative content coding of online reports on Noxolo Xakeka .....	151
5.1.2	Quantitative content coding of online reports on Joey and Anisha van Niekerk .....	153
5.1.3	Quantitative content coding of online reports on Noluvo Swelindawo .....	155
5.1.4	Quantitative content coding of online reports on Eudy Simelane .....	157
5.1.5	Quantitative content coding of online reports on ‘good’ online report to be used for comparison .....	159
5.1.6	Comparing online reports on the four case studies of ‘queercide’ (quantitative) with ‘good’ online reports .....	161
5.2	Qualitative data presentation: thematic coding .....	162
5.2.1	Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on Noxolo Xakeka .....	163

5.2.2	Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on Joey and Anisha van Niekerk.....	167
5.2.3	Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on Noluvo Swelindawo.....	170
5.2.4	Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on Eudy Simelane .....	173
5.3	Data interpretation: Quantitative content- and qualitative thematic analyses.....	177
5.3.1	Quantitative content interpretation.....	178
5.3.2	Qualitative thematic interpretation.....	180
5.4	Findings and discussion.....	185
5.4.1	Discussion of findings: Technical composition of online reports on ‘queercide’.....	186
5.4.2	Discussion of findings: Ideological frames used in online reports on ‘queercide’.....	189
6	CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	195
6.1	Ethical considerations.....	196
6.2	Validity and reliability.....	196
6.3	Trustworthiness.....	197
6.4	Limitations.....	198
6.5	Heuristic value of this research.....	199
6.6	Recommendations for future studies.....	203
6.7	Cogitations on this research.....	205
	SOURCES CONSULTED.....	208
	Primary sources.....	208
	Secondary sources.....	214



## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

4IR – Fourth Industrial Revolution

GBV – Gender Based Violence

IISS – International Institute for Strategic Studies

LGBTIQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SAPS – South African Police Service

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

WHO – World Health Organization

UNSRVAW – United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Meeusen and Jacobs's (2016) findings on the news threat frames for minority groups on prime-time television in Flanders between 2003-2014.....	74
Figure 2: A timeline of events constructed on the Joey and Anisha van Niekerk 'queercide' case.....	120
Figure 3: Example of how online reports are coded using the quantitative coding sheet (Isaacs, 2016).....	126
Figure 4: Example of how online reports are coded using the qualitative coding sheet Adapted from Maregele (2018).....	145
Figure 5.1: Venn-diagram presenting similarities between the ideological structure of 'good' and case studies of 'queercide' online reports to establish a collection criterium.....	161
Figure 5.2: Qualitative data articulated into a Pie-chart for comparability.....	176
Table 1: Quantitative coding sheet template.....	123
Table 2: Qualitative coding sheet appearing before the pilot study (see section 4.5).....	128
Table 3: Moderation sheet used in the pilot study.....	135
Table 4: Qualitative coding sheet template after the pilot study.....	140
Table 5.1: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of Noxolo Xakeka's killing.....	152
Table 5.2: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of Joey and Anisha's killing.....	154
Table 5.3: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of Noluvo Swelindawo's killing.....	156
Table 5.4: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of Eudy Simelane's killing.....	158
Table 5.5: Quantitative data collected on 2 online reports considered as 'good'.....	160
Table 5.6: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports of Noxolo Xakeka's killing.....	164
Table 5.7: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports of Joey and Anisha van Niekerk's killing.....	168
Table 5.8: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports of Noluvo Swelindawo's killing.....	171
Table 5.9: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports of Eudy Simelane's killing.....	174
Table 5.10: Results from the Pie-charts for each case study and theme tabulated for a comparative description.....	177

# 1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Mother, don’t go there! It is Eudy. They’ve killed my sister!”

- Bafana Simelane -

(Alfredsson, 2008: 1)

## 1.1 Introduction

Although rejection, abuse, intolerance and hatred are familiar to the LGBTIQ community in countries across the world, it is lesbians in particular that are being targeted (Sicetsha, 2018). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people are perceived to conform to non-normative gender and sexual identities are institutionally discriminated against in schools, work spaces and places of worship. Countries with dogmatic and colonised laws and families cloaked in the orthodoxy of culture and tradition are also in particular intolerant of members of the LGBTIQ society (Bornman, 2017). Lesbians are an especially vulnerable group that is targeted in overt ways such as ‘corrective rape’, verbal abuse, physical violence and murder (Saxe, 2018). Such women often suffer the indignity of having to internalise their hatred of their own homosexuality and they feel compelled to cull their voices and suffer in silence due to the oppressive nature of patriarchal systems that are intolerant of their way of life (Sicetsha, 2018). Even after these women have been ostracised, marginalised, beaten, raped and murdered, the humiliation continues. Their bodies are mutilated, burned, thrown off bridges and dumped like garbage (Botha, 2018). To feed the relentless need for news and entertainment, members of the media – both print and digital – have become ubiquitous and it is through their lenses and voices that the plight of lesbians has been judged in terms of what matters and how it matters for these women (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Davis, 2016). Issues affecting the LGBTIQ community are reported online and in print by established media and novice writers alike, and their opinions and comments coalesce into contributions to the conversations about topics that affect these people (Iqbal, 2018). It is undeniable that accounts of crimes against the LGBTIQ community seep into the consciousness of our society through the media, and it is this establishment, in all its forms, that drives the discourse whereby the issues affecting these people are contextualised. The role of the media is consistently affirmed at all levels of society and the collective conscience of the media is often tested in the manner of its reporting of events that rock the world. However, the untimely and sometimes unnoticed death of a woman who made the life choice to live her life as she chooses is as worthy of fair, honest and truthful reporting as is the life of a celebrity or member of the Royal Family, and this study set out to determine to what extent the media have accepted their mandate in this regard.

## 1.2 Background

The etymology of the acronym LGBTIQ is unclear. In the academic environment it first appeared in articles by Amy Lind and Sofía Argüello Pazmiño (2009), Jason Lambrese (2009), and Michael O'Malley, Mei Hoyt and Patrick Slattery (2009). It is noteworthy that all these articles appeared in 2009. Drawing from these articles collectively, the current study utilised the moniker that defined gay women as a constituent-category.

The term 'queercide' that is used in this thesis to refer to the targeted murder of LGBTIQ people is not a concept that existed long prior to this study. To properly contextualise the targeted homicide of this community and this neologism that was recently coined, this chapter introduces and contextualises the research topic to provide an understanding of the purpose of the study, its relevance to the field of media research, society, especially the queer community, and communication, as well as the importance of media literacy in terms of the ontological understanding of this topic. This chapter commences with sections that dissect the phenomenon of violence against lesbian women, or 'queercide', and explores how media sources reported on selected incidences. The discourse is then extended to include online news consumption orthodoxy as well as new trends which poses the following question: "What is considered 'good' writing?" The chapter also discusses the importance of online audiences in confirming reports on LGBTIQ issues by explaining how the Internet is vulnerable to fake news. The chapter also refers to the clandestine agenda and curtness when information about 'queercide' is offered. Finally, the chapter presents the research problem, the research questions, the research hypothesis and the objectives and discusses the research impression. This chapter concludes with the philosophical influences that framed the analysis and interpretation of the data ensuring a well-rounded and cohesive understanding of the topic under investigation as an introduction to the following chapters.

The series paper, *Prevention of violence against women and girls: what does the evidence say?* explores forms of violence against women and young girls with particular reference to intimate partner violence, female genital mutilation, non-partner sexual assault such as rape, and child marriage (Ellsberg, Arango, Morton, Gennari, Kiplesund, Contrera & Watts, 2015: 12). The foregoing is some of the brutal acts endured by women worldwide. Regardless of the fact that physical and sexual violence often dominate the debate on gender-based violence (GBV), women are persistently marginalised both economically and socio-culturally as men have culturally and historically been the principal participants in household finances and the work environment while women have been marginalised in many domains as second-class citizens (Bryson 2011). According to Siyabulela Monakali, spokesperson for the women's support organisation *Ilitha Labantu*, some men believe that they alone should occupy the role of breadwinner and head of the household. Such opinions of dominance and ownership create a context where women easily fall victim to violence based on their gender (Evans, 2019). A South African example of violence

against women that provoked considerable media attention occurred in February 2019, when a Mangosuthu University of Technology student, Zolile Khumalo, was shot and killed at her residence in Durban by her ex-boyfriend (Hlati, 2018). In another case, 21-year-old Jabulile Nhlapo, a student at the University of South Africa, “was allegedly shot and killed by an ex-boyfriend” at a commune in Vanderbijlpark a few weeks later (Delaney, 2018: 2). Even though South Africa has laws in place to protect women, the problem lies in the implementation of these laws (Masweneng, 2018). One such law is the amended Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998 (Department of Justice, 2008). Sonke Gender Justice (2018: 3) states categorically that GBV “...is an injustice that affects women and girls worldwide, with South Africa recording some of the highest rates of sexual violence globally”. World Health Organisation (WHO) data have shown that the murder rate of women in South Africa “was more than five times the world average [in 2002]”, but it has “steadily declined during the period 2000 to 2015” (Stats SA, 2018: 56). Even though there is an indication of a decline in attacks on women by the WHO, the rate of murder of women and children in South Africa remains unacceptably high with local sources counter claiming that there has in fact been an increase in the murder of women. For instance, Triangle, a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town, states that “support groups dealt with ten new ‘corrective rape’ cases every week and the number is increasing” (Martin, Kelly, Turquet & Ross, 2009: 7). Current statistics on the actual number of attacks on women remain vague as many go unreported. However, the latter claim is supported by Andile Sicetsha, enterprise journalist for *The South African*, who noted that the 2017/2018 number of women and girls raped and/or killed had increased with 146 cases from the previous year. This occurred despite the fact that organisations, protesters and officials had engaged in ongoing debates trying to create salience for this issue (Sicetsha, 2018). A charity organisation, *Luleki Sizwe*, also affirmed this increase by stating that, over a three-year period (2010 – 2013), nine cases of gender-based murders based on the victims’ sexual orientation had been recorded (Beaty, 2013). The lack of more accurate and current statistics is indicative of the sparse resources and attention accorded the issue of GBV.

### **1.3 Violence against the LGBTIQ community, especially lesbians**

Homosexuals, especially black lesbians, are being ostracised in economically distressed areas in South Africa and they are also being murdered because of their sexual orientation (Pillay, 2018). South Africa has a high murder rate (Sicetsha, 2018) and the obstinate hate for the LGBTIQ community exacerbates attacks against them. As a member of the marginalised lesbian group, comedian and actress Wanda Sykes famously said: “It is harder being lesbian than black” (Sykes, 2012). Sykes made this comment after Black Consciousness campaigns highlighted African American police violence and racial profiling of communities. These campaigns were sparked by the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the shooting death of African American teen, Trayvon Martin, in February 2012 (Alvarez & Buckley, 2013). Sykes (2012) maintains that lesbians have even less power in society than is generally perceived and that they

are excluded and victimised because of their sexual orientation. Many other critical thinkers echo her observation, such as Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler and Anthony Slagle (Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel, 2017: 83-84). Lesbians are further disenfranchised through secondary victimisation by police when crimes are reported (Wolhuter & Olley, 2008: 12-18) and they are misrepresented through poor and biased reporting (The National Union of Journalists, 2017).

### **1.3.1 Attitudes against the LGBTIQ community**

Behaviour and action are preceded by beliefs and attitudes. When a person acts on their emotional valence, it has both “direction – either positive or negative – and intensity” (Du Plooy-Cilliers & Louw, 2014: 34). Therefore, violence is influenced by people’s negative attitudes towards a person or group. The focus of this study was thus on the attitudes that influence violent behaviour against the LGBTIQ community, with particular attention given to lesbians reported in online spaces to contribute to discourses on the issue and the role media plays in this function of directing and intensifying attitudes.

Lesbians are not only discriminated against in their families and communities, but also in the workplace. An article entitled *Discrimination against queer women in the U.S. workforce: A résumé audit study* by Emma Mishel (2016), the author states that, since 2015, it has been legal in 27 of the states of the United States of America to differentially compensate, hire, promote, or fire a non-federal worker because of his or her sexual orientation. However, in 30 states it is legal to do so because of a person’s gender identity. As part of the LGBTIQ community, transgender women are also experiencing transphobic attitudes. Haley Solomon and Beth Kurtz-Costes conducted a study using the *Attitudes Towards Transgender Individuals Scale* in 2017 by showing viewers videos and movies that prominently featured transgender women. Viewers who were religious, male and had had limited exposure to transgender individuals had adverse reactions with negative attitudes towards these characters (Solomon & Kurt-Costes, 2017). Similarly, men experienced lesbianism as threatening to the traditional notion that a ‘woman belongs to a man’. According to Mishel (2016), the latter perception is also a South African cognitive error resulting from toxic masculinity and gives rise to an opposing anxiety and a moral panic that both result in anger and rage.

Kinama (2011) argues that it is because of economic, social and cultural discrimination that lesbian women are one of the highest risk groups for attacks. Another reason for the negative attitude against lesbians could be the idea of progeny – that is, that a lesbian does not fulfil her duty to procreate and thus cuts off a man’s lifeline to genealogical immortality (Warren, 1996). Whatever the reason for the negativity levelled against lesbian women, it is underpinned by heteronormativity which is the dominant idea in society that heterosexuality is the only ‘normal’ inclination and that men and women have

specified gender roles relating to their sexual orientation. Those who challenge these roles are often met with discrimination and violence (Martin, Kelly, Turquet & Ross, 2009).

### **1.3.2 Rape and ‘corrective rape’ cases**

One of the ways in which women, especially lesbian women, are visibly targeted is through GBV. It is estimated that a woman is raped approximately every 17 seconds in South Africa (Rape Crisis, 2012). The South African Police Service (SAPS) Crime Report (2018) indicated that 40 035 reports of rape had been recorded for 2017/2018. This figure was up from 39 828 in 2016/2017 (Africa Check, 2018). William Shiel (2018: 16) defines rape as “forced sexual intercourse, sexual assault and sexual intercourse between an adult and a minor”. Rape may be heterosexual or homosexual and involves insertion of an erect penis or any object into the vagina or the anus of a women (or man). Legal definitions of rape may also include forced oral sex and other unwanted sexual acts. An average of 110 rapes per day was recorded by the police in 2018 (Africa Check, 2018). According to the Medical Research Council, a survey conducted in Soweto revealed that 25% of the male participants admitted to having raped a woman, while 50% of these men admitted to raping someone more than once (News24, 2013). Approximately one in four rapes is reported, and of those that were registered (statistics for 2008 – 2011), only 14% lead to a conviction by the South African courts (Africa Check, 2018). Of the 124 526 total rape cases reported in the last three financial years (2015-2017), children were the victims of 41% of rape cases (Anderson, 2018: 6). When these figures are perused, it is important to note that they reflect *reported* rape cases. It is not clear whether the recent increase in recorded incidences of rape and ‘corrective rape’ has shown a growing trend of rape in South Africa, or whether it is the result of improvement in the reporting of incidences. Whatever the reason, in societies where rape occurs – and particularly when it has been ‘normalised’ in these societies – the relevance and role of traditional as well as online media in reporting such incidences should receive investigation, particularly as many rape incidences result in murder. ‘Corrective rape’ refers to rapes where perpetrators believe lesbianism to be behaviour unbecoming of a woman that can be rectified through rape (Africa Check, 2018). Behaviours that are associated with lesbianism include women wearing pants (particularly masculine style pants), women refusing to marry and have children, and women who are ‘butch’ (masculine) in their demeanour. ‘Corrective rape’ does not preclude women who do not identify themselves as lesbian, but in this form of rape lesbians are almost exclusively the victims (Rape Crisis, 2012). According to Middleton (2011), lesbian women are often ‘correctively’ raped by men under the supervision of and mandate by members of their own families as a means of curing them of their ‘gayness’ or ‘boy-like’ behaviour.

The South African Judiciary does not recognise ‘corrective rape’ as a separate category where rape is used to punish a lesbian. Where this form of rape is recognised, such as in New York State in the US,

it carries harsher sentencing for perpetrators than other forms of rape (Rape, 2012). ‘Corrective rape’, also known as ‘curative rape’, is unique to other categories of rape as it refers to the sexual assault on lesbians meant to punish them with the ironic intention to change their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual (Bryson, 2011: 13). Reference to ‘corrective rape’ was first made in South Africa in the cases of Zoliswa Nkonyana and Eudy Simelane. Nkonyana was a 19-year-old openly lesbian teenager who was gang raped and murdered in 2006, while Simelane was a *Banyana Banyana* soccer player with a high public profile. She was also an LGBTIQ activist (Rape, 2012). These women were targeted because they were lesbian. The men accused of raping and murdering them justified doing so in the belief that it was their responsibility to cure lesbians of their homosexuality (Mambaonline, 2018). There have been reports of ‘corrective rape’ in Zimbabwe, Ecuador and Canada where gay men have also been victimised (Hawthorne, 2005). Even in South Africa, cases have been reported where parents paid prostitutes to have intercourse with their gay sons in an attempt to cure them (Naidu, 2019). Other cases of ‘corrective rape’ are those of Sikalele Sigasa and Salome Massoa who were tortured, raped and murdered; Millecent Gaika, whose attacker kept saying: “You think you are a man, but I’m going to show you that you are a woman”; Zukiswa Gaca who was raped by an acquaintance in 2009 (Wesley, 2012); and the Mooinooi couple, Joey and Anisha van Niekerk, who were brutally murdered. Eight suspects were implicated in their kidnapping, torture, rape and killing (Mambaonline, 2018) but the case had not been concluded at the time of writing this thesis.

### **1.3.3 Discrimination against sexual minorities**

The LGBTIQ community has long suffered discrimination, isolation and violence within a heteronormative socio-economic, political and cultural background (Hlati, 2018). Brunei enacted Islamic criminal laws on 3 April 2019. These laws include anti-LGBTIQ measures that make gay sex between men punishable by stoning to death (Gunia, 2019). The implementation of this draconian penal code is part of the majority of Muslim countries’ rollout of Sharia law. It was already illegal to be homosexual in the Malaysian country, but it was previously punishable by a prison sentence. This new legislation decrees death by stoning for male gay sex along with other activities, including insulting the Prophet Mohammed and rape (Sicetsha, 2018). The new penal code also punishes lesbian sex by public whipping. Articles 82 and 84 that punish *liwat*, or anal sex between two men or a woman and a man, “apply to both Muslims and non-Muslims” (Gunia, 2019: 24). In reaction to the new law, a British television awards show as well as an established Swiss-owned travel agency joined “a growing boycott of businesses owned by the kingdom of Brunei” (Dixon, 2019: 6). *TV Choice magazine* also announced that the annual *TV Choice Awards* would not take place at London’s Dorchester Hotel, which operates under the Dorchester Collection brand which is a luxury chain owned by the Sultan of Brunei (Dixon, 2019: 8). This illustrates how violence against the LGBTIQ community has far-reaching and global repercussions in both a positive (supportive) and negative way. In Chechnya, a crackdown in 2017



revealed that more than 100 gay men had been abducted, tortured and killed for their real or perceived sexual orientation (Gunia, 2019). To date, not one person has been held accountable for these crimes (Gunia, 2019). According to Marie Struthers (2019), Amnesty International Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Russian authorities “...have shown themselves to be complicit in heinous crimes committed in Chechnya against people believed to be gay or lesbian”. In 2019, the Russian Republic of Chechnya launched a new crackdown on gays in which at least two people died and approximately 40 people were detained (Gunia, 2019). These arrests of gay men occurred in predominantly Muslim regions in southern Russia (Two killed, 40 detained in new gay purge..., 2019). In the Orlando nightclub shooting in 2016, 50 people, including the gunman, died. This incident has been the deadliest attack of its kind in modern North American history (Ibid., 2019) and is another example of the violence that is caused by intolerance for the LGBTIQ community. In the latter incident the victims were predominantly young LGBTIQ people of colour. Massie and Golshan (2016) argue that their fates were sealed because of the creation of a socio-political climate that protects hate crimes in the United States of America (USA).

Violent acts against LGBTIQ people in Africa remain some of the most adverse. An article entitled *A precarious haven: Africa's LGBT+ refugees teeter on the brink in Kenya* (Bhalla & Hayden, 2018) claims that, among the evacuees in this volatile East African region, LGBTIQ refugees are largely forgotten. Kenya hosts around half a million immigrants who have fled conflict, drought and persecution from countries such as Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Burundi. These refugees are forced to live without much protection, housing and employment. African countries have some of the most prohibitive laws against homosexuality in the world. Same-sex relationships are considered taboo and are a crime across most of the continent, with punishments ranging from imprisonment to death (Maregele, 2018). A 2017 report by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association found that 33 African countries out of a total of 54 nations criminalise same-sex relations. The persecution of LGBTIQ Africans is especially emboldened, with gay women routinely being abused, blackmailed, assaulted by mobs, or raped by police or vigilantes (Bhalla & Hayden, 2018). Conversely, same-sex relationships became legal in Botswana, on 11 June 2019 after a unanimous ruling by the country's High Court, making it only the third country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to do so after South Africa and Mozambique (Maregele, 2018). This move occurred because a prominent LGBTIQ organisation, *Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana* associated itself with two mainstream human rights organisations, namely *Ditshwanelo – Botswana Centre for Human Rights* and *Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/Aids*.

The importance of top tier, cross-interest involvement to support the interests of LGBTIQ people cannot be understated (Viljoen, 2019) as many reports support the realities of the issues that these people face.

Some of the most prolific of these problems, according to Human Rights Watch (2020), include ‘corrective rape’ and ‘queercide’ that are attributed in part to the combination of the community’s social and economic marginalisation, vague morality norms assigned by cultures and religions, and the absence of enforcing legislation that protects citizens against discrimination or reliable complaint systems, which include poor data collection and statistics. These are barriers that impede the ability and willingness of gays, transgender people and lesbians to report sexual violence to the police. This lack of reporting creates an environment in which they can be abused in violent masculine contexts with impunity. A 2016 report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UNSRVAW) states that South African sexual minorities remain vulnerable to extreme forms of violence such as ‘corrective rape’ and particularly heinous murders “despite an explicit prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Constitution” (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

#### **1.3.4 Murder cases, trends and laws in South Africa concerning lesbians**

Discrimination against lesbians is not merely relegated to verbal and physical abuse and isolation from family, community and economy, but also often results in their murder. According to a SAPS (2017/2018) report, there were 20 336 murders in South Africa between April 2017 and March 2018, showing a 7% increase from the previous year. The murder rate increased by 6.9% in the 2017/2018 period “when 291 more women had been murdered compared to the previous period” (Sicetsha, 2018: 3). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018), South Africa had the fifth highest murder rate in the world in 2015. Data provided by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Armed Conflict Survey state that, in the 1 144 police station precincts across South Africa, 20% of these murders were recorded at 30 stations. According to the IISS Crime Hub (2018), several precincts had a murder rate estimated at more than 100 per 100 000 people, which is higher than in most war zones such as Yemen with an average of 63 per 100 000. In Philippi East, a township in the Western Cape, the rate was estimated at approximately 323 per 100 000 (BusinessTech, 2018). It peaked at 215 per 100 000 in Madeira in the Eastern Cape province, and 177 at Pietermaritzburg’s central city station in KwaZulu-Natal (BusinessTech, 2018). Although there is no official reporting body to specifically record cases of murders perpetrated against lesbians, non-profit organisations such as *Luleki Sizwe* confirm that increasing numbers of lesbian murders are being observed (Beaty, 2013). Some of these cases include Unathi Bix (who was shot dead in 2017), Noxolo Xakeka (who was stabbed to death during an altercation at a shebeen in 2018), Noxolo Klaas, Noluvo (“Vovo”) Swelindawo, married couple Anisha and Joey van Niekerk, Nonkie Smous, Lerato Tambai Moloi (who was stoned to death in 2017), and Eudy Simelane, to list a few (Mambaonline, 2018). A more comprehensive list of over 200 global cases of lesbian murders with a cursive description of each can be found on the blog: [inmemoriamlesbian.blogspot.com](http://inmemoriamlesbian.blogspot.com). Many of these cases, including the murder of other South African

women, could have been prevented if adequate legislation and implementation measures had been in place to protect these victims (Sicetsha, 2018).

The exact number of other incidences against the LGBTIQ community is impossible to establish because there is no separate category for 'corrective rape' or 'queercide' in the law, which means that these incidences are not officially recorded (Thorpe, 2016). Moreover, Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015) explains that, regardless of a wide and extensive legal framework, the lack of legislation to protect the LGBTIQ community specifically is endemic in South Africa where time-honoured patriarchal attitudes permit GBV.

Hate crime legislation in United States did not explicitly include acts against LGBTIQ people until the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was signed into law by erstwhile President Barack Obama in 2009. Matthew Shepard, a 21-year old student, was beaten to death in Wyoming in 1998 in a suspected anti-gay hate crime (Braidwood, 2018: 4). In South Africa, there is no such special legislation relating to the murder of gay women and no immediate plans to construct such laws. This can be inferred by the non-registration of the murders of Eudy Simelane, Joey and Anisha Van Niekerk and others on the court dockets as they are not considered *precedent setting* (Singh, 2019).

Once offenders have been found guilty, they may be sentenced to imprisonment for life. However, life imprisonment in South Africa has an indeterminate length and may last for the remainder of the offender's life or a shorter period. It is a mandatory punishment for premeditated murder, gang rape, serial rape and rape where the rapist knew he was HIV positive or if the victim was under 18 and/or mentally disabled. In certain circumstances, robberies and hijackings (and aircraft hijacking) also carry a mandatory life sentence (Braidwood, 2018). Section 51 of South Africa's Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1997 prescribes the minimum sentences for other types of murders, rapes and robberies to 25, 15 and 10 years respectively, so parole is almost always granted to prisoners serving life sentences after the minimum sentence for the lesser crime has been served (Department of Justice, 2007). However, a prisoner must be given a parole hearing after having served 25 years. In special cases, life imprisonment "without any possibility of parole or pardon for an extensively long period of time (such as 1 000 years) can be imposed", such as in the case of serial killer Moses Sithole (Department of Justice, 2007).

### **1.3.5 The murder of LGBTIQ people: 'Queercide'**

'Queercide' is a recent neologism and a homosexualised portmanteau. It was first coined by Antje Schumann, Senior Lecturer in Political Studies and the Centre for Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, in her article *Shooting violence and trauma: Traversing visual and social topographies in Zanele Muholi's work* (Schumann, 2015). This term refers to the violence and targeted

victimisation of gay, lesbian and transgender people in South Africa. Sedgwick (1990) used the word ‘queer’ when she coined the term ‘Queer Theory’ to disrupt research on gay and lesbian issues that had become stale. Queer is a term that was originally used in a derogatory sense for homosexual people, but many LGBTIQ youth have embraced this word and given it a rebirth. It can be described as a broad umbrella term for anyone who may identify him-/herself as being either gender, sexually and/or bodily diverse (University of Queensland Union, 2014). Earlier newspaper reports used the pejorative term ‘queer’ in their reports on the killing of lesbians. For instance, a *Mail & Guardian* heading read: “A mother fights queer bias” (Collison, 2017). The term ‘homosexual’ is seen as too clinical and harks back to a time when gays and lesbians were diagnosed as having a mental disorder. The term was classified in the DSM-II from 1965-1987 (Psychology Today, 2015). The ‘-cide’ part of the term is derived from homicide, which is the act of one human killing another (Taylor, 2009). Therefore, ‘queercide’ combines ‘queer’ and ‘homicide’ to identify the killing of LGBTIQ individuals. For the purpose of this study the focus will specifically be on lesbians.

Why ‘*queercide*’ and not *femicide*? Whereas femicide is the more popular term to refer to the killing of a woman or girl by a man or men specifically because of her gender, it does not operationalise the proper naming convention of the killing of women and girls based not only on their gender, but also their sexual orientation or gender enactment. Many other naming conventions for ‘queercide’ include ‘trans-murder’, which is the systematic targeting and killing of transitioning women-to-men or men-to-women or those who classify themselves as ‘transgender’ (Transgender Europe & Balzer, 2019). Trans-murder refers to those transgender people who are killed by another/others. ‘Trans bashing’ is another form of violence against transgender people with ‘trans panic’ being cited as a cause (Taylor, 2009). To gather statistics on the violence against transgender people that includes trans-murder, the Trans Murder Monitoring project was launched in 2009. This project is a collaborative operation between Transgender Europe (TGEU) and the academic online magazine *Liminalis*, which is a journal for sex/gender emancipation and resistance (Transgender Europe, 2009). Ratele (2014) explains how transgenderism and lesbian issues intercept by proposing the argument that analyses of issues of lesbian, gay, and ‘othered’ sexualities are vital for a fuller understanding of how hegemonic forms of masculinity are formed in Africa. The focus of the current study, however, was on the murder of lesbians in South Africa as a category of ‘queercide’ and not on trans-murder or the murder of gay men or people who identify as bisexual, intersex, or queer.

#### **1.4 Media coverage of the LGBTIQ community**

Media coverage has an agenda-setting as well as an agenda-cutting effect on the salience of issues that are required as ‘newsworthy’ (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This applies to online reporting of ‘queercide’ and the potential those reports have for presenting frames to readers or viewers that may influence their

understanding of the issue. In a journal article by Theo (2017) entitled *Empathic new(s) orientations in narratives about sexuality*", he argues that the anti-homophobic agenda of the media might inadvertently have an adverse effect on human rights campaigns calling for equality on the basis of gender that is issue based and not on "couch activism", liberal guilt or other epistemically skewed motivation. Also, in the watchdog role as the 'Fourth Estate', mainstream South African news media publish articles in avid response to discrimination. An example of such a report is Ina Skosana and Thandeka Moyo's (Skosana & Moyo, 2014) *Mail and Guardian* article entitled *Double stigma leaves gay men with little hope*. They expose homophobia in the public health system through stereotyping that prevents gay men from accessing treatment and prevention of HIV infection. Theo (2017) explains that such articles are unlikely to change homophobic attitudes as news audiences tend to support the events that transpire against groups of whom they disapprove (Theo, 2017). This supports the notion that there is a correlation between the affective disposition of audiences towards news coverage of LGBTIQ issues and their pre-existing ideas of "they deserve what is coming to them" held by the community who reads/views the reports (Theo, 2017).

In the LGBTIQ media advocacy group's *Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's* (GLAAD) fifth annual Studio Responsibility Index of 2017, the organisation claims that, despite the critical success of the Oscar-winning film *Moonlight*, LGBTIQ people have little screen-time or are debunked in outdated and stereotypical jokes. The Studio Responsibility Index, which presented the quantity, quality, and diversity of LGBTIQ people in films released by the seven largest Hollywood film studios and their subsidiaries in 2016, revealed that, of the 125 releases from major studios, only 23 (18.4%) included characters identified as LGBTIQ (Nolfi, 2019). An analysis of the representation of LGBTIQ people and the way in which they are portrayed would therefore be significant in understanding how media coverage could influence social and cultural contexts. Another popular trend in Western media coverage of LGBTIQ issues is *RuPaul's Drag Race* (World of Wonder, 2009 – 2019), which has been renewed for more than ten years due to its popularity with heterogenous audiences – thus gay and heterosexual people. It has also been ranked in pageviews which shows that the Emmy Award-winning reality programme scored "8.8 million unique views". By comparison, *Game of Thrones* (HBO), which is another popular television programme, "scored 7.7 unique pageviews" (Nolfi, 2019: 2).

Another LGBTIQ event that garners media coverage is the annual *Gay Pride* parade. On 2 November 1969, Craig Rodwell, his partner Fred Sargeant, Ellen Broidy, and Linda Rhodes proposed the first pride march to be held in New York City and, on Saturday 27 June 1970, the *Chicago Gay Liberation* organised the first *Gay Pride* march from Washington Square Park to the Water Tower at the intersection of Michigan and Chicago avenues. In 2019, many countries around the world observed the *Gay Pride* tradition. However, on the African continent only South Africa, Mauritius and Uganda have events to celebrate the LGBTIQ community's march to promote self-affirmation, dignity, equal rights,

and an increase in visibility. These events are often covered by national and major local news outlets (Igual, 2018).

#### 1.4.1 Quality media reporting: Laws, regulations, guidelines and industry recognition

Even though the physical newsroom is shrinking with the newspaper industry in a state of entropy as traditional journalism has given way to participatory and collaborative citizen journalism (Ngobese, 2019), the need for quality reporting on issues affecting the lives of people to inform and entertain them in a way that leads to growth and emancipatory conscientisation and remind them of their civic responsibilities, is more important now than ever before. Ngobese's (2019) view in the journal article *Identifying markers of sensationalism in online news reports on crime* supports this notion (Grundlingh, 2017). The former author describes how the changing news media landscape is in need of good reporting that speaks of a confident journalistic presence to provide citizens of a country with credible and relevant information. However, there is evidence that quality reporting in South Africa is being impeded by unskilled news reporters who publish their views on unregulated and non-reputable websites resulting in retrenchments, small newsrooms and heavy workloads (Ngobese, 2019). With just over 30 million internet users in South Africa, which accounts for over 53% of the country's population, more people consume digital content and the platforms they use are set to grow (Ngobese, 2019). The growth of online as well as social media, in conjunction with shrinking newsrooms, has affected the quality of journalism in South Africa and the end product of many reports leaves a lot to be desired (Ornico, 2018). In terms of online reporting on 'queercide', there is a need for concerted efforts to impress upon those writers the gravity of their works as they influence and impact those reading them. **This power at the fingertips of all who have an opinion, whether regulated or not, was of significance for the study as it aimed to highlight the need for a better understanding of the technical and ideological presentation of and quality reporting on LGBTIQ matters** (Sicetsha, 2018).

It is relevant and necessary to investigate the motivation of writers who produce reports that become available in the public domain what that are thus informative and considered 'news'. Evidently some online reporters on 'queercide' might write for "Likes" and "Shares" to boost their sense of popularity and/or to support some ideological intentions. This is called 'click bait' as it is used to impress advertisers. At a darker level, it has the malevolent purpose of spreading messages that will cause divisiveness (Sicetsha, 2018). To counteract the impact of such reports, quality reporting may be ensured for reporters of online content if they subscribe to directives, whether these directives may guide the technical execution of their writing; their manner of dealing with the pressures placed upon them by laws and internal as well as external regulatory bodies; or their response to incentives such as awards (Ngobese, 2019). One such award programme that might incentivise online reporting as well as offer a criterion to judge online reports, is *The Drum Online Media Awards* which is a worldwide awards

scheme that identifies the most innovative, engaging and stand-out news writing from across the world. It includes categories such as ‘Content Creator of the Year’, ‘Journalist of the Year’, ‘B2C Website of the Year’ and ‘Specialist News Site’ (Drum Media Online Awards, 2019). Unfortunately, these awards tend to favour only the bigger news conglomerates (Ornico, 2018).

Another way to encourage quality online reporting is to enforce internal regulations for online staff writers. One example is the *Naspers* Code of Business Ethics and Conduct (or the ‘Code’) that applies to its online staff reporters. The code of conduct espouses regulations such as the following:

“...acting lawfully towards third parties, including avoiding illegal payments, complying with laws concerning the collection and use of data, and complying with applicable competition and antitrust laws that protect competition, prevent abuse of dominance and require advance approval for certain transactions” (Naspers Group, 2017).

The South African Constitution, which is heavily influenced by the African National Congress’ (ANC) Freedom Charter, includes the Bill of Rights which, in Chapter 2 Section 16, promises freedom of expression. However, this freedom does not extend to the advocacy of hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion or any actions that constitutes incitement to cause harm. In Chapter 3 Section 9, the Bill continues to elaborate on equality:

- “(1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- (2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed Chapter 2: Bill of Rights 6 to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.
- (3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
- (4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.
- (5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair” (Justice.gov.za, 2019).

This section in the law focuses on members of vulnerable groups, including gay women. They thus have the weight of the law for the protection of their rights to be safe and to live their lives without the fear of retribution. **It is therefore inarguable that the media, including online reporting on ‘queericide’, play an important role in respecting their rights and contextualising issues impacting the LGBTIQ community.** Therefore, any reports (whether print or digital) that might appear to be in contravention of the provisions espoused in the Constitution are open to criticism and even reprisal by

law. Of concern is that, because of the volume and flow of news online, there is no auditing body that currently reviews online reports and thus transgressions of the Constitution as well as industry regulations go unpunished. Moreover, the onus is on the reader to report questionable or irresponsible writing to hosting domains.

The Press Ombudsman as well as the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) have divisions that deal with issues of online reporting, but these are often dealt with only on a complaints-raised basis (Ngobese, 2019). The BCCSA was established by the National Association of Broadcasters of South and Southern Africa (NAB) with the aim of ensuring high standards in broadcasting and resolving complaints expeditiously against full members of NAB who have submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the BCCSA and its Code (Thloloe, 2012). In support of the work that these bodies do, GayStarNews.com (2019), a gay and lesbian infotainment website, has a function button on its website that allows readers to report posted articles posted that they deem ‘suspicious’ or ‘inaccurate’ so that the website may follow up on the information provided. This is a way in which websites could regulate their own material and present a body of work that is, as a result of self-scrutiny, more credible. Another support mechanism to ensure quality online reporting jointly with external regulatory bodies are the three industry institutions that deal with regulation. These are The Press Council and the Digital Media and Marketing Association (DMMA). The Press Council was founded by industry associations. These are the former Print Media South Africa (PMSA) which is now Print and Digital Media South Africa (PDMSA), the Forum of Community Journalists (FCJ), the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP, and the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF). The main objective of the Press Council is to promote and to develop ethical practice in journalism by endorsing the standards set by the South African Press Association (SAPA). The *DMMA* is an association of online publishers whose objectives includes the development and promotion of standards across all aspects of South African digital media and marketing industries (Thloloe, 2012).

#### **1.4.2 Media coverage of lesbian issues**

Higher visibility of gay people in television, news and movies started in the 1990s (Ayoub & Garretson, 2017). Prominent gay celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres who appeared on mainstream American television in her portrayal of Ellen Morgan in the ABC-sitcom, *Ellen*, have attracted considerable media attention. More particularly, issues involving gay women such as feminism, careers for women, sexual relationships, marriage and parenting have been explored. However, some critics of how the media write about lesbians – such as Judith Butler in her interview about gender performativity (Big Think, 2011) – have asserted that this kind of exposure may lead to exploitative and unsubstantiated coverage of issues relevant to the lesbian community. The general lack of lesbian portrayal in the media may also influence audiences’ views of lesbians when, by omission, they are not informed of issues affecting



these women when one-sided portrayals are presented. Common tropes of lesbians in the media include 'femme' or 'butch' lesbians. If such labels persist, media coverage of lesbians and lesbian issues have implications for the audience's understanding of diverse groups and shape their beliefs and values about gay women (Hubbard, 2014). Researchers, advocates, policymakers and producers should thus take into account "...how cultural contact through media can shape opinions and values, even across national borders" (Ott & Aoki, 2002: 15). Examples are *RuPaul's Drag Race* (World of Wonder, 2009-2019) and its cross-cultural influence. Another is the murder of Matthew Shepard which was one of the US's most infamous hate-crimes and sparked a global outcry for civic action against homophobia (Ott & Aoki, 2002). It subsequently had a direct impact on hate-crime legislation in the US. The Internet, film, television, and radio remain powerful socialising instruments through which young audiences come into contact with previously invisible minorities (Ayoub & Garretson, 2017), and they should therefore be utilised responsibly.

In the article *Queer nation is dead, long live queer nation*, Mary Gray (2009) explains how news tropes have typically identified the opposition to positive demonstrations of gay women led by Christian and Islamic beliefs. These fundamentalist attitudes are often resistant to liberal political figures, such as Justin Trudeau who openly supported gay rights by walking in the Vancouver Gay Pride in 2018, or New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, who became the first prime minister to participate in the nation's Gay Pride Parade. However, many who consider themselves to be religious conservatives argue against LGBTIQ people's nudity in public when participating in Gay Pride because it violates their traditional values. In this context, as an institution of objective social conscience, the media that are designed to reflect society and different communities such as lesbians, should interrogate their motivation for and manner of the presentation of such public displays. Historically, news coverage tended to cover homonormative LGBTIQ people (such as seemingly stable married same sex couples with children) more than other more fringe or alternative LGBTIQ people (such as more masculine lesbians) (GLAAD, 2017). "Homonormative is the replication of a normative heterosexual lifestyle excluding sexuality" (Gray, 2009: 5). Media portrayals of LGBTIQ people "...have also been important in furthering activist movements in South Africa" (Sicetsha, 2018: 3). In general, lesbians have gained more visibility for their positive contributions to movements for social change in the Twenty-First Century. For example, in the documentary *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*, lesbians of diverse backgrounds are recognised for their integral role in generating greater visibility for a section of the population that has been largely ostracised by their families and communities, [persecuted] by the police, and discriminated against because of a patriarchal culture (Hubbard & Schulman, 2014).

### 1.4.3 Media coverage of violence and ‘queercide’ perpetrated against lesbians

Women-led movements such as *#TimesUp*, *#MeToo*, *#AmINext* and *#TotalShutdown* in South Africa highlight sexual abuse, GBV, femicide and ‘queercide’ issues that are prevalent in the world and that are of socio-cultural, economic and political importance. In March 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed that the country was in crisis due to the impact of the Covid-19 virus, where lockdown measures were implemented on 27 March 2020 (Ramaphosa’s full address: Restrictions eased but killing of women is another pandemic in SA, 2020). Earlier in 2019, Ramaphosa had signed the declaration against GBV and femicide in Booyens, Johannesburg, and pleaded with his compatriots and South Africans in general to fight for the rights of women. At the same address, victims of violent attacks as well as activists against GBV were asked to tell their stories. One of the speakers was a lesbian who stated, “I’m just so sad to live in a country where we have to prepare to be raped and killed” (Nicolson & Retief, 2019). Narratives presented in media on these issues are often challenged and their authenticity, accuracy and credibility are often questioned as they seem to create a context where there is confusion and a lack of advocacy for the plight of victims (Mokgoroane, 2019). More particularly, the manner in which South African media have reported the murder of lesbians has remained underexplored (Balani, 2018). In light of the protection accorded to LGBTIQ people in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, it is important to understand not only the frames used when reporting on ‘queercide’ and how this will contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the issue, but it is also vital to determine what implications such reporting has for the development of online reporting criteria that will recognise the rights of the LGBTIQ community in South Africa.

This study engaged in an investigation to determine the vulnerability of the LGBTIQ community not only to violence, but also to the media, with specific focus on lesbians. An actual event that in part prompted this study was the rape and murder of former *Banyana Banyana* midfielder, Eudy Simelane. Simelane was a high-profile athlete and gay rights activist. On 28 April 2008, Johannes Mahlangu, Thato Petros Mphiti, Khumbulani Magagula and Themba Mvubu tried to rob Simelane while on their way from a local shebeen. They were undeniably inebriated. They claimed later that, because Simelane had had no money and that she would recognise at least one of her assailants, they had to silence her. So they beat and stabbed her and then gang-raped her repeatedly. She was later found left half-naked in a ditch that had become a well-known dumping ground for bodies. Simelane had 25 stab wounds on her face, legs and chest. Even the soles of her feet were lacerated (Daniels, 2018: 3).

The murder of Simelane foregrounded the issues of ‘corrective rape’, violence against women and the murder of lesbians and the media were quick to put these on their agenda. The front page of the *Sowetan* read: “Ex-Banyana Banyana player's killing case postponed” (Fuphe, 2008) while, after the trial of the

perpetrators, that of the *Mail & Guardian* read: “Gang-rape killer of lesbian footballer gets life” (Mail & Guardian staff writer, 2009).

Various role-players have stated that South Africa is one of the better places in the world to be gay because of its Constitutional inclusion of LGBTIQ rights. However, it has also been termed one of the worst places for gays as there is an ongoing threat of ‘corrective rape’ and the killing of LGBTIQ people. The latter view demonstrates the lived reality for lesbians. As the statistics on the killing of lesbians seem to be on the rise (Luleki Sizwe, 2013), there is also the assumption that the ‘copycat effect’ impacts murders of lesbians. For instance, Dipika Nath, a researcher for Human Rights Watch claimed that “...as news of attacks spread, people may get inspired or learn to do the same in their communities” (Smith, 2017: 13). This recognition of the realities experienced by the LGBTIQ community, especially lesbians, necessitates an understanding of how the global and South African media report on and thus impact the life-threatening issue of ‘queericide’.

### **1.5 LGBTIQ news coverage: Influential global and South African people, events and media**

On 14 November 2006, acting president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka signed the Civil Unions Act that legalises same-sex marriages in South Africa. This made South Africa only the fifth, and to date the only African state to award such rights to the LGBTIQ community (Daniels, 2018). Before then, the South African LGBTIQ community had many obstacles to overcome such as community isolation, disengagement from family and church, bullying in schools, and conversion therapy. Under South Africa's ruling National Party (1948 to 1994), homosexuality was a crime punishable by up to seven years in prison (Falkof, 2018: 16). In the 1970s, despite state opposition, South African gay rights organisations, such as Gay and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), challenged the oppressive policies of the Apartheid government and harassment by police of gays and lesbians. Until the 1980s, gay organisations were often polarised into racial groups as a consequence of Apartheid. In Hillbrow, Johannesburg, The Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) was predominantly white and avoided taking an official position on Apartheid, while the Rand Gay Organisation was more liberal with a multi-racial constituency. The latter was founded in opposition to Apartheid (South African History Online (SAHO), 2011). The South African media during the Apartheid era strived to keep social order with government interventions. For instance, the promulgation of the Publications Act of 1974 gave the government the power to censor newspapers, films, plays, books and other entertainment programmes. This censorship gave the state the right to decide what South Africans could or could not view (SQM5404, 2014). After the abolishment of Apartheid this law, which restricted reporting on the LGBTIQ community, was repealed and replaced by provisions such as Section 16 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution which states:

“...everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- a) Freedom of the press and other media;
- b) Freedom to receive and impart information or ideas (Justice.gov.za, 2019).

There is an active representation of LGBTIQ people in the global and South African media, even though these representations are still mostly imbalanced compared to that of heterosexual people while portrayals are often dogmatic and stereotypical (Cook, 2018). Globally, members of the LGBTIQ community are more visible than ever before and making strides in becoming an influential part of popular culture. Ellen DeGeneres became the first openly gay main character in her sitcom *Ellen* in 1997. Thereafter, shows such as *Will & Grace* (1998) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1998) followed by featuring gay characters prominently. Popular interviewers such as Rosie O'Donnell and Graham Norton are openly gay and frequently discuss topics of homosexuality on their talk shows, while openly gay singers Adam Lambert, Sam Smith, Janelle Monae, Calum Scott, the band Years and Years, and Troy Sivan are staples on local and international radio airplay (Cook, 2018). In South Africa, soap operas depict the lives of people in the LGBTIQ community. One notable production is the sitcom *City Ses'La* (SABC1, 2019), which features a gay character for which actor Warren Masemola received a South African Film and Television Award (SAFTA) in 2018. Other highly rated soap operas that feature LGBTIQ characters is *Generations: The Legacy* (SABC1), *Uzalo* (SABC1), *Isidingo: The Need* (SABC3), *Rhythm City* (etv), *7de Laan* (SABC2) and *The Queen* (Mzansi Magic) (Sicetsha, 2018). South African media personalities who are openly gay include Somizi Mhlongo, Nataniel, Tannie Evita (Pieter-Dirk Uys) and Caster Semenya. These people continue to provoke local conversations around being gay. Because of media inclusion of gay men and women, local as well as global acceptance rates of LGBTIQ people are improving. For instance, a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2016) survey of 3 000 South Africans indicated that even though 72% of citizens believed that homosexuality was morally wrong, 55% said that they would accept a gay family member and 51% believed that gay men and women should have the same rights as all other heterosexual citizens. Only 27% of the respondents claimed to personally know of someone from the LGBTIQ community and noted that media are the only sources that expose them to the lives and experiences of gay and lesbian people (HSRC, 2016).

However, the visibility of gay and lesbian people in the media also has a negative impact. Violence against the LGBTIQ community has escalated in recent years and this may well be a result of increased visibility that may cause communities to believe that homosexuality is a growing trend that threatens the moral fabric of heteronormative nationalism and creates anxiety (Sicetsha, 2018). On the African continent local communities often feel that homosexuality is un-African and an import from the West that corrupts and destabilises their families and the sanctity of their churches, their cultural beliefs and practices, and their obligation to procreate (Sicetsha, 2018). The dilemma that the media now face is

the question of continued visibility combined with creating salience of lesbian issues such as ‘queercide’ through the frames and other technical and ideological elements used in reports. This dilemma begs the following questions: (i) What lesbian issues do the media – along with the platform they provided for LGBTIQ media personalities as iconoclasts – include on their agenda? and, even more importantly, (ii) what is the nature of the language and frames that these reports contain to discuss these issues? These are some questions that this research endeavoured to address.

To address these questions, it was envisaged that three of the largest online news reporting agencies in South Africa would account for the exposure of LGBTIQ (especially lesbian) issues. Therefore, by exploring the nature of their reports, significant understanding of the local influence of media coverage of lesbian issues and their approach to selecting, producing and publishing content would be elicited. *Independent Online (IOL)*, which is owned and run by *Independent Newspapers*, publishes 15 national and regional newspapers and several Western Cape-based community newspapers. *IOL*’s mission is to represent the group as a whole online by using elements from newspaper titles along with fast and breaking news features. One of more than 20 online reports on lesbian murders that appeared on *IOL*’s online news site between 2012 - 2013 was: “SAHRC outraged by brutal lesbian murder” (SAPA, 2013). According to *Independent Media* (2019: 4-5), the news on *IOL* “...comes from the newspapers run by the Independent group in South Africa as well as from news wires. A small portion of the content is generated by *IOL* staff”. *News24.com* is another of South Africa’s and Africa’s premier online news resources that offer complete 24-hour coverage of local and international news. The main news sections are South African, African, world, entertainment, technology and sport. *News24* also provides information relating to the latest business developments through *Fin24*. A segment especially dedicated to women’s issues, though more on health and wellbeing, is *Women24* (Naspers, 2019). One of the seven reports on lesbian murder read: “Hundreds sign petition against release of man accused of lesbian's murder” (Maregele, 2018). *Africa News Agency (ANA)* is Africa’s first syndicated multimedia and online news service and aims to provide the continent with accurate and credible news on government, business, politics, economies, sport and lifestyle throughout the day. *ANA* is owned by Sekunjalo Investments Chair and Executive Chairman of *Independent Media*, Dr Iqbal Survé, and the Chairman of the *Pan African Business Forum*, Ladislav Agbesi. Their ownership followed the liquidation of *SAPA*. However, *ANA* has not yet established itself as an active online reporting source for issues relating the killing of lesbians, but it is a visible supporter of LGBTIQ rights on its website (Naspers, 2019).

## **1.6 News consumption online: Global and South African trends**

A development in reporting is that news consumption is increasingly occurring online. The website *The Conversation* (2016) claims that online services are reshaping morning news routines as fewer people

access the news by reading a physical newspaper – in fact, only 6% in the US and 8% in the UK still do so. Instead, online services are the first source of daily news for 39% of US citizens ahead of television, which is estimated at 36%, and 31% percent in the UK, where television viewing for news is estimated at 32% (Ogunsola & Okusaga, 2017). Although statistics on online news consumption in South Africa are slim, it would not be unreasonable to confer a similar trend to that of the US and the UK even though the digital divide is much more pronounced in less developed compared to developed countries (Ogunsola & Okusaga, 2017). According to Carolyn Byerly (2018), Professor of Media and Journalism at Howard University in the US, even though online news consumption is on the increase, online reporting is vulnerable to fake news that is also sometimes referred to as “yellow journalism” (Murphy, 2007). Moreover, inconsistent reporting, unethical reporting and repetition of incorrect information are challenges. Misinformation and bad reporting are turning audiences into *echo chambers* who spread false information and create environments where issues such as ‘queercide’ are represented inaccurately. Such reporting in the end fails to motivate salience, justify action and promote understanding.

However, because of the impact of fake news online, readers have increasingly become sceptical of online information. Online reporters are expected to report, write, blog, tweet, sift the web and create video and picture content to produce news without time and training. This can be referred to as “hamsterization of journalism”, according to Baran and Davis (2015: 357). In addition, many online reports fail to frame the issue of ‘queercide’ to create mobilisation of audiences for advocacy (Ortiz, 2018). Byerly (2018) argues that a concerted effort is necessary to improve the media literacy of consumers of online news by proposing they check the source for credibility, look at the headline for verbosity and fantasticality, and reading the by-line to confirm the author and his/her track record. Byerly (2018) also recommends that audiences look at the photographs used in the report as well as who is quoted and that they investigate the quoted sources for credibility. Finally, Byerly (2018) stresses the importance of fact checking for accuracy in online reports of being conscious of incidences of economy of scale where content is merely copied and pasted.

Fact-checking websites have become an instrument for journalists as well as audiences to confirm information. Fact checking has its origin in the early 20th century when magazines and newspapers began to verify statements made in non-fictional texts before publication. Some of the best fact-checking websites include *Snopes* and *FactCheck.org*, according to Byerly (2018). *Snopes* began as a website that mainly dealt with urban legends, common misconceptions and rumours (Ellis, 2018). However, it has expanded to include general fact-checking of viral misinformation. *FactCheck.org* is a fact-checking website with a recognised history of journalistic rigour, and it is one of the partners *Facebook* uses to address viral fake news (Ellis, 2018). Byerly’s argument is supported by Giovanni Luca Ciampaglia, Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at the

University of South Florida, and Filippo Menczer is Professor of Computer Science and Informatics as well as Director of the Centre for Complex Networks and Systems Research at Indiana University. They claim that social and online media are among the primary sources of news in the US and in most countries where access to the Internet is high (Byerly, 2018). Ciampaglia and Menczer (2018) claim that users are constantly exposed to content of questionable accuracy, including hyper partisan content, fabricated fake news reports, conspiracy theories, clickbait and pseudo-science.

In light of the above, the current study not only sought to contribute to the understanding of how online news media report on 'queercide', but it also aimed to develop an online reporting framework based on the data collected from online reports on 'queercide'. It was envisaged that, in this manner, the study would contribute to conversations based on the solution of LGBTIQ issues.

### **1.6.1 Online news reporting**

Online news is progressively becoming the primary source of information, particularly for young consumers of news (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2015). Web journalists, bloggers and amateur 'backpack' journalists have different work routines and ideas about how to constitute a story compared to print journalists (Paterson, 2011). Clear technological and market restrictions, such as time and a reliance on 'clicks' as well as an abundance of differing resource tools and working routines, contribute to the fact that online media reporting is generally less meticulous than print media. These online reports also lack working business models (Humphrecht & Buchel, 2013) and, in general, rely more strongly on the most efficient way of producing news, which refers to agency copy (Johnston, 2009; Fenton, 2010; Doyle, 2015). According to Paterson (2011) who analysed the reliance of online reporting on news agencies, the Internet provides the illusion of multiple perspectives although news may actually originate from only a few sources. Online news also breaks away from traditional centralised news agencies to a more decentralised presentation of issues through trained journalists as well as novice bloggers, opinion piece advocates and not-for-profit interest groups (Boumans, Trilling & Vliegthart, 2018).

In South Africa, over 66% unique browsers of online news tend to do so on cellular phones, whereas the country's top five websites are mainly news agency portals. The growth in mobile access to online content presents an opportunity for newspapers and other news brands to present reports on issues affecting citizens in a broader, more accessible way. Approximately 80% of global online traffic to news agency portals is mobile (Jordaan, 2017). According to Adriaan Basson, *News24* Editor, the desktop decline was much quicker than anticipated (Jordaan, 2017). Basson confirms Paterson's (2011) concern that digital is not separate from print – journalism is journalism. What are changing from print to online reporting are the pace, the frequency and the variety of storytelling forms that lead to online

content that is either dogmatic or explicitly incorrect. Another popular online news website is *TimesLive* with 3.6 million unique browsers (Johnson, 2015). According to Gustav Goosen (2019), CEO of *The SpaceStation* which is a digital media sales company, there is definitely a shift of advertising budgets from print media to online platforms, but it is not keeping up with mobile growth. Goosen (2019) acknowledges that audiences have migrated to mobile online news content consumption. However, there is still a challenge in terms of utility as a result of user apprehension to maximise the value of mobile news sites (Jordaan, 2017).

Investigative journalist Pieter-Louis Myburgh's book entitled *Gangster state: Unravelling Ace Magashule's web of capture* won the *Taco Kuiper* award in 2020 (Basson, 2020). The time-honoured tradition of bestowing rewards on investigative journalists has been applauded, and it seems that none of these accolades would have been possible without dogged shoe-leather reporting, including tracking down sources, interviewing experts, digging up public records, telling all the sides of the story and analysing data. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 may have accelerated the great disruption in the news business that began at least two decades ago (*The Times* Editorial Board, 2020). For example, the economic effects of the novel Coronavirus and its global lockdown have exacerbated a crisis in the South African media, particularly of the printed media, with the latest being the announcement of Caxton to close its entire magazine division. This decision affects publications such as *Bona*, *Your Family*, *Country Life*, *Rooi Rose* and *Food & Home* (Cohen, 2020). The causes of the disruption are due to changing reader habits; the migration of classified advertising to, for example *Gumtree* and other internet services; the dominance *Facebook* and *Google* have built over online advertising; and also the slow adoption of media organisations of the digital transformation in the production, distribution and consumption of news. The rise of citizen journalism and other not-for-profit news, however laudable, is nowhere close to the scale that would be needed to make up for the reduction in original reporting by newspapers. And that loss affects other local news sources as well (*The Times* Editorial Board, 2020). The sharing of fake information online, for example, is not only distracting and upsetting, but it can also prove to have long-term harmful repercussions. In online reporting, breaking news, once it is published, may be picked up by other reputable media in a matter of minutes and can therefore have ancillary implications (Anthony, 2020).

### **1.6.2 Quality news reports of LGBTIQ issues online: What is 'good'?**

In the article "*Sunday Times stripped of journalism award for Cato Manor 'death squad' reporting*", Kanya Somdyala (2019) exposes how the conveners of the prestigious Taco Kuiper Award for Investigative Journalism withdrew the awards given to three *Sunday Times* journalists for their Cato Manor killings reports. The reason for the withdrawal was that, upon review, it was found that the reporting, writing and editing were sloppy and unprofessional and led to errors and gaps in the report.



Somdyala explains that even though entrants for such a prestigious award may be subjected to detailed screening before the judging process, there are still challenges to judging what ‘good’ quality news reporting is (Somdyala, 2019). The threat of retractions, public apologies and the withdrawal of industry awards of recognition might be a deterrent for news agencies, but what about online news report writers who might include citizen journalists, social media users, bloggers and advocacy or interest groups with no journalistic training or being bound by regulatory codes? What advice could they use to support their writing about the LGBTIQ community, for instance, if the intention is to write credibly and accurately? And, more importantly, what could audiences use to judge the online reports they are reading?

The *GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Glossary of Terms* (2016) proposes some advice, including terminology, when writing about LGBTIQ people. For example, ‘openly gay’ describes a person who self-identifies as gay. The term also applies to ‘openly lesbian’ and ‘openly queer’. Although generally lauded, the phrase still implies a confessional aspect in publicly acknowledging sexual orientation or gender identity. Some terms are deemed offensive while others are preferred. For example, ‘homosexual’ as a noun or adjective is seen as offensive because of the clinical history of the word. It is aggressively used by anti-LGBTIQ conservatives to suggest that people attracted to the same sex have a psychological disorder. The preferred terminology is ‘gay’ as in ‘gay man’ or ‘lesbian’ for women. Another example would be the pejorative expressions ‘homosexual relations or relationship’, or ‘homosexual couple’, or ‘homosexual sex’. Rather, according to the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*, one should refer to a same-sex couple as ‘relationship’, ‘couple’ or ‘sex’. It is important to avoid labelling an activity, emotion, or relationship as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. ‘Sexual preference’ is also seen as derogatory as it is typically used to suggest that being attracted to the same sex is a choice and therefore can and should be ‘cured’. The accurate phrase is ‘sexual orientation’ or ‘orientation’, because the attraction to members of the same as well as opposite sex is inclusive of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and queer people, as well as straight men and women. Defamatory language and references to be avoided that are used when describing LGBTIQ people include the epithets ‘faggot’, ‘fag’, ‘homo’, ‘dyke’, ‘sodomite’, ‘deviant’, ‘perverted’, ‘pervert’, ‘dysfunctional’, ‘disordered’, ‘diseased’, and ‘destructive’, as well as similar degrading descriptions. Also, associating LGBTIQ people with paedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest is fallacious and is a cognitive error. These associations and innuendoes insinuate that LGBTIQ people threaten the sanctity of society and families, and children in particular (GLAAD, 2016).

A British based organisation, *The National Union of Journalists* (NUJ), offers further support to reporters of LGBTIQ issues by explaining that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people have the right to equal, accurate and inclusive reporting that is fair and respectful. The NUJ further states that significant progress has been made in reporting on LGBTIQ issues, but states that there continue to be

concerns, particularly in how the media, especially in terms of online reports that remain difficult to monitor, treat stories. Therefore, before committing to any reporting on LGBTIQ people and issues, journalists and reporters on matters concerning the community should question themselves whether the use of labels such as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ or ‘bisexual’ would be appropriate. If these terms are not necessary and relevant to the report, they should not include them, as the sexual orientation or gender identity status of a person should only be mentioned if relevant to the story. Intrusion into the private lives of LGBTIQ people is only justified by overriding considerations of public interest. Therefore, a journalist or reporter should not produce material that is likely to lead to accusations of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Moreover, online reporters of LGBTIQ issues should strive for diversity, accuracy and balance in their reporting, especially when it comes to sensitive social issues. They should clearly understand that not all organisations campaign for all LGBTIQ people. *Stonewall*, for example, does not campaign for transgender people, just as *Trans Media Watch* does not drive gay and lesbian rights. The NUJ also recommends that journalists and reporters on LGBTIQ issues should avoid publishing letters, make phone-in contributions or online comments that contain gratuitously offensive and possibly illegal statements and attitudes concerning LGBTIQ people, as this could encourage negative sentiments and cause discriminatory mobilisation. This is what occurred in Uganda in 2014 and Tanzania in 2017, when national newspapers and tabloids published the names of known gays and lesbians without their permission (AFP, 2017). This exposure led to numerous incidences where people suspected of being gay or lesbian were attacked (AFP, 2017). According to NUJ (2019: 17), “...the words ‘gay’ and ‘transgender’ should not be used as nouns as it is gender specific, similar to how ‘lesbian’ is gender specific. For example, while ‘lesbian couple’ is grammatically correct, the term ‘lesbian woman’ is both unnecessary and tautological”.

Online news agencies have been exploring ways in which they may affect better quality news reports. For example, *News24* ran a promotion in 2019 where readers could win R10 000 if they completed a survey to express how they felt about the news agency’s reporting of news. Respondents were asked questions such as “*Are news reports written in a way that is interesting?*”, “*Do you trust the information provided in the articles?*” and “*Describe to which extent you would recommend the reports you have read to friends and family*”. Because there was a monetary incentive attached to the respondents’ participation, there might have been some bias in the answers. However, the outcomes of such promotions indicate how credible news agencies might collaborate with their consumers through inviting feedback in order to improve the quality of their reporting (*Media24*, 2019). In an interview with Carl Peters, Sports Editor for *The Witness*, Pietermaritzburg, he was asked what would make online reports more credible and less superficial. Peters (2019) responded that the main element to look for in a report is that the journalist must mention which sources they used and that audiences should consume news from credible news outlets such as *News24*.

Zubeida Jaffer, anti-Apartheid journalist, writes in an article “20 years of unshackled journalism” (2017) that good online reporting is writing each story with unwavering courage to tell the truth [while] knowing that online content exists in what she termed “unshackled times”. In the spirit of the South African Constitution writing is noble; however, the Constitution is a piece of paper. It must gain life through the ethical and technical practice of the journalist and reporter. Jaffer continues to advocate that every generation produces journalists that meet the demands of their time. Therefore, for this generation, the challenge is to hold power to account through decentralised platforms and by understanding who the powerless are (Jaffer, 2017).

### **1.6.3 The audience as co-creators: Media literacy is as important as good news reporting**

According to James Potter (2019), Professor in Instructional Technology and Communication at the University of California and author of *Media Literacy*, audiences who do not periodically examine what they consume online default to influences such as misinformation, biased writing, ideological propaganda and reaffirmed power structures that are outside their control. The mass media therefore continually reinforces certain behavioural patterns that stem from faulty logic until they become naturalised. These beliefs that are followed stem from media platforms that increasingly deliver less valuable information and experience.

A Stanford University study of 7 804 primary and high school students reported that 82% of the respondents were unable to distinguish between an advertisement labelled “sponsored content” and a real news story on a website. In the study, two out of three primary learners trusted the information in the report they had been given, while 4 out of 10 high school students believed, based on the headline, that a photograph of deformed daisies on a photo shared on a website provided strong evidence of toxic conditions near the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in Japan – they believed this despite the lack of source or location of the photograph. The study provided details that are suggestive of how young online audiences will react to misleading partisan posts and articles (Spector, 2017). A growing number of schools are teaching their students to fact check the various information sources they retrieve online to improve their media literacy. One of the recommendations, according to Bloggers Kirk McElhearn and Derek Erwin (2018), to improve responsible reading of online text is that parents should instil a healthy scepticism about online published reports and blocking websites they consider inappropriate for their children to access. They should also limit their children’s use of social media. Some basic skills that professional fact checkers use include foregoing the ‘about’ section of a website and to learn about the topic through lateral reading, which would entail leaving the website almost immediately after opening it and researching the organisation or author. Online audiences also need to understand that a top ranking on *Google* does not necessarily mean an article is trustworthy, because the rankings are based on algorithms such as geographic location and popularity (Shellenbarger, 2016: 15).

In the article “*How to tell if an online article is real, fake or a scam*”, McElhearn and Erwin (2018) propose advice to online audiences on how they may improve their media literacy. First, is the publication name recognisable and does the information appear on a secure domain? One of the ways to answer these questions is to look in the address bar of the computer’s browser where there is a padlock icon. This means that the connection to the *intego.com* website, which confirms the credibility and safety of the particular webpage, is secure. If the publication name is recognisable, the user will be able to contact the site owner or company to verify information. Online audiences also need to confirm that the website they are accessing has a ‘contact’ section or link with an email address so that they may communicate with the company (McElhearn & Erwin, 2018). Other recommendations are that audiences should perform a basic search on the company or authors of the report and check the accuracy of the spelling and grammar of the article. Poorly written reports may provide insight into the quality thereof. McElhearn and Erwin (2018) claim that more authoritative websites can be trusted as they are more accurate and truthful, especially if they routinely offer corrections to address errors when they find them, such as having a ‘report invalid information’ function on the website. Fact checking a story is problematic, but some topics can be checked on sites like *Snopes*, which is an independent fact checking website that eliminates ideas where no clear evidence is provided for its findings. Finally, McElhearn and Erwin (2018) recommend that online audiences should understand that false equivalence, “which is presenting dissenting opinions about an issue just to pretend to be balanced, does not guarantee balance” (McElhearn & Erwin, 2018: 34). Often false equivalence is used to bolster ideas that are false or manipulative – almost in the way that inoculation is used in propaganda.

It is therefore as important for online audiences to read online content responsibly as it is for online reporters on LGBTIQ issues to write dutifully so as to prevent them from becoming echo chambers of misinformation that supports an ideology they might be unaware of. The ideal would be for audiences of online content to become fact checkers. Although not an explicit goal of the research, it is important for further investigations on quality online reporting to involve audience consideration.

## **1.7 Purpose statement**

The purpose of this research was to uncover how online reporters (including writers of gay news websites, blogs, formal news websites, informal news websites and advocacy online groups) wrote about four case studies involving the murder of lesbians in order to illuminate the structural as well as ideological frames used. A theoretical framework comprising three theories supported the data to ensure significant understanding of how online reporters’ approach and discuss LGBTIQ issues.

The study also aimed to test the structural elements used in other ‘good’ online reports to compare them for similarities and differences to the online reports on ‘queercide’ in a syntagmatic and paradigmatic process required in quantitative studies.

The final purpose of this study was to develop a reporting framework for quality reporting when reporting online by critically exploring the ideological frames used in the online reports on ‘queercide’ in an ontological manner that is indicative of critical realist studies.

## **1.8 Relevance of the study**

The South African Constitution, which was inspired by the ANC Freedom Charter, protects the freedom of lesbians and those rights are further protected by the laws of the land. However, when these freedoms are challenged, it sets a precedent that challenges other debatable rights such as key women’s rights and the rights of other minority groups. Martin Luther King Jnr. (1964) famously said that a threat to freedom anywhere is a threat to freedom everywhere. Realising the dream of peace and prosperity and protecting the rights of every South African as entrenched in the Constitution are the responsibilities of every citizen. Violent actions such as rape, physical harm and especially murder place the sanctity of the South African Constitution in jeopardy – whether one agrees with freedoms awarded the LGBTIQ community or not. In a democratic country there are avenues such as protests, referendums, the voting system and the media to voice grievances; however, South Africa is a country where women are not safe. Challenging their deeply entrenched right to patriarchy, men are often defensive when confronted with issues of GBV. In many cases, these defensive feelings turn to offensive violence and, when sexual orientation is at the core of the conflict, it often results in murder (Sicetsha, 2018). Media in all their forms have a responsibility to provide salience to issues so that they may acknowledge and understand them and then inform groups in support or opposition of those issues of the truth. When media, traditional as well as online, waver or fail in this responsibility, the community they service remain unaware or, even worse, is misinformed and is therefore unable to make critical decisions regarding those issues. A citizenry that is excluded from information, whether through lack of access, omission of reporting features or low digital literacy, will forever remain obtuse regarding the foundations of this country’s hard-fought for democracy.

The intentional murder of lesbians, in this study referred to as ‘queercide’, and how the media report on those cases, were foci of this study. The ability of readers to distinguish between fake news and enterprise journalism was tested by looking at how these cases were reported and the impact the nature of the reporting might have. The study thus not only illuminates issues concerning the LGBTIQ community, but also exposes potential issues that may threaten the democratic ideals promoted by transformative leaders such as Albert Lethuli, Desmond Tutu, Albertina Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, and

many other South Africans who called for an inclusive and equitable society in this country. In a democracy, which South Africa claims to be, the words of Thomas Jefferson should always be recalled: "Individual rights are not subject to a public vote [or action]. A majority has no right to vote [or take] away the rights of a minority" (Ayn Rand, 2011).

## **1.9 Research problem**

The lack of knowledge on how South African LGBTIQ issues are covered online has translated into a failure in establishing a sound reporting framework to write about and consume reports about this minority community in South Africa. Current statistical information on 'queercide', or lesbian murder, is vague or non-existent. Moreover, the position that online media platforms occupy in terms of violence targeted against lesbians locally as well as internationally has been under-researched (The Conversation, 2016). It is therefore important to address this deficiency as South Africa has a large LGBTIQ community that comprises between 5 – 10% of the population (*Mamabaonline*, 2016) whose rights are protected by the South African Constitution (see the Civil Union Act, 2006) and the Bill of Rights (Justice.gov.za, 2019). However, these rights seem to be disregarded by some members of society who remain intolerant of and prejudiced about the life choices that lesbians in particular make. Against this background, reports on various news platforms that expose the vulnerability of the LGBTIQ community and, most importantly, the position that the writers of these reports assume in the frames they utilise to report attacks on 'queercide', and lesbians in particular, demand attention. These frames are important as they have the potential to create salience and impact understanding and a sense of urgency among those with vested interests in safeguarding the lives of this vulnerable community. Advocacy groups who assist in the formulation of laws as well as policing and counselling strategies may also be informed by such information (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). To better contextualise the problem, it is noteworthy that the perception of 'queerness' is a Western construct can be dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in South Africa, but this phenomenon existed in societies in the Southern African region even before the arrival of any Western factions (Lake, 2014).

### **1.9.1 Circumstances of the research problem**

Reports on societal issues such as the murder and 'queercide' can often be found on online sources such as websites, blogs and special interest gopher sites, for example *News24* and *Gaystarnews.com*. However, there is an academic lacuna relating to the frames that reporters use and that implications that these frames may have for feminist and queer studies within these new mass media conventions. This lack in knowledge creates a gap between writing that is epistemologically objective and writing that includes false information and misrepresentations of lesbian women. The latter type of writing creates platitudes of dogma and is then easily dismissed as economy of scale or fodder (Lake, 2014). To fill the

gap, research questions that explored the nature of the frames that were used by online reporters of selected cases of 'queercide' were asked. These questions included the following: (i) Do online reports on 'queercide' in South Africa result from central sources or peripheral ones? (ii) What journalistic elements concerning reporting are present in the selected online reports? and (iii) Do these selected online reports on 'queercide' follow the reporting principles espoused by online interpolations of Galtung and Ruge (1965)?

These questions were addressed by first examining online reports on 'queercide' through an inquiry of secondary literature and previous research conducted for the Masters dissertation, "*An issue of social and political salience: A content analysis of how South African newspapers report on 'corrective rape'*" (Van der Schyff, 2018: 24). Secondly, they were addressed by examining the analytical frames of relevant online reports to uncover where these reports appeared and who these reports were written by. The research also evaluated them against the backdrop of South African as well as international socio-cultural, political, legislative, economic and ethical contexts. Finally, the research explored the evaluative frames that were used for each of the selected reports to uncover understandings of LGBTIQ issues.

### **1.9.2 Anchor**

To establish orthodoxy in a study is important as this enables real research lacunas to emerge without fabricating an imagined absence in knowledge. What is known is that patriarchal beliefs create contexts where women are particularly vulnerable to violence and murder (Maswaneng, 2018). Lesbians in particular are exposed to violence and secondary victimisation (Martin et al., 2009), which are phenomena that are evidenced by increasing murder rates of these women in South Africa (Mambaonline, 2018; Sicetsha, 2018; Braidwood, 2018).

Online media news consumption is growing to such an extent that it is far outpacing supply capabilities (Ellis, 2009). Studies have shown that these media tend to cover LGBTIQ issues such as 'queercide' as homonormative narration, thereby avoiding robust journalistic writing which may be able to create salience and advocacy for the plight of this section of society (Hubbart & Schulman, 2014; Smith, 2017; Sicetsha, 2018). Even support and special interest websites do not position themselves as active conversationalists about the murders of lesbians (APA, 2019). Claims are made that online news and reports often appear stereotypical and contain innuendo, generalisations and falsehoods to sustain the idea of the "sanctity of the family" (GLAAD, 2016: 4), although data supporting these claims are equivocal. *Conditio sine qua non* – if it were not for the establishment and reinforcement of socio-cultural heterosexism, 'queercide' would not exist.

To conclude, as a recommended extension of future studies relevant to this research, online media literacy is as important for creating understanding of LGBTIQ issues as quality reporting (Spector, 2017; McElhearn & Erwin, 2018). One way of improving online media literacy is to address the issue of readers becoming *echo chambers* by providing a reporting framework for online audiences to become *fact checkers*.

### 1.9.3 General research problem

The overall research problem was that **the divide between good journalistic writing** about ‘queercide’ that should meet quality standards in technical execution and ideological ideals, **and the kind of ‘journalistic writing’ that is basically insignificant** and fails to create understanding, salience or advocacy for this community, **was nebulous and under explored.**

### 1.9.4 Specific research problem

From the readings included in the research, there is no information on the technical- nor ideological frames used in online reports on South African cases of ‘queercide’ to understand LGBTIQ issues which will contribute to the continued discussion surrounding quality online news writing.

Despite extensive readings on the topic to conduct the research, no information in either the technical or ideological frames that writers used in online reports about South African cases of ‘queercide’ that would enhance understanding of LGBTIQ issues or contribute to the continued discussion surrounding quality online news writing were detected.

## 1.10 Methodologies pertaining to the research issues and research questions

The research problem was constructed from multiple sources to present a field of inquiry that would be relevant and of significance to philosophy and critical studies. The research methodology was therefore *après pos* to conducting both a quantitative investigation (that is, into the technical aspects of online reports to determine the structural frames used when reporting on an LGBTIQ issue) and a qualitative investigation (that is, to enable a more robust description of the frames used to present certain power ideologies).



### 1.10.1 Research issue

The literature that was explored revealed no unified vision regarding the quality of the structural components of online reporting for the four South African cases of ‘queercide’.

The research, as it pertained to the **quantitative** aspect of the topic, investigated how the online reports on ‘queercide’ mechanistically measured up to online reports that might be considered ‘good’. In order to do so, the issues that were explored were length of report, features included, format where these reports appeared, whether these reports were original or copies from other sources, whether credible sources had been used to construct the report and what, if any, photographs were used. Here, the issue under investigation related to the technical quality of the online reports of four South African cases of ‘queercide’ by utilising theoretical frameworks (including newsworthiness), the South African Constitution, internal and external regulations, as well as industry awards that might be beneficial in making this determination.

### 1.10.2 Research questions

There were two research questions of significance to investigate the **qualitative** aspect of the research problem.

#### ***RQ1: What frames do writers of online reports of four South African case studies of ‘queercide’ use?***

This question was asked to explore the frames used when reporting online on ‘queercide’ case studies. The research thus explored how the writers created a narrative or story in a way that presented an ideology to the readers, and this was significant in showing how online media report on LGBTIQ issues. The framing theory, the standpoint theory and the queer theory were used to provide a foundation from which the answer(s) to this question were contextualised in order to address the larger research problem.

#### ***RQ2: What significance do the four South African case studies on ‘queercide’, as a LGBTIQ issue, have for quality news writing?***

This question was asked to explore, through the use of newsworthiness, the standpoint and the queer theories, what the critical analysis and evaluation of the four South African case studies of ‘queercide’ as a LGBTIQ issue uncovered about the quality of online news reporting.

### 1.11 Research objectives

By further refining the research problem into the research issue and research questions, the research hypothesis states what the testing intention of the study was, while the research objectives state what

specifically the qualitative portion of the study sought to uncover. The study was oriented to the significance of the problem and, in this section, declarations are formulated which define the parameters of what was investigated.

#### **1.11.1 Quantitative descriptive objective**

**Exploring the difference between the technical composition as well as the structural frames used for online reports on ‘queercide’ and those online news reports considered as ‘good’.**

The quantitative aspect of the research was descriptive and not inferential, therefore there is no hypothesis presented. The elements were treated as an objective and are discussed in the data interpretation section. They were not tested to correlate variables or prove a hypothesis.

#### **1.11.2 Research objectives (RO)**

RO1: To identify the frames that writers of online reports of four South African case studies of ‘queercide’ used.

RO2: To determine the significance that four South African case studies on ‘queercide’ as a LGBTIQ issue have for quality news writing.

### **1.12 Research impression**

Christian Louis Lange, historian, teacher and political scientist and who became one of the world's foremost promoters of the theory and practice of internationalism, sums technology up well when he says it is “...a useful servant but a dangerous master” (Lau, 2018: 16). Online media are fantastic platforms in many respects, especially in terms of time saving, connectivity, speed, and affordability of communication. However, the utility of this medium through the content it provides needs to be vigorously and continuously scrutinised for its influence and impact in the South African and global context.

The research impression, which explains the ‘argument’ to be investigated, is a relatively new methodology in critical relativist studies.

### 1.12.1 What is the research argument?

The argument that presented in this thesis is that online media reporting is influenced by the concentration of media ownership and pluralism. This research thus argue that such reporting allows access for multiple voices to online media spaces; limits control of harmful media content; the risks of censorship; positions the professional responsibilities of journalists versus their professional autonomy; and opens questions about the cultural significance of media in relation to cultural diversity, the protection of cultural identity, societal integration, and the role of minorities (Hamelink, 2015: 32). The ultimate objective of this research was not simply to critique heteronormativity, but to suggest a way forward in reporting on LGBTIQ issues by detaching personal bias from a patriarchal ideology and to propose a “commensurable universality” (Hamelink, 2015: 36). Though not an explicit purpose of this research, the research argument introduces the importance of collaborative construction of information. This requires understanding that meaning is created in the mind of the audience and therefore report writing should actively engage with them to fully realise the journalistic framework of ‘good’ reporting online.

Issues that are generally unpopular in traditional societies are, among many others, the rights of lesbians (Sicetsha, 2018) and reporting on ‘queercide’. Therefore, if the intention is to mobilise social action to curb such occurrences, writers have to approach these stories as “mind managers” and fact checkers in order to become an alternative digital public (Grant, 2017). This means that the standard news reporting convention of the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* questions is insufficient and impedes objectivity – thus simply addressing these questions elicits writing that is too ‘gullible’ and insufficient to critically question deceptive messages (Hamelink, 2015: 160-161).

The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has introduced entirely new ways in which technology becomes embedded within societies and how skilled workers, such as journalists, practise their work. New forms of machine intelligence and approaches to governance that rely on cryptographic methods such as the blockchain will radically alter how journalists write and readers consume news and create salience for issues (Davis, 2016). This means that reporters on ‘queercide’ incidences are now required to acknowledge when they do not know certain realities rather than rely on stereotypes, labels, innuendo and axiomatic truths to construct their stories. The argument addresses the issue of both technical and ideological ability; that is, it raises the question whether men are more able than lesbians to liberate themselves from an oppressive system.

### 1.12.2 Philosophical foundation

Research is most effective when it presents an argument influenced by thought and the critical construction of ideas. An understanding of the philosophical foundation of a research project assists the research to oscillate between doxology (what is *believed* to be true) and epistemology (what is *known* to be true) and this results in consistency. A research philosophy is “a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon needs [sic] to be gathered, analysed and used” (Kienstra, Imants, Karskens & Van der Heijden, 2015: 39). Those philosophical beliefs that influence a researcher’s approach, data collection and analysis methodologies, and the interpretation of the data may yield information that either contributes to these philosophical underpinning or refutes them. However, they may also cause, as Thomas Kuhn argues in his seminal work, *Structure of scientific revolution* (1970), a paradigmatic crisis that leads to a shift in understanding reality. Thus, whichever way the researcher’s philosophical foundation impacts his/her research, it has a noteworthy influence. For this reason, the work of critical as well as feminist thinkers who overtly as well as covertly influenced this study are acknowledged.

### 1.12.3 Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a French philosopher, literary critic, historian and social theorist (Mortensen, 2013). In his seminal work, *The history of sexuality: Volume I*, Foucault (1976) claims that there is a significant relationship between sex and truth; that sexuality is constructed through social and psychological means that have influenced how people think about sex. Knowledge about sexuality is formed through discourse which constructs subjective ‘truths’. In the biography *The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault* (2008), Lisa Downing writes how Foucault’s approach to sexuality, which he perceives as socially constructed, has become influential in Queer Theory, as his resistance to identity politics and his rejection of the psychoanalytic concept of objective choice contradict some theories of queer identity. Foucault’s work has reference that spans extensively across disciplines. His fundamental ideology is encapsulated in his frequently used quote, “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1976). This phrase easily articulates into other avenues of critical study such as Feminist Resistance as well as Standpoint Theory. There have been, however, frequent debates as to whether Foucauldian Theory has relevance in Feminist studies because of its political shortfalls and implications and also because it relates to gender power struggles (Buntin, 1992). Foucault’s work has been used extensively by Feminism theorists such as Jana Sawick who explains that the significance of Foucault’s work is in conceptualising power relations (Bunting, 1992). bell hooks (1984) draws attention to how these power struggles result in women having the ability to resist sexist domination and to the fact that that these struggles are dynamic.

#### 1.12.4 Simone De Beauvoir

Simone Lucie Ernestine Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir (1908-1986) was a French writer, philosopher, political activist, social theorist and feminist. De Beauvoir's work has a significant influence on feminist existentialism and feminist theory. In her landmark feminist treatise, *The Second Sex* (1949), she describes how biological need and sexual desire that make a man dependent on a woman have not liberated women socially. She also explores how systems always favour the oppressor over the oppressed, and she argued that this explains the slow pace of liberation for the working class. These sentiments continue in her acclaimed novel *The Mandarins* (1954). De Beauvoir, along with Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, set out to propose thoughts on justice and freedom that helped to ignite the feminist movement in America and France and spread existentialist philosophy through writing and art. Similar to the belief that Nelson Mandela expressed in his 1994 inaugural address, De Beauvoir stated: "I'm against all forms of oppression" (Aeon, 2012: 8).

De Beauvoir's ideology focuses mainly on the social and cultural mechanisms of oppression that restrict women. In the article entitled *Women's oppressed and disfigured life in Margaret Atwood's the Handmaid's Tale*, Bahman Zarrinjooee and Shirin Kalantarian (2017: 62) write how De Beauvoir asserts that "womanhood is imposed on woman by civilization and what it means to be a woman and therefore contextualise [sic] how women are punished for challenging these restrictions." For De Beauvoir (1949), the fundamental social meaning of 'woman' is 'other', and the main reasons that women are oppressed are their biological features and sexuality that exist within a patriarchal society. De Beauvoir therefore challenges the discourse by which a woman is defined based on her biology; especially those discourses that occur in public spaces like the mass media. In De Beauvoir's view, "heterosexuality and prostitution are exploitation of women, and so she rejects heterosexuality as the norm for sexual relations" (Zarrinjooee & Kalantarian, 2017: 21).

#### 1.12.5 Paulo Freire

In his book entitled *The radical pedagogies of Socrates and Freire: Ancient rhetoric/radical praxis*, Stephen Brown (2012) situates contemporary critical praxis at the intersection of the teaching philosophies of Socrates and Paulo Freire. Brown (2012: 35) "not only sheds new light on the surprising and significant points of intersection between ancient rhetoric and radical praxis as embodied in the teaching philosophies of Socrates and Freire, [but he also uses] the philosophy of each to illumine the teaching of the other". In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian educator and critical theorist, describes the difference between banking education and liberating education as an exercise in *praxis*, which refers to combining reflection and action to invent and reinvent reality (Brown, 2012). The interpretation of Freire's work provides a teaching and learning pedagogy of internal

decolonisation – so the question is posed: *Is being gay un-African, unnatural and sinful* to heal the self? Freire espouses two truths that need acknowledgment for emancipatory conscientisation to occur: first, oppression exists and secondly, the transformation and liberation of the oppressed are possible. Therefore, the causes of oppression have to be located and reality needs to be transformed. Praxis is a dialectical process where true and emancipatory learning happens through critical questioning (Freire, 1970). In this argument Freire intersects with Butler as both emphasise disrupting current beliefs and realities by recommending teachings in dissent, even though the initial intention of Freire's work centres around education and Butler's is concerned with third-wave feminism. The works of both, in a multidisciplinary way, explain the alienation that occurs when people have limited control over their own lives. In this way there is even an interpolation of Marxism, which is a Communist ideology about human existence and struggle.

Freire (1970) argues that the oppressor-oppressed relationship is dehumanising to both. He proposes engagement with audiences through dialogue because, without questioning, critical thinking, praxis, emancipatory conscientisation and revolutions of invention and reinvention, healing the relationship will not be possible. Anti-dialogic and dialogic processes can be presented as “matrices of opposing theories of cultural action – the latter as an instrument of oppression and the former as an instrument of liberation” (Freire, 1970: 54). “The theory of anti-dialogical action and its characteristics include conquest, manipulation, cultural invasion, and a divide-and-rule approach, while the theory of dialogical action [with its accompanying] characteristics includes cooperation, unity, cultural synthesis and organisation” (History is a weapon, 2003: 7-8). Therefore, no reflection leads to activism that has no way of determining its effectiveness, while continuous reflection without implementation relegates ideas to dithering – theory and revolution should thus occur in tandem with one another (History is a weapon, 2003). Of significance to the current research was Freire's idea of **problem posing education**. This refers to the way learners (or media audiences) are able to fully engage with what they are being taught through media content. No longer will the teacher be the one to teach and students the ones to learn, as students will teach as well and teachers will also learn. In this context everyone has a unique point in life. If everyone works together, according to Freire, they all could use their unique points of view to build knowledge (Webber, 2014).

Problem posing education ties in with the Standpoint Theory as it relates to media content creation and presents new and significant ideas around power relationships. This ideology proposes that power should not merely be identified and understood for the emancipation of oppressed groups, but it should also be used to identify the legitimate power occupation of groups in specific contexts. Therefore, members of the LGBTIQ community have to appear in a hierarchal position in mechanisms concerning them; thus, in the absence of such members, those consulting LGBTIQ discourses should enjoy power privileges.

### 1.12.6 Judith Butler

Judith Pamela Butler, born on 24 February 1956, is a gender theorist and American philosopher whose work has influenced the fields of third-wave feminism, queer and literary theory, political philosophy, and ethics (Comstock, 2017). Similar to Erwin Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation of self in everyday life*, Butler does not think about acting in the theatrical sense, but rather as the discourse of 'acts' that maintain associative semantic meaning with theories of acting and performance. Butler echoes De Beauvoir's sentiments that "one is not born, but rather, *becomes* a woman" as gender is not a stable identity or locus of agency where various acts originate from. Rather, it is an identity which is sensitive to its environment created over time through stylised repetition of acts (Butler, 1988). Butler therefore describes the "woman" as a social, political, economic and cultural construction where "womanness" is performed and understood in those contexts, but where it is not fully and honestly portrayed and therefore misunderstood and vulnerable to power dynamics (Butler, 1993).

Butler (1990) asks if "woman" is a universal term. This questions the relationship between sex and gender. The difference is that sex is the anatomical body parts like the penis and vagina, while gender is the socially constructed performance that identifies an individual as male or female. Gender is then not inherent to *being*. Butler (1993) also claims that sex is merely a created category with no inherent inner truth. "Sex is always already gender according to the heterosexual matrix, which is a grid of naturalised bodies and desires" (Butler, 1993: 12). The problem with the heterosexual matrix is that it only considers certain identities and all others are outside of it and are philosophically erased or ignored. The heterosexual matrix is indelible and is impossible to overcome without an evolution of thinking about this matrix. Therefore, Butler (1993) suggests that "...sexual minorities – such as lesbians – and people with excluded identities need to form a coalition in order to transcend the existing categories of identity" (Comstock, 2017: 16).

This chapter introduced the recently proposed concept of 'queercide' by contextualising its occurrence and embedding it in the South African socio-cultural, legal, political, ethical and economic environment. The discourse established the phenomenon as a current LGBTIQ issue within the media field that can – and should – be investigated by constructing a philosophical support for its understanding. Such a process underpinned the data analysis for the purposes of this research.

## 2 CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“That the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply that repetition itself ought to be stopped – as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: *What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?*”

- Butler (1990: 42) -

In this chapter theories of importance are discussed in order of significance and ability to contextualise the data that were obtained to address the research problem adequately. The framing and representation theory by Gregory Bateson (1972) will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the theory of newsworthiness as understood by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965). The research also explores contributions to this theory by Yvonne Jewkes (2004) and its critical deconstruction by Paul Brighton and Dennis Foy (2007). Discussions of the Standpoint Theory of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807) and the Queer Theory of Teresa de Lauretis (1990) will follow. Sections of the Social Responsibility Theory of Dag Westerstähl (1983) will be referenced to address the need for understanding ‘free press’ and how this freedom is contextualised in terms of LGBTIQ issues and news values. The theories that succinctly presented in this section assisted in the research’s attempts to describe the online framing of reports on lesbian murders and thus to extend existing knowledge in this field within the limits of the bounding assumptions of critical relativism. The purpose of this chapter is to present the research’s exploration of these theories as an assembly in order to legitimise the findings and inductively motivate new ways of a quality reporting framework on LGBTIQ issues online. The major assumptions of each of the theories will be discussed as they supported the principles that the research examined. Criticisms judging each theory and discourse about them by other theorists to improve scholarly understanding of the theories as they relate to this research problem are also unpicked. The contribution of these theories to illuminate evaluative criteria, philosophical scope, appropriateness, heuristic value, validity, parsimony and openness (Littlejohn, Oetzel & Foss, 2017: 14-17) provided a robust consideration of the data and underscored findings of the academic lacuna that exist as it pertains to the research, and its utility in contextualising data.

### 2.1 The Framing and representation theory

The process of framing and representation has its origins in sociology and psychology and lays the foundation for a theoretical construct to investigate media articles (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Todd Gitlin (1980) first described the concept in his analysis of how news media trivialised the *New Left* student movement in the 1960s. Gitlin (1980: 64) described framing as “a schema of interpretation and



collection of generalisations, anecdotes, stereotypes and narratives used by audiences to understand issues”. These mental ‘filters’ are influenced by the idiosyncrasies of readers as well as the culture and society they belong to. It is therefore “used to make sense of the world” because “choices made by audiences are influenced by the creation of frames” (Zelizer, 2004: 33). In this research, frames such as the moniker used to refer to *lesbians* and the ideological approaches that were clearly identifiable were explored in selected online reports to illuminate the issue of ‘queercide’. David Altheide (1997) supports this approach by stating that “frames and formats shape mass media content” as communication and media formats enable the audience to recognise various frames that provide a general definition of what they are consuming” (p. 21). Framing thus describes *how* issues such as ‘queercide’ “are represented and packaged to media audiences who interpret the message in a variety of ways” (Altheide 1997: 21). According to Gitlin (1980: 46), framing offers a way to understand the “systematic and predetermined organisation of news reports into types facilitated by emphasis, presentation and pattern selection”. This means that framing is a way to organise the world both for online reporters who describe or narrate incidences pertaining to a certain issue and the audience who rely on and interpret their reports. In the context of LGBTIQ issues, the framing of studies offers reporters “a means of examining the filters that made the news understandable” (Zelizer 2004: 140). Another contribution to the contemporary understanding of framing comes is derived from the works of Ervin Goffman. Goffman’s *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1959) and *Frame analysis: An essay on the organisation of experience* (1974) explains how frames are used by media to shape audiences’ understanding of issues. Goffman’s work is heavily influenced by Kenneth Boulding’s concept of *image* (Gitlin, 1980).

The references to framing and representation in the research of online coverage of the ‘queercide’ issue were essentially based on the works of Gitlin (1980), Claes De Vreese (2000), and Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman (2007), as these offered the most descriptive work relevant to the research. Of particular interest to this research is De Vreese’s (2000) study on how the European media reported on the introduction of the *Euro* as a currency in 1999 by distinguishing between issue-specific news frames and generic news frames. Issue-specific news frames concentrated on topics and events. Based on their study that was conducted seven years later, Chong and Druckman (2007) describe how frames can be classified as weak or strong. Strong frames are considered more persuasive, while weak frames are generally less influential. In the current research, frames (or themes) were identified in the headings of online news and this research explored their potential to create interest and salience, or to appear as opaque and myopic.

### 2.1.1 Key contributors and what they contributed to the study

When Gregory Bateson first bounded a set of interrelated themes and ideas as a form of metacommunication in his work *Steps to an ecology of mind: Collected essays in anthropology, psychology and epistemology* in 1972, he described the angles media use to create narration. Ervin Goffman, in his 1974 article *Frame analysis*, utilised Bateson's (1972) description of frames to expand on media narratives by identifying 'natural frames'. Such frames, he argued, are supported in formalism and explain how texts as events occur. Goffman separates 'natural frames' from 'social frameworks' and describes texts as opaque where content is constructed through socially driven occurrences (Oso, 2017). Furthermore, social frameworks distinguish events as being socially orientated occurrences due to the objectives and manipulations of others (Creedon, 2018). In lieu of 'queercide', this would describe the socio-cultural environment as a precursor of how reports are considered and executed.

Robert Entman's (1991) article, *Framing US coverage of international news: Contrast in narratives of KAL and Iran*, proposes that reporters use five frames of news: (i) **human interest** (that grounds those afflicted with faces or emotional angles to the presentation of an issue), (ii) **conflict** (between countries, institutions and individuals), (iii) **morality** (which refers to principles regarding right and wrong or good and evil behaviour), (iv) **attribution of responsibility** (which refers to presenting an issue in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or resolving the issue to the government or to a group or even an individual), and finally (v) **economic consequences** (which is a concept that refers to profits and losses for individuals, institutions and countries) (De Wet, 2017: 82). Entman (2006) further proposes that framing involves two basic elements of salience and selection. For instance, when an issue such as 'queercide' is reported on, the media select an aspect of the perceived reality to make the issue more salient in a communication text such as an online report.

Susan Fiske and Shelley Taylor (1991) explain how human beings are *cognitive misers* who utilise frames to process information rather than investigate an issue to uncover the truth about it. This suggests that online readers are susceptible to becoming consumers and distributors of false information rather than critical readers or consumers. Vincent Price and David Tewksbury (1997, cited in Zelizer, 2004: 128) describe framing and representation as "the ability of media reports to alter the kinds of mental routes people use in forming their opinions and ultimately belief systems". Entman (1993, cited in Zelizer, 2004: 141) also claims that "to frame is to select some aspect of a perceived reality and make [it] more salient...these frames create mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information." Expanding on this concept, Linda Venter (2007) explains that frames used in [online] reports are the interpretive and ideological clusters that are the platforms from which reporters write about an issue. Moreover, these platforms also influence the contextualisation of news reports within a specific framework. In other words, online media writers may opt to report on an issue

in a certain way. This may result in audiences being subjected to the ways in which media writers *choose* to report on an issue and they thus imbibe this influence that insinuates similar perceptions of the issue into their consciousness. Against this background, the current research identified themes such as ‘elements of quality in online reports’ and ‘narratives used in online reports referring to efficacy’ to support the investigation into the way in which selected online reports framed and represented the issue of ‘queercide’.

An assumption of the Framing Theory is that frames are ideas linked together to build a narrative over time among consumers of media texts (Bateson, 1972). For example, readers of a report on ‘queercide’ that includes pejorative nouns throughout the article will, depending on their social, religious, political and personal ascriptions, assimilate the negative framing of lesbians in their perceptual understanding of gay women. Then, if such a thematic approach to lesbians persists, the reader will form a central belief about them. Contemporary contributors to the Framing Theory such as Dmitry Epstein, Merrill Roth and Eric Baumer (2017) added linguistic frames for online writing of ‘security’ as well as ‘privacy policy’ as parameters. Although their contributions are significant to our contemporary understanding and utility of the Framing and Representation Theory, they were tangential to this research of frames and when reporting on ‘queercide’ as an LGBTIQ issue. Therefore, the Framing Theory by Bateson (1972), with contemporary contributions by Epstein, Roth and Baumer (2017), helped create a structure to understand the themes embedded in online reports on lesbian murder cases. As they were underpinned by these theories, the study findings will thus contribute to the existing body of knowledge concerning how online reporters shape gender-based violence in their news articles. The study uncovered noteworthy trends in the framing of lesbian victims and ‘queercide’ in news narratives and highlighted discrepancies between online journalism and online report writing by non-journalists. However, determining whether these reports presented political, economic or even online security and privacy issues was beyond the scope of the study.

For the purpose of this research, the Framing and Representation Theory refers to the framing process in media effects and not the causal effects of media texts on the audience. Dietram Scheufele (1999: 105-106) explains framing as follows:

“Framing occurs through three stages: an input, process and finally output stage. In the input stage the audience and media do not represent the issue as yet; however, there are pre-existing tensions that would influence their approach to the issue. For the media there are organisational pressures, such as a need to increase circulation or attract more advertisers, ideologies, other elites and the publication’s codes of practice. For the audience, the input stage could include their existing or established frames such as a bias against the issue, personal beliefs, values and attitudes. Being confronted with the issue, the media enters the process of frame building and frame selling which, at the outcome stage, would result in media

frames, while the audience is affected by the process in terms of attributes of responsibility and behaviours.”

This research did not explore the outcomes of the selected media reports on its audiences as it particularly explored and described media platforms’ approach to framing the issue of ‘queercide’.

### 2.1.2 Criticisms of the Framing and Representation Theory

Limitations of the Framing and Representation Theory pertaining to the research was that it mostly refers to worded text and merely alludes to other compository elements, whereas this research also endeavoured to extend that application to photos that were used in the online reports that were analysed as well should the selection framework allow for this inclusion. Also, there is a break in knowledge of frames used when reporting on the lesbian murders as ‘queercide’. In this sense, the theory seems to be most effective for the constructivist rather than the cognitive and critical paradigms (Hertog & McLeod, 2003). To bridge the limitations in knowledge on frames and representation as well as to identify the areas where the Framing and Representation Theory did not address the research problem, the works of Dietram Scheufele (1999), Werner Severin and James Tankard (2003), and Todd Gitlin’s *An application for Framing Theory* (2017) were also consulted. Scheufele (1999: 103) describes how “*frame building, frame setting, individual level processing of frames and a feedback loop from audiences to journalists*” may be used to interrogate how reporters present information in their reports, while this research also interrogated Tankard’s (2001) view of framing and representation as a multidimensional concept that provides an alternative to measuring media content. Tankard (2003: 101) recognises that “frames hold the power to exclude voices, such as those supporting LGBTIQ issues, and downplay their arguments”, thereby proposing that the media’s **tone, length of reports, references** as well as any other ideological identifiers may be used to investigate the frames used in media reports. Here, a frame is only useful if it determines whether audiences notice, understand and remember an issue, such as a photograph of the victim of ‘queercide’ that emphasises the LGBTIQ issue instead of using irrelevant or misleading ‘stock’ images. For example, in the article *Another Khayelitsha woman murdered, dumped in communal toilet*, Dolley (2016) argues that the photograph is a stock image of the SAPS insignia which does not provide any relevant or additional information to the content of the article other than the article mentioning that the police found the body.

Another criticism of the Framing and Representation Theory is that it is a “fractured paradigm”. What this alludes to is that other structures such as ‘schema’, ‘scripts’ and ‘themes’ may fulfil many of the same functions as frames (Zelizer, 2004). Barbie Zeliser (2004) also explains that Framing and Representation performs a second-level agenda setting in linking a theory, method or neither. For the purpose of this research, this research addressed these criticisms applying the Framing and

Representation Theory as an important pathway for thinking about language use and the ability to identify themes through categories and codes. This was done to highlight the use of language in news reporting as a communications discipline in which language is not necessarily an obvious target of analysis.

To explore how frames were used by the media to create a narrative of an issue in support of a normative ideology in newspapers, Jesper Falkheimer (2015) analysed 924 articles found in two of Norway's major newspapers following the first two weeks after the terrorist attack in Oslo, Utöya, which resulted in the killing of 77 mainly young people on 22 July 2011. The issue Falkheimer investigated was whether newspapers favoured or counteracted the propaganda espoused by 'the terrorist'. He found that coverage of the attacks was descriptive and focused on the perpetrator as an individual who was humanised and presented in a way that elicited empathy. It was also found that newspapers gave the terrorist political exposure without analysing the reasons for and the consequences of his actions on a socio-political level. This, Falkheimer argues, reveals how reporter bias influences the factual representation of information. The research also concluded that the news framing function depoliticised the terror attack by reporting on the attack as an action that was conducted by a lone, mentally unstable individual and not as a politically motivated terrorist linked to right-wing extremism (Falkheimer, 2015). The findings of Falkheimer's (2015) research contributed significantly to direct this research on how selected online reports of 'queercide' could have affirmed the idea that media reports might frame an issue according to available information as well as reporter bias. It also affirmed that the manner in which online media frame and represent LGBTIQ issues focusing on 'queercide' needed to be investigated and explained to uncover underlying power relationships. Frames have indeed become a valuable parameter for discussing a particular event that is reported online because they focus on what will be discussed, how it will be presented, and even how it will not be represented (Altheide, 1997) after the event. An example of the outcomes of appropriate framing may be that 'queercide' will be treated and viewed as a public health and social awareness issue rather than a criminal justice or moral and ethical issue.

The manner in which frames and representations emerge from thematic discourse analysis was the focus of a study on how newspaper columnists framed Kenyan politics in the post-2007 election violence in that country. The attribution of responsibility frame was used to examine which one of the Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, or President Mwai Kibaki was to blame for the poverty, hunger and war experienced in Kenya. The focus of the study was to look at whether the two leaders were framed positively or negatively. The 90 opinion columns that were analysed within an 18-month period showed that the conflict frame was the most prevalent, followed by the international interest, attribution of responsibility, economic consequences and human-interest frames. More blame was directed at Kibaki and, as a result, "...he was framed more negatively than Odinga" (Ireru, 2015: 13-14).

Another study using both agenda-setting and framing was by Sung-Yeon Park, Xiaoqun Zhang and Kyle Holody (2012: 16) who examined the 2007 *Virginia Tech* and *Columbine* shootings. The study revealed insights that also applied to the agenda-setting and framing lens employed in this research in analysing 'queercide' in the media reports analysed. In the former study, agenda-setting revealed that where race was prominently featured in reports on the *Virginia Tech* shootings, it was almost completely absent from the *Columbine* shooting articles. Framing analysis discovered that "the media framed *Virginia Tech* shootings around the perpetrator's race and generalised criminal culpability to his ethnic description. Ethnic and racial references were also regularly displayed in prominent positions" (Park, Zhang & Holody, 2012: 21-22). A similar hypothesis may be used to investigate reports on the murders of Caucasian lesbian victims compared to those of Black lesbian victims. The current research included a case study involving a White lesbians couple as it was deemed important to gauge how the media dealt with the issue by determining which elite frames dominated the coverage of 'queercide' involving aspects of moral, ethical, political and religious contention (Martin & Oshagen, 1997; Hertog & McCleod, 2003) as the latter tend to sustain the major institutions of society. For example, if online media promote a religious frame on an issue, it will highlight religious institutions' perspectives on the issue of 'queercide'. In South Africa, even though the Constitution protects the rights of gay women, their lived experience is suppressive and often motivated by conservative religious views (Smith, 2017). Thus, by selective determination, online media as *information processors* often allow some frames to emerge at the expense of others, and this supports the status quo through dominant frames. The hegemonic source selection of media also tends to be limited, which restricts the scope of information on an issue like 'queercide', thereby affecting the credibility of reports (D'Angelo, 2002).

This research needed to further understand the possible framing function of the media to create an 'othering' perspective when it comes to 'queercide' and its relationship with LGBTIQ discourse. This was deemed important as such discourse involves possible power relationships that in turn motivate how the issue is reported on while also extending the influence of the Framing and Representation Theory when photographs are included. With this goal in mind, a journal article by Athanasia Batziou (2011) that explores the photojournalistic practices of framing immigrants as 'others' in newspapers in Spain and Greece was consulted. Batziou (2011) explains how photographs are capable of transmitting ideologically rich messages in subtle ways and driving perception and interpretation of news. Batziou (2011) drew on the Framing and Representation Theory and content analysis to focus on images as texts loaded with socio-cultural meaning. Her findings revealed that certain techniques had been used to frame immigrants as 'others'; for example, they were depicted in groups of people who looked different when juxtaposed to people from the local population around them. She explains that the practice of creating a symbol of 'otherness' assigned to immigrants not only reflects the dominant ideology of their 'otherness' in local societies, but that it also further confirms, fixes and consequently eternalises the perception of them as outsiders that cannot be incorporated into the local society (Batziou, 2011). What

was significantly utilised from Batziou's (2011) study was the suggestion that the photographs used in the reports on 'queercide' could either have been used to 'other' the victims by including irrelevant, inappropriate or even incorrect details in the photographs used, or they could have been used to create a sense of empathy by including relevant, unique and emotive images of the victim(s) and their surroundings.

### **2.1.3 Relevance of the Framing and Representation Theory to the research**

As was discussed above, the Framing and Representation Theory is closely related to the Agenda Setting theory as it assumes that *angles* are used in a news story on a particular issue to influence the audience. Venter (2007) explains that certain angles used in ideological and interpretive frameworks and the contextualisation of news reports within a specific framework such as a politically oppressive country would make it difficult for a free media to exist. This means that the media may choose to report on an issue in a certain way which could result in audiences who are confronted by the ways in which the media choose to report on an issue will adopt similar perceptions of that issue. Having said that, it should be noted that the effect or impact of media on audiences was beyond the scope of the current study. However, this limitation is addressed in the recommendations section. The research rather focused on a description of framing and representation and frame building as I investigated which frames were created and adopted by journalists (Chong & Druckheim, 2007). In this context the study addressed criticisms of media effects on passive audiences by excluding frame setting – that is, the study excluded how frames *influence* audiences but explored how media *build* an issue such as 'queercide'.

Stuart Hall (2013), a theorist in the culturalism perspective, describes many key concepts used in research such as *representation*, which is defined as “a process whereby items [that is, an issue such as 'queercide'], people and events are arbitrarily correlated with a set of mental representations either through central or peripheral cognition; therefore *how language* – through words, phrases and sentences – is used to encode a message and how this becomes a system of how they [people] are represented” (Hall, 2013: 61). Even though Hall (2013: 64) refers to why culture is sometimes defined in terms of “shared meaning or shared conceptual maps”, it was relevant to the research aim to explore and describe the angles used in online reports of 'queercide'. The work of Hall closely relates to that of Ferdinand De Saussure, Emile Durkheim and Jean Baudrillard, but an overview of their work will be tangential to the focus of this study. However, the work of Roland Barthes (1972: 37) entitled *Mythologies* does describe how “everything that is perceived is myth”, which echoes the same ideas by Michel Foucault in *The history of sexuality* (1976), claiming that sexuality is formulated and sustained through discourse which is fluid and changes over time. An example could be that because of the legislative acknowledgement of the rights of lesbians, gay women are then being targeted more vigorously. This

point was relevant to the study although it did not significantly support the research's endeavours to answer the research objectives. Therefore, only an introduction to their work is provided.

According to Zelizer (2004: 30), "framing research focusses on story presentation as a way of explaining the news and is often discussed in conjunction with agenda setting and priming". This idea is supported by Entman (2006), who describes framing as the selection of certain aspects of a perceived reality and how it makes people, events or issues more salient in a report in such a way as to promote causal interpretation, problem definition, moral evaluation and also treatment recommendation of an issue. Goffman (1974) notes that frame analysis for a qualitative investigation (that excludes holistic, reductionist and computer-assisted attempts) involves inductive frame construction analysing a small number of reports. This allows for a qualitative content analysis which enables a context-sensitive and comprehensive exploration and description of 'queercide' presentation in online reports.

Framing and representation theory academics such as Goffman (1974) and Entman (2006) may have been influenced by politics and political communication (Semujju, 2013); however, this theory has been effectively applied to social issues such as HIV and AIDS programmes (Kiwunika-Tondo, Albana & Cobb-Payton, 2012) as well as racial and LGBTIQ issues (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Li & Lui, 2010; Strand, 2012), thereby confirming the relevance of the assumptions posited by the theory in exploring the research topic. The framing and representation theoretical framework, according to Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman (2007), posits that there is no single perspective to an issue as each perspective has an implication for a variety of considerations and values. How 'queercide' is framed will therefore have a bearing on how it is understood, evaluated and judged. Entman (1993: 52) claims that, "to select some aspects of a perceived reality, makes them more salient than others". William G. Jacoby (2000) supports this idea by observing that politicians highlight certain features of a policy when they want to impact the relationship it would have on decisive values so that voters will be mobilised to back the policy. Similarly, when online reporters of LGBTIQ issues highlight certain aspects of the issue, they invoke "a frame of communication" (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 106). Therefore, frames become useful for making sense of LGBTIQ issues and they help readers to build expectations, organize their memories, motivate their actions, and interpret feedback (Goffman, 1974; Lemert & Branaman, 1997; Snow, 2001).

However, although the Framing and Representation Theory enabled robust investigation into the frames used when reporting on 'queercide' and to determine how this LGBTIQ issue was represented in online reports, it did not assist the research in gaining insight into how or why these issues were selected to present to readers in the first place. Apart from LGBTIQ advocacy groups and activists, the question of relevance to the heteronormative majority persists. In the framing of events according to reporters' understanding of the will of the people, Gitlin (1991, in Baran & Davis, 2015: 44) also describes how



writers of news stories, in their selection of topics, have become “cognoscenti of their own bamboozlement”.

## 2.2 Newsworthiness

Gaye Tuchman (1978: 29) defines news as “public accounts of selected events reported on by professionals according to institutional methods, conditions and limitations with a profit-making motive aimed at everyone, but no one in particular”. This definition by Tuchman (1978) links to Goffman’s (1974) understanding of framing analysis when explaining that media use a subjective reflection on reality through the use of deterministic frames. Research on reports by both professional and lay writers using a decentralised economic model has argued against this popular, traditionalist definition. The website *mediacollege.com* explains that news is “any newsworthy information about recent events or happenings, especially as reported by news media” (Goosen, 2019: 4). This proposes that news is news because the media confer it as such. Whether the above statements are axiomatic or not, they still provide some insights into the agenda setting ability of the media. Therefore, in juxtaposition to the perspectives of online journalism, ‘queericide’ can be studied to better understand the frames that reporters of news (not necessarily journalists) use when they write about LGBTIQ issues. This suggests that the concept of the newsworthiness of the reports needs to be investigated to establish what motivated these writers to report on the specific cases in the manner that they did.

However, understanding the motivations of online reporters is problematic as there is currently a large gap in knowledge concerning what constitutes a ‘good’ report about murders involving lesbian victims (Lake, 2014: 76) and its significance in terms of quality online reporting. But, to understand what is unknown, what *is known* needs to be clarified. To address this dilemma, this research commenced the theoretical review for this thesis with the works of Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965) on news values in their work, *What is news?* Another influential analyst of news values that was considered was Stuart Hall (Jewkes, 2004). In *The determination of news photographs* (Cohen & Young, 1981), Hall (1973) specifically distinguishes between ‘formal’ news values – broadly the approach analysed by Galtung and Ruge – and ‘ideological’ news values. The news values espoused by Hall (1973: 43) are “*recency, linkage and newsworthiness of event or person*”. These values became an extension to those introduced by Galtung and Ruge who developed their news values after observations of radio broadcasts and conflicts in newspapers from an academic perspective. To integrate the initial news values developed by way of additions and criticisms to adapt their view for an online media environment, the works of Tony Harcup and Deirdre O’Neill’s *What is news?: Galtung and Ruge revisited* (2010) and Nico Meissner’s article *50 years on: Galtung and Ruge’s news value factors revisited in online audience building for independent films* (2015) were consulted. Another important theorist surrounding newsworthiness was Tuchman (1978) who addresses social criticisms in light of

the Social Responsibility Theory (Westerståhl, 1983; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1984). Therefore, to gain an understanding of news values and why journalists and others report on cases and write about issues, and to consider how they report on those issues, helped to contextualise the nuance of the research problem. Moreover, Anthony Collins and Monique James' (2011) *Media constructions on violent crime* as well as Yvonne Jewkes' (2004) *Media and crime: key approaches to criminology* formed the epistemological framework within which newsworthiness was described as a concept and explored in this study.

### 2.2.1 Key contributors and their contributions

To discern between those news events that are deemed noteworthy by the media and those that will fail to generate interest from the media, Galtung and Ruge (1965) describe fourteen values (or characteristics) that a news event must demonstrate before it will receive attention from the media. These values are the following:

- *Frequency*: which refers to events that occur suddenly and fit well with the news organisation's schedule;
- *Familiarity*: which deals with people or places close to the audience's home;
- *Negativity*: which refers to bad news being more newsworthy than good news;
- *Unexpectedness*: where an event is out of the ordinary;
- *Unambiguity*: which refers to events whose implications are clear and make for better copy than those that are open to more than one interpretation. It is this value of 'unambiguity' that evoked some disagreement from other scholars. In their critical review of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) thesis, Paul Brighton and Dennis Foy (2007) argue that 'clarity' is undefined and could cause minority groups to become excluded due to uncertainty and anxiety.
- *Personalisation*: where events considered as 'human interest' will receive more audience attention than those that involve inanimate objects;
- *Meaningfulness*: which relates to the sense of empathic identification the audience has with the topic;
- *Cultural approximation*: stories involving people who look, work, act and speak the same will receive more coverage than those concerned with people who are different. This news value might be of more importance if the research concerned the agenda setting function of online media. However, for the current research, the cultural approximation value will merely serve as a *raison d'être* of the report.
- *Elite nations*: this term refers to events and stories concerned with global powers and news flowing from central areas;
- *Elite persons*: events or stories concerned with the rich, famous, powerful and infamous;

- *Conflict*: where the opposition of forces or people results in a dramatic effect;
- *Consonance*: where the stories that fit with media expectations receive more coverage than those that defy them;
- *Continuity*: which refers to an event that is already in the news; and
- *Composition*: where events must compete with one another for space in the media. For example, it refers to the need to establish a balance between sport, entertainment and hard news stories (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

Based these news values journalists, academics and theorists have contributed other principles and thus created an evolving understanding of why news media select certain events, people and stories to report on. These academics include Phillip Schlesinger's (1987) article that proposes *time constraints*, which refers to the need for traditional news media such as radio, daily newspapers and televised news reports to adhere to strict deadlines as they have a short production cycle. Another value or characteristic *logistics*, which is the ability to deploy and control production and reporting staff and ensure the functionality of technical resources that can determine whether a story is covered.

Another contributor to news values is Allan Bell (1991: 27) who, in his *The language of news media*, adds the following values:

- *Competition*: which refers to commercial or professional competition between media that may lead reporters to endorse the news value given to a story by a rival news agency;
- *Co-optation*: which refers to a story that is only marginally newsworthy in its own right, but may be covered if it is related to a major running story;
- *Prefabrication*: where an event that is marginal in news terms may be written ahead of a much more newsworthy story;
- *Predictability*: which is similar to 'clarity', where an event is more likely to be covered if it has been pre-scheduled; and
- *Data*: where the news media need to back up all of their stories with data in order to remain relevant and reliable.

Even though the list of news values changes and evolves with the dereliction of certain news media, such as the diminishing circulation of daily newspapers (Wijesiri, 2019), there is an increase in rolling news media such as online news platforms (Byerly, 2018). However, the foundation for news selection criteria has remained relatively entrenched in the works of Galtung and Ruge in the Twentieth Century (Brighton & Foy, 2007). In *News values*, Brighton and Foy (2007) critically deconstruct the epistemological and axiological assumptions of Galtung and Ruge (1965) to identify how their work may contribute to more contemporary investigations. According to Brighton and Foy (2007), previous

accounts of news values tend to be of two kinds. The first examines news stories from the perspective of the journalist working in the industry, while the second attempts to take a broader approach by incorporating areas such as ideology, cultural conditioning, technological determinism, and others. Brighton and Foy (2007) also argue that a third approach is needed in conjunction with these two existing schools of thought because of changes within individual media – online media platforms allow for different opportunities and restrictions to those of print media – and because of “a shift in the nature of the relationships between reporters and consumers of news, especially online”.

Returning to the purpose of Newsworthiness, Galtung and Ruge (1965) hypothesise that it is important to uncover the selection of news items rooted in social science studies rather than in the intrinsic value of the event as the determinant of news. As a result, Newsworthiness has a decidedly Marxist principle (Brighton & Foy, 2007). Brighton and Foy (2007) also criticise the methodological assumptions of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) work as they argue that their thesis resulted from observations of a narrow range of newspaper publications in Norway while growing online news consumption and global influences necessitate major revisions and a broader observational scope. Wijsiri (2019) argues that there is a growing expectation that newspapers will develop their websites to become the first point of reference where news will go straight to the website, which has a global implication as it is instantly accessible to readers without them having to wait for the next edition of the newspaper.

Another key contributor to the discussions about the future of news reporting is Dietmar Schantin (2017) who explains that it is not sufficient to run the same content in both editions – or Wijsiri (2019) predicting that online content will replace that of traditional media – as there is an economic imperative to generate a workable model and failure to do so will result in falling circulation and eventually the failure of the entire publication. Here, in line with the philosophy of Michel Foucault, Brighton and Foy (2007) note that many reporters online do not get paid for their investments of time and effort when writing about LGBTIQ issues when they use outside established news outlets. A key concern regarding funding for these online sites is that they may rely on ‘Likes’ and ‘Clicks’ to attract advertising revenue and that this motivation might result in the representation of sexualities. In an ironic twist, it is the insular nature of web-based media that allows reporting to promote the interests of activist groups. A key question would be whether these advocacy and pressure groups utilise online media as much as news outlets do insofar the reporting on ‘queercide’ is concerned. Online media platforms can provide an easy route to ‘power for minority’ interest groups (Jewkes, 2004) on websites that are endowed with a disproportionate sense of power. The current research, as a critical study, involved an investigation of the phenomenon of narrow interest in amateur web media as a channel for how LGBTIQ interests are framed. Another concern was that the LGBTIQ community might feel the need to bypass established channels of paid media and democratic process in what could be described as the *Fifth Estate*.

Based on the critical review of Brighton and Foy's (2007) work, it is argued that, in order for Galtung and Ruge (1965) – and more contemporary theorists of Newsworthiness – to become more open and valid for news in the Twenty-First Century and in order to add heuristic value to the study of online reports on 'queericide', the works of Jewkes (2004) and Harcup and O'Neil (2010) need to be considered. Of these works, some "...are more concerned with the subjects of, and actors within, the story, such as 'power élite' and 'celebrity', while others are more conceptual, such as 'relevance', and yet others are accounts of media practice, including 'follow-ups' and 'media agenda'" (Harcup & O'Neil, 2010: 75). For these reasons the research proposes that authors such as Collins and James (2011), Meissner (2015) and Grundlingh (2017) have to be involved in the pursuit of moving Newsworthiness into the Twenty-First Century.

### **2.2.2 Important criticisms of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) Newsworthiness as a Twenty-First Century paradigm shift**

Jewkes (2004) contributed *threshold, predictability, simplification, individualism, risk, and sex* as news values that contribute to the understanding of Newsworthiness. Considering the influence of sexual orientation and gender on whether an event is newsworthy or not, this research also considered news values also to include *celebrity or high-status persons, proximity, violence or conflict, visual spectacle or graphic imagery, children, and, conservative ideology or political diversion* in this study. This research therefore considered news values that would have a significant bearing in the socio-cultural and religious climates in South Africa to determine whether an event would be selected for publication. Collins and James (2011), in their article entitled *Media construction of violent crimes*, provide a criticism of Jewkes's (2004) news values by stating that media presentations have a powerful influence on the ways in which audiences come to perceive criminal violence as well as the ways in which they experience their own victimisation – both in terms of the victim and the community they belong to. Their exploratory article reviews the news media as an important part of the conceptual framework through which people construct their understandings of crimes such as murder. Therefore, Collins and James (2011) contribute the *description of violence* to Jewkes' (2004) work through conceptualising 'clarity'. Some of the criticisms of Galtung and Ruge's hypothesis, which this research did not explicitly inquire about, include Gert Shultz's (1976, in Westerståhl & Johansson, 1994) addition of *geographical dimensions* and *commercial relations* to news values. These additions refer only to cultural proximity. Another criticism is offered by Harcup and O'Neill (2010) who had put Galtung and Ruge's (1965) widely cited taxonomy of news values to the test in an empirical analysis of news published in three national daily United Kingdom newspapers. They found that, in coding newspapers according to the fourteen values, they were frequently confronted with questions such as: "*What is an ambiguous event?*" and "*Reference to something negative for whom?*". Thus, Harcup and O'Neill (2010) question the subjectivity of researchers when utilising Galtung and Ruge's (1965) factors to

determine the newsworthiness of a report. However, regardless of criticisms of their additivity hypothesis, the work of Galtung and Ruge (1965) is important when a researcher considers the context of *why* or *why not* an online media report was selected. The research therefore needed to consider these questions when exploring reports on ‘queericide’. Harcup and O’Neill’s (2010) study of the printed press also contributed to understanding newsworthiness as they revised and updated some of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news values. Being influenced by the work of Denis MacShane (1979: 46) who “subdivided newsworthiness into categories of *conflict*, *hardship* and *danger to the community* as well as its *unusualness*, *oddity* or *novelty*, they also identified values such as *power elite*, *celebrity*, *entertainment*, *surprise*, *bad news and good news*, *magnitude of the event*, *relevance* – although here it is used in as broad a description as Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) ‘unambiguity’ – *follow-ups*, and *media agenda*. None of these news values needed contextualisation for the purpose of this research, where the mere appearance of these values warranted coding from a qualitative perspective. This is because the research focussed on the motivation of online reporters of a ‘queericide’ event to select, write about and publish the story and not on the particulars of the news values that could emerge from the selected stories. However, the research acknowledge that contemporary authors and scholars have contributed significantly to the philosophical scope of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) Newsworthiness values for Twenty-First Century application.

### 2.2.3 Relevance of Newsworthiness to the current research

Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) work on Newsworthiness created a foundation for the current research as it guided an understanding of why it would be important to look at where online reports on ‘queericide’ were located in online media as frames in themselves. Alteide (1997: 112) notes that “private as well as public concerns have been joined through the advancements made in information technology and mass media frames and that this collapse of symbolic boundaries has produced a collaborative message and views of social reality”. This manner of reporting has been described as post-journalism news media. Du Preez (2013: 46-48) verbalises this as follows:

“During the period of Apartheid the international and underground media romanticised and glorified the political violence experienced in South Africa and it became newsworthy on an international scale. Extrajudicial torture and assassinations by ‘death squads’ such as the *Vlakplaas* unit and the *Third Force* activities fomenting violence between black groupings continued with impunity up until the early 1990s. This violence is still experienced when the African National Congress (ANC) sings its struggle songs. Violent language [that is] still permeating news reports and infiltrates [sic] the minds of South African citizens, coupled with the gross economic and education inequality in South Africa, arguably contributes more to violent crime than poverty does, which leads to anger and frustration.”

In light of the above argument it was deemed important not only to explore the frames used in online news reports on LGBTIQ issues, but also to investigate why such events are, or should be, considered as newsworthy to a South African audience. Both the Framing and Representation Theory and the Newsworthiness theory enabled the research to scrutinise relevant frames, both technical and ideological, that were used in online reports on 'queercide'. This scrutiny also allowed the research to understand why reporters selected these events. However, the research was confronted by the limitations of both these theoretical frameworks as neither considers the nature of gender, gender issues, gender violence, and the ideological and philosophical expositions of the South African context and nor do they provide an opportunity for quality journalistic narration from a LGBTIQ perspective. Therefore, to enhance the theoretical embeddedness of the research sufficiently, the Queer Theory and the Standpoint Theory were also used.

### **2.3 The Queer Theory**

The Queer Theory is a post-structuralist field of critical studies that emerged in the early 1990s from the fields of queer and feminist studies. Italian feminist and film theorist Teresa de Lauretis coined the term Queer Theory in her paper *Eccentric subjects: feminist theory and historical consciousness* for a conference she organised at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1990. It was published in a special issue of *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* based on that conference edited by Butler (1993) who has become the principal progenitor of the theory. Queer Theory developed from a lack of constitutive discourses and examinations of contemporary arguments around sexual identities considered as 'deviant, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and intersexed classifications. Queer Theory includes both queer readings of texts and the theorisation of 'queerness' itself. De Lauretis (1990) wanted to challenge naturalised assumptions about genders, sexualities and desires by critically examining the way in which power works to institutionalise and validate expressions of sexuality and gender as accepted, while stigmatising others (Ruhsam, 2017) in order to make sense of the already deeply entrenched set of what is considered normal (Watson, 2005). Validity of the theory may be found in how online reports on LGBTIQ issues – specifically reports on 'queercide' – are written from generalised angles. The theory problematises rigid gender categories and the oppression of sexuality and gender, which such hegemonic norms justify (Ruhsam, 2017). In what is described by Paul F. Lazerfeld and Robert K. Merton (1948) in *Mass communication, popular taste, and organized social action*, the mass media has an *enforcement of social norms* function, which describes how the mass media may initiate organised social action by highlighting conditions that are at odds with public moralities, but it need not be prematurely assumed that this pattern of trending evolving moralities consist simply to make these deviations more widely known. Therefore, no organised social action is taken with respect to behaviour deviating from a social norm unless there is a public announcement of the deviation. The work of Lazerfeld and Merton (1948) underscores the original idea that mass media

not merely inform the reader of the facts of a case, but when audiences have privately known of any deviations to the norm they will not press for public action. Of course, Lazerfeld and Merton has no research to support their claim of apathetic audiences and their theorising about mass media is dated. However, they do open the door for the argument that the stigmatisation of ‘others’ in writings should be considered and they suggest that codes, such as seminal versus economy of scale, is used in writing to promote information, infotainment and ideological perspectives.

A key works that was perused relevant to this section were the studies and articles published by Jack Halberstam, also known as Judith Halberstam, who contributed to Queer Philosophy debates through her book *Female masculinity* (1998). The research also included *No future* by Lee Edelman (2004), who underwrites Queer Theory. Additional theorists engaged with based on their relevance to Queer Theory included Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1995), José Esteban Muñoz (*Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*) (2009), and Leo Bersani (2015).

### **2.3.1 Relevance of the Queer Theory to the research**

Queer Theory was developed from feminist challenges that expounded the idea that gender is part of the indispensable self. This research also explored gay and lesbian studies that closely examine the socially constructed nature of sexual identities and acts. The works of Foucault and Butler are especially significant as they account for the fact that [lesbianism] is spoken about. They pose guiding questions such as “*Who does the speaking?*”; “*What are the positions and viewpoints from which they speak?*”; “*Which institutions prompt the speaking about it?*” and “*Who [are the people who] store and distribute the things that are said?*” (Callis, 2009: 54). Queer Theory thus related to the research problem and aided in clarifying the construction of the selected online reports of cases of ‘queercide’. It was thus foundational in creating a better understanding of the way in which LGBTIQ issues were reported on by online media and supported the research’s attempts to ascertain the role reporters play in shaping social cognisance of this phenomenon.

It was important to include relevant information from studies that utilised the Queer Theory in reporting on lesbian issues and murders in South Africa to identify exactly what was known and where deficits existed in addressing the research problem. By utilising theoretical key concepts of the Queer Theory, this research was able to construct ‘queercide’, which is a neologism coined by Schumann (2015), as a term with academic implications. The main principle of Queer Theory, according to De Lauretis (1990: 143), is to “disrupt the complacency of lesbian and gay studies” by unpacking the categories of sexuality and identity and by exposing them as social constructions created by heterosexist institutions and not as biological categories (Littlejohn, Oetzel, & Foss, 2017). However, David Halperin (1995: 47) describes the term queer, which was originally meant as a homophobic slur, as “...whatever is at odds



with the legitimate, the dominant and the normal”, thereby also referring to bisexual, transgendered, intersexed as well as non-conforming sexual identities. The assumption in Queer Theory is that definitions and categories of analysis, including the focus on marginalisation and oppression, have to shift from emancipation and civil rights to that of understanding the multiple and fluid gender categories of ‘queer’ as socially constructed concepts originating from the institutions that support those constructions. Moreover, probative questions that emerged from the Queer Theory guided the inquiry of how online reporters used naming conventions, contexts, visuals and even avenues of dissent as quality writing mechanisms to interpret LGBTIQ issues, and lesbian issues in particular. According to De Lauretis (1990), there is a sense that there is a disappearance of lesbians in feminism. There thus appears to be a struggle against the ideological apparatus and socio-economic, cultural and political institutions of women’s oppression that consists of the refusal of the heterosexual contract, not only in the practice of living an authentic sexuality, but also in the practice of knowing.

The initial concept of the Queer Theory is that it consists of the social subject in terms that exceed, are autonomous from, and are other than the categories of gender. The concept ‘lesbian’ is one such term which is difficult to grasp or define when it is excluded from a given conceptual system. For instance, lesbians are not tolerated by the dominant heterosexist conceptual scheme. Proof of this might be the exclusion of ‘queericide’ and ‘corrective rape’ in the lexicon of dictionaries (APA, 2019). Occupying the outside of a conceptual reality is systematically overdetermined with language and tropes designed to keep lesbians in their metaphysical positions, as ‘other’. Therefore, being outside of this conceptual framework may place a sub-cultural group in a position to perceive things that cannot be perceived from within the system; therefore, to disaffiliate or dislocate attention from and to experience a reorientation of that attention as power (De Lauretis, 1990). In the research, this was a limitation of the Queer Theory.

### **2.3.2 Criticism of the Queer Theory**

The way to ground the Queer Theory in less objective epistemic aspirations is through engaging with the critical and contemporary theorists of this theory as well as through a rigorous definition of its limitations. According to Tim Edwards (1998), a criticism of Queer Theory as it relates to the ability to define lesbian issues is that, although Queer Theory celebrates difference, queer politics makes the ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ identity too central. This view is in contrast to the aims of showing that sexual orientation is a mere part of how a person acts and feels (Butler, 1994). The research addressed this criticism by consulting current third-wave feminist scholar Susan Archer Mann’s (2013) work. Her explanation is that Queer Theory utilises *queer* as an umbrella term which includes groups regardless of class, race and gender. Therefore, the research’s intention was to contextualise the idea of *queer* studies in a contemporary setting and to introduce the Queer Theory as a foundation for more fully understanding the role online media play in framing how and why lesbians are being targeted as murder victims not

only as an explanation of report content, but also from a disruptive feminist narration. Through the utility of the Queer Theory, this research was able to articulate the gaps in knowledge pertaining to the research problem. The heuristic value of the Queer Theory is that it contributes to post-structuralist ideology of gender to such an extent that it decentralises institutional heterosexism, thereby ending judgement of queer behaviour, queer sexual identity, queer reality, and LGBTIQ issues such as 'queercide'.

In contextualising LGBTIQ issues – and lesbian murders in particular – this research found that it had often been argued that a lack of education could lead to violence against LGBTIQ people, especially as categories such as heterosexual, gay, lesbian and bisexual had been developed largely in the late Nineteenth Century. The Social Dominance Theory by Pratto and Stewart (2011) describes how societies maintain their group-based dominance – such as heteronormative understandings of LGBTIQ issues – and how an understanding of this type of dominance can be enhanced by the Queer Theory. The axiological assumption of the Social Dominance Theory values hierarchies in nearly all stable societies that can be considered group-based. In such groups one social grouping, such as heterosexuals, hold disproportionate power and enjoy special privileges, whereas at least one other group has relatively little socio-political power. This is a significant notion in terms of the validity of the Queer Theory and the Standpoint Theory relating to lesbians as a disruptive group to normative gender performativity (Butler, 1993), having a subjective epistemic position and thus view and conceptualise 'queercide' as a way of emancipating and empowering their sub-culture group. However, currently they are subservient because of their lack of power (Sicetcha, 2018) in relation to the dominant heterosexual society in which they live.

As an iconoclast in gender studies, Foucault postulates various arguments in *The history of sexuality* (1976 – 1984) and *The gay science* (2011). These works have influenced contemporary utility of Queer Theory, particularly as expressions of his resistance to identity politics. The rejection of the psychoanalytic concept of objective choice contradicts some more accepted theories of queer identity and thus forms part of the third wave critical studies. In *The history of sexuality* (1976), Foucault considers the formation of power exercised rather than the indulgence thereof and refers to the construction of specific individuals within the broader societal framework. This means that perversions, as 'other' or deviant, become embodied in a new specification of individuals. Thus, the homosexual, according to Foucault (1976), becomes a type of person with a history and a biology rather than a type of act, like the act of sodomy, that is usually associated with heterosexist discourses. Such classifications of natures multiplied first in medicine through rational inquiry and publication and then in laws, such as the legalisation of same sex marriage in South Africa (Daniels, 2018). In *The gay science*, Foucault's (2011) contributions to the understanding of *queer* are further expanded by the explanation that discussions surrounding LGBTIQ communities are again being referred to as overused, worn-out and

overdetermined — for example, terms such as repression and oppressed are used — and these need to be investigated to understand what they mean and how discourses could be made to function in a contemporary socio-political environment within a debate where their discursive angle has changed since Foucault's original assumptions.

Building on the works of Karl Marx and Foucault on post-structuralism of class and sexuality, Judith Butler (1990), in *Gender troubles: Feminism and subversion of identity*, posits that gender is performed based on the values learned from birth through a series of socialisation customs such as dress and talk. Therefore, *gender* is performative and the understanding of gender is socially constructed and grounded in the assumption that gender is based on biological sex. Thus, if a person is born female, she will be feminine, be attracted to men, and be predisposed to behave in accordance to the ideals associated with her sex. According to Butler (1990), although these assumptions about the relationship between sex and gender seem natural, they are not. In her article *Critically queer*, Butler (1993: 25) continues to challenge dogmatic conventions surrounding sex and gender by claiming that "...gender is the repeated stylisation of the body. It is [thus] a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance". Mainstream online media continue to play a significant role in constructing public meanings of LGBTIQ issues through writers' understanding of sex and gender, and these media thus influence reporting frameworks (McKinnon, Gorman-Murray & Dominey, 2017). The work of Butler (1993) made a significant contribution to the research by problematising 'queer' as a definition as well as providing an investigative framework for uncovering ideologies used in online reports on 'queericide'.

In her work *Epistemology of the closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) contributes to Queer Theory debates by reflecting about the 'closet' metaphor that refers to gay men and women living public lives by hiding their sexuality 'in a closet' (GLAAD, 2016). As a regime of regulating comments on gay and lesbian lives, this term seems important to heterosexuals because using it guarantees their dominance. Sedgwick (1990) claims that the regime of "closet" or the "open secret" has been basic to the lesbian and gay reality even after the germination of the Gay Rights movement of *Stonewall* in 1969. This regime, with its constraining limitations about public and private, privacy and disclosure, knowledge and ignorance, has shaped the way in which many questions about epistemology and values are comprehended in Western society as a whole, and in South Africa in particular. It is significant to understand Sedgwick's (1990) view of the origin of Queer Theory as it highlights the frustrations experienced by the LGBTIQ academic community on the staleness of homosexual discourses. Berlant and Warner (1995) further belaboured the issue of 'queer' to contribute to Queer Theory's utility for journalism. For instance, in their article *Guest column: What does Queer Theory teach us about X?*, Berlant and Warner (1995) argue that this theory has incited a vast labour of metacommentary in sections of journals, anthologies and omnibus reviews and even appear as dictionary entries. Though

hesitant to proclaim “queer theory as a thing”, Bertland and Warner (1995: 345) wonder whether “queer commentary” might not more accurately describe phenomena linked to the theory intended as academic objects; that is, that the “meta-discourse of queer theory” has vital precedents and collaborations in aesthetic genres and journalism and that it is multi-disciplinary. Although Berlant and Warner’s (1995) article can be seen as a criticism of Queer Theory, their contribution to the theory’s utility in discourses around journalism and its validity to queer issues such as ‘queercide’ ingratiate it. However, Berlant and Warner’s (1995) use of the term ‘queer’ still remains an umbrella term for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. Halberstam (1998), on the other hand, conceptualises Queer Theory from a transgender and lesbian perspective in the book *Female masculinity*. Halberstam (1998) discusses biological male masculinity and posits that female masculinity has offered an alternative to it since the Eighteenth Century. Through textual readings as well as empirical research, Halberstam (1998: 72) uncovers female masculinities while at the same time arguing for a “more nuanced understanding of gender categories that would incorporate rather than pathologise *queer* categories”. Halberstam (1998) also explores issues of transsexuality among *transgender dykes*, which are lesbians who can pass as men, or female-to-male transsexuals that are often labelled as “lesbian”, and the phenomenon of male impersonators. In *Female masculinity*, Halberstam (1998) signals a new understanding of masculine identities and behaviour by demonstrating that female masculinity is not a challenge of virility, but a performativity of hybrid and minority genders, which is a view that was of significant support to the qualitative aspects of this research, particularly in terms of how codes would be administered to online texts.

One of the first full texts dedicated to the principles and assumptions concerning ethics espoused in Queer Theory is Edelman’s (2004) *No future*, wherein the LGBTIQ community is urged to abandon the stance of accommodation to heteronormativity and rather accede to being figures of disruption. Also significant to this research was Edelman’s (2004) description of ‘queer’ as powerful, not power abdicating, and a representation that acquiesces to the idea that being homosexual imbue its members as somehow “less than”. As an extension of Edelman’s (2004) call for ideological reform and the reconceptualisation of *queer*, the seminal work of Muñoz (2009) cannot be excluded. Queer Theory validates and even contributes to Marxism in its fundamental interpretation to explain the disconnect between the lived experiences of those who are oppressed and utopia. Through his examination of *queer* aesthetics from dance and cinema, building on the works of Berlant and Warner (1995), and consultations with and inclusion of diverse thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Ernst Bloch, Muñoz (2009: 40) challenges, in *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity*, the dominant cultural logistics of heterosexuality and capitalism to imagine a utopia where there is “something missing”. From this challenge, the assumption was made that online reports may be perceived as an opportunity to become deconstructivist; that they are interrupters of sorts when better understood.

In light of the above expositions of Queer Theory, the Meaning Theory of Media Portrayal could also be a viable theoretical framework to use when investigating how online media play a role in shaping and influencing ideas about groups of people such as the LGBTIQ community. It is such groups who produce those ideas and distribute them as they may have vested interest to do so. However, the work of Bersani (2015) legitimises Queer Theory as the assumption is made that *queer* angles are presented in media to have disruptive properties in the understanding of gender and its significance for reporting in a libertarian approach to LGBTIQ issues. The Meaning Theory of Media Portrayal explains that “communication is a tool that is used to process meaning, where an individual create, interpret and retain [all sic] a sense of meaning through the media content and [where] meaning resides within people who relate it to media content” (DeFleur, Kearney & Plax, 1993: 85-86).

Bersani (2015) specifically explains how the “something missing” referred to by Muñoz (2009) could somehow be addressed through reference to *desire*. In the chapter entitled *Father knows best* from *Thoughts and things*, Bersani (2015) quotes Foucault and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in a pre-Freudian explanation of desire. According to Bersani (2015), if ‘otherness’ is somehow reduced to difference, then the paranoid suspicion or moral panic caused by how *queer* is presented in media could be a logical strategy of defence, because the desire to know the other is inseparable from the need to master the other. Therefore, the desire for mastery becomes a motivator to know the other. However, the key question Bersani (2015) poses is, *What does it mean to know another human being – to truly empathise in a situation that extends an ethnorelativistic desire to know the other?* According to Bersani’s (2015) readings of Foucault, he understands that to know the other is to know the other’s desire. For Bersani (2015) the most unique part of another person’s individuality is what is desired. In other words, desire is human only if a person desires not the other’s body, but the desire of the other. Therefore, in reporting on LGBTIQ issues, the utopian achievement of the report would be to affect perfect understanding of a *queer* person; thus, what are the ideological frames used in online reports on ‘queericide’ to achieve or diverge from this ideal? Of course, perfect understanding is impossible – as Dean C. Barnlund’s (1962) Transactional Model shows – because when participants of the communication process communicate, they communicate with everything that they are, which is non-identical. Thus Queer Theory is heavily criticised for its idealist views of LGBTIQ theorising. Peter Sanders (2017), Chief Executive Officer of the Forum of Christian Leaders, echoes in a YouTube video the reservations that Berlant and Warner (1995) have regarding Queer Theory by proclaiming his understanding of Queer Theory to be that people create their own identity from what they feel and reject regarding any inclusion of biology. Queer Theory echoes Freire’s (1970) philosophy that only the *oppressed* have the subjective epistemic privilege to emancipate themselves and that true revolution can only be led by the singular vision of a marginalised group. In stark contrast with the arguments posed by Butler (1990), Queer Theory therefore has limitations in understanding the standpoint of LGBTIQ individuals as part of ‘queer commentary’ in text.

## 2.4 The Standpoint Theory

Standpoint Theory emerged as a feminist epistemological, post-modern method for analysing inter-subjective discourses after the criticisms of standard objectivity and value neutrality that was the theme of the 1970s Women's Rights Movement in the United States of America (Butler, 1993). The three main assumptions of this theory are: (1) knowledge is socially situated, (2) marginalised groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible to be aware of subjective realities, and (3) when conducting research, begin with the lives of the marginalised. For this section, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1965) will support ideas of the position of the oppressed as empowerment in the process of their own emancipation. Important theorists consulted include George Willhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807), Karl Marx (in Ellis & Fopp, 2001), Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Dorothy Smith (2005), political philosophers Nancy Hartsock (1998) and Alison Jagger (2015), and Sharon Crasnow (2006). Hegel (1807: 58), in *The phenomenology of spirit*, argues that:

“The fear of truth may conceal itself from itself and from others behind the pretence that it is precisely the ardent zeal for truth which makes it so difficult, and indeed impossible, to find any truth other than vanity's own truth of being always still cleverer than any thought that one gets either from oneself or from others.”

In other words, those reporting on the events in society that they deem newsworthy and the truth have a passion that drives their reading, their interviewing, their writing and their presentation – but their unique understanding of those events, however, prevent them from knowing. As a reference to the ontological assumption of Standpoint Theory, Hegel (1807) presents a philosophy, that is later echoed by Freire (1965), in which he states that the only foundation of revolution should originate from the perspective and efforts of those who are being marginalised. In the research, this translated into the ideological frames used for the LGBTIQ community; for instance, Black lesbians victimised and institutionally voiceless and the trauma of families and friends who are affected by violence and ‘queercide’.

In *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*, Smith (1987) argues that individuals are not able to perceive reality in any other capacity than their given standpoint. By making this claim, Smith (1987: 28-29) states that: “(1) No one can have complete, objective knowledge, (2) individuals must not take the standpoint from which they speak for granted, and (3) no two people have exactly the same standpoint”. Individuals, including reporters of ‘queercide’, must recognise this, be reflexive about it, and problematise it. “Our situated, everyday experiences should serve as a ‘point of entry’ of investigation” (Smith 2005: 10). The goal of Smith's (1987: 36) feminist sociology is to “explicitly reformulate sociological theory by fully accounting for the standpoint of gender and its effects on experiences of reality”. Through this criticism of objectified knowledge and its use in the management

of institutional life, Smith (2005: 21) suggests that “the categories and conceptual frameworks of administration are inattentive to the actual circumstances of the diverse lives people, such as LGBTIQ members, live in contemporary societies”. In his book *Institutional ethnographic*, Smith (2005: 57-58) extensively refers to Marxism and claims that “studies should contribute to a social justice agenda by making knowledge from the standpoints of people’s everyday lives, thereby demystifying relations of ruling, and pointing to possible interventions in ruling relations”. Smith’s (2005) understanding of Marxism contributed to the assumption made that doctors, teachers, social workers, *journalists* and *online reporters* who want to be acknowledged as credible, as a professionally skilled, should conscientise their work to be used in socio-political activism from a subjective epistemic privilege, starting with the oppressed person, and not from an objective epistemic vantage point. Both Hartsock (1998) and Smith (2005) contribute to the theoretical assumptions of Standpoint Theory by explaining that female voices tend to be ignored in favour of male domination in social conversations about feminine issues such as abortion, rape, and femicide. In their respective studies, both researchers propose that women possess subjective epistemic knowledge which is generated only by the lived experiences of being marginalised and oppressed by heteronormative, masculine structures in society. Both theorists argue that standpoint is a way to emphasise what is known as being affected by where one stands in society. They differ, however, insofar as Hartsock’s (1998: 42) reference of Smith’s (1987) work describes the “radical division between spheres of action and consciousness of the middle class and how it came to emerge”. This point conceptualises ‘ruling relations’ as not only modes of domination, but also forms of consciousness. For the research, this meant that the naturalisation of heterosexuality in texts needed to be explored by identifying the use of *monikers* that referred to lesbians in online reports, highlighting *engendered* or non-binary/neutral pronouns, and exploring *comments* whenever they appeared in the online reports. These elements would of necessity have been seen by audiences and they thus contributed to the context of the report frames.

#### **2.4.1 Key contributors and their contributions**

Hill Collins (1990), in *Black feminist thought*, contributed to Standpoint Theory by introducing the importance of Black women as having a unique worldview that results from their experiences in a highly racialised, gendered and classist society. A caustic reading in terms of its identification of race, gender and sexuality in the context of third wave iteration of feminism will reveal that Hill Collins’s (1990) work exposes the fissure that occurs in the treatment of White, middle-class heterosexual women and their Black, poor, homosexual peers. Although the case studies in the research also included other races for the purpose of syntagmatic and paradigmatic investigation of how online reports approached the issue of ‘queericide’ regardless of apparent or covert racialism, Hill Collins’s (1990) work contributes heuristic value to Standpoint Theory as it relates to feminism as well as ‘queericide’. Intersectionality, the Third Wave in feminism is also explored by both Martha Rampton (2015) (*Four waves of feminism*)

and Jagger (2016) who explored gender and globalisation. The latter study refers to three levels, namely the normative, methodological, and epistemological. At the normative level, Jagger (2016: 58) explains how “...global institutions and policies interact with local practices to create gendered cycles of vulnerability” which generate various structural injustices, while the methodological level is intended to develop a gender-sensitive standard for measuring poverty across the world. It is, however, at the epistemological level that Jagger (2016) contributes most in terms of the relevance of Standpoint Theory to the research as they describe morally feasible alternatives to the heterosexist and racist culture of Western Christianity (and, by extension, other organised religious civilisations) that inform the ideological interrogation of online reports on ‘queercide’. Online writers of reports on LGBTIQ issues, who usually lack the subjective epistemic privilege that is necessary to properly contextualise the true lived reality of the subjects they write about (Lake, 2014), can therefore be guided to contextualise their writing through Standpoint Theory. It must be noted that the purpose of the research was not to investigate the writers themselves – for example, which sexual proclivity they ascribed to – but to explore the frames they used such as the *conditions for newsworthiness* and the *monikers* they used when referring to lesbian murder victims. This research aimed to determine how and to what extent such elements imbued their reports with an oppressed voice to contextualise the world more objectively, which is what the main contribution of Standpoint Theory entailed. Other aspects thereof might have been too controversial or irrelevant. This approach was important as online writers of reports on LGBTIQ issues might lack the subjective epistemic privilege that is necessary to properly contextualise the true lived reality of the subjects they write about. It was thus envisaged that Standpoint Theory would, in part, provide a framework for investigating the under investigated area of online reporting in terms of how lesbian murders were treated by reporters of these cases.

Standpoint Theory emerged as a feminist epistemological, post-modern method for analysing inter-subjective discourses after the criticisms of standard objectivity and value neutrality that were themes of the 1970s women’s rights movement in the United States of America. The three main assumptions of this theory are that knowledge is socially situated, marginalised groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible to be aware of things, and when conducting research, begin with the lives of the marginalised. A question that was posed, for example, was whether sources were consulted when online reporters of ‘queercide’ investigated these events. Moreover, if sources were consulted, did these sources pose some subjective understanding of being an LGBTIQ member? For this section, Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1965) supported ideas of the position of the oppressed as a visualisation of empowerment in the scope of their own emancipation.

According to (Allen, 2017: 83), Standpoint Theory is based on the view that:



“Power relations shape knowledge and members of subordinate (that is, oppressed) groups understand the world from their own perspective while also being very familiar with the views of dominant (that is, oppressor) group members whose knowledge systems permeate society. In this sense, minorities have a more complete ‘double-consciousness’ and hence a better overall understanding of the world”

Therefore, while this theory applies a critical lens to social conditions, it also serves to underpin feminist claims to ‘situated truth’ against the now largely debunked ‘objectivity’ of science (Tsou *et al.*, 2015).

#### **2.4.2 Criticisms of Standpoint Theory**

This research sought to contribute to theoretical conversations by providing better understanding of how marginalised groups are framed. Where the Standpoint Theory was applied, the frames that were explored were tested against the criticisms of Harding and Julia Wood (2008) about this theory. They explain that Standpoint Theory is not able to establish credibility in its objectivity and subjectivity and that this overbalance of power could lead to the oppressed becoming the oppressor. Thus, by combining Standpoint Theory as a critical paradigm through which specific sections of the study were conducted with the works of Freire provided a better understanding of this oscillating movement in the power dynamic between lesbian victims as subjects and LGBT activism and the heteronormative social frameworks online reports are generally constructed from.

This research also sought to contribute to theoretical conversations on journalistic frameworks pertaining to LGBTIQ issues by providing better understanding of how marginalised groups are represented. These depictions were tested by giving each selected online report both technical as well as ideological treatment. The critique of this theory by Sandra Harding and Julia Wood (2008) is that Standpoint Theory is not able to establish credibility in its objectivity and subjectivity and that this overbalance of power could lead to the oppressed becoming the oppressor. This is addressed by combining Standpoint Theory as a critical paradigm that framed specific sections of the study in conjunction with the works of Freire (1965), as this combination provided a better understanding of the oscillating power dynamic between lesbian victims as subjects and LGBT activism and the heteronormative social frameworks from which online reports are generally constructed. In other words, Standpoint theorists have been accused of reinforcing undifferentiated dichotomies (that is, men versus women) and seeking, for example, to privilege the views of women over men (Kokushkin 2014). Seeking to overcome such limitations, more inclusive forms of Standpoint Theory drawing from Black feminist epistemology have emphasised over thinking, dialogue instead of debate, caring, personal accountability, and integrity (Kokushkin 2014).

It is noted that it has been posited that the term ‘thinking’ should replace ‘theory’ given that standpoint approaches do not represent a coherent set of ideas about the world but present much more like an epistemology in providing a specific perspective on the world (Kokushkin 2014). Crasnow (2006) addressed this criticism in a paper entitled *Feminist philosophy of science: ‘Standpoint’ and knowledge* by stating that feminist philosophy of science has been criticised on several counts. Kokushkin (2014) claims that it results in relativism of the worst kind because the political commitment to feminism is *prima facie* incompatible with scientific objectivity. On the other hand, when critics acknowledge that there may be some value in the work that feminists have done, they comment that there is nothing particularly feminist about their accounts. Both criticisms can be addressed through a better understanding of the contemporary contributions in research to feminist epistemology. Therefore, Standpoint Theory requires deeper examination to illustrate these contributions. Harding and Wylie (2008) suggest ways in which the objectivity question can be addressed. These two accounts, together with a third approach referred to as ‘model-based objectivity’, indicate that we can understand how a standpoint theory both contributes to a better understanding of scientific knowledge and provides a feminist epistemology.

Another criticism of Standpoint Theory centres around the claims made by Yin Paradies (2018) who argues that intersectionality is a key challenge to the validity of Standpoint Theory as a relevant argument in feminist theory that arose in the late 1980s. Crenshaw (1989: 15-16) argues that intersectionality as a conceptual paradigm “...stemmed from the observation that we tend to focus too much on prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion that occur along a single axis of power and oppression”. More specifically, Crenshaw (1989) is concerned that feminism, for example, focuses too much on the experiences of privileged group members such as White women, while other groups such as Black women remains marginalised. Intersectionality is thus about acknowledging that all of us have multiple identities and inhabit multiple locations. However, it is also about “mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (Crenshaw, 1991: 126) while remaining cognisant of relationality, social context, power and social justice (Collins & Bilge 2016). By adopting a multi-dimensional approach to identity and social location, intersectionality fractures the implicit dualism of standpoint theory. This limitation is addressed through explanations of Queer Theory in the works of Muñoz (2009), who specifically applies ‘queer commentary’ to diverse aesthetic texts from multiple sections, including academia and entertainment, to arrive at queer perspectives. Standpoint Theory thus limits the intersectionality of third wave feminism by describing the perspective only as it is occupied by Black lesbians and other LGBTIQ members, their friends and families who are affected by occurrences of ‘queericide’. However, this criticism is addressed by Crasnow (2006) who, in an article *Feminist philosophy of science, ‘Standpoint’ and knowledge*, writes that intersectionality is the key to feminist modelling and practice in problematising and solving a wide range of issues affecting women in differing demographics. Crasnow (2006) proposes that Standpoint

Theory should relax its subjective epistemology to include institutions of support. The current research incorporated this proposal and included police spokespersons, politicians and any other representative institutional figures that generally fall just outside the parameters of standpoints but support the credibility of reports. In brief, this research investigated whether the online report writers consulted various stakeholders.

### **2.4.3 Relevance of the Standpoint Theory to the research**

With so many limitations of the Standpoint Theory in terms of the research, its relevance was that only assumptions of the ‘visualisation of emancipation from a marginalised community’ were used. If these axiomatic sections were used, then why not consider the Invitational Rhetorical Theory by Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin (1995)? This theory states that change cannot happen through explicit force, but rather through discussion and an ‘invitation’ for audiences to see the world from someone else’s perspective. However, the emphasis of the latter theory is on persuasion and attitude change and this was not the intention of the research, and thus this research used Standpoint Theory to explain perspectives, not persuasion, as it relates to gender discourse.

### 3 CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

“There is so much information in the modern world that we cannot absorb it all...the media simplifies things for us; the replication of stories leads audiences to accept them as reality. The physical world, in their unpackaged and unexplained form, are [sic] no longer accessible to us...all complexity has been lost. Therefore, we live in a world where there is more information, and less meaning.”

-Jean Baudrillard (1965: 113)-

The following thematic literature review will explore studies and works from both seminal and secondary sources to identify and define the key concepts that supported the fundamental framework of this research. These works illuminate important relationships between newsworthiness, writing principles and frames as they pertain to reports on ‘queercide’. Also, a review of these studies confirmed the theoretical framework that this research employed, generated new ideas, and defined the informational lacuna relevant to the research problem (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Major contemporary findings concerning ‘queercide’ as an issue affecting the LGBTIQ community, the way in which this phenomenon has been reported online, and how audiences of online content are consuming news reports will be summarised. Key academia and their contributions to this field of investigation will also be discussed.

The thematic literature review will be presented under key sub-headings. Six themes were identified, each with unique and defensible properties that contributed to this research. These themes are: (i) violence against and the homicide of women (which emerged from both qualitative and quantitative studies); (ii) the framing and representation of lesbian murders in the media; (iii) online reporting of news and GBV; (iv) attitudes towards LGBTIQ people: standpoints and queerness; (v) coverage of LGBTIQ issues in general and lesbians in particular in South Africa; and (vi) online content consumption: echo chambers or fact checkers? Each of these themes includes an analysis that contextualises the studies holistically and is evaluated to explain its significance to the study.

Roy Bhaskar (1975) was one of the first major contributors to the philosophical argument of critical realism. It is a paradigm that tries to explain as well as understand rather than predict an outcome (as is the case in positivism) or merely describe a lived experience (as is the case in interpretivism) (Jackson, 2011). Bhaskar’s (1975) work draws inspiration from Marxist political and economic theory as he explains that an individual’s ideas of reality are a result of social conditioning (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). With this argument, Bhaskar (1975) proposes that reality is an experience based on how people perceive a reality that, in fact, may be different from the reality experienced from its observable, empirical surface (Bhaskar, 1997).

This introduction has been presented to explain that the current research was anchored within the critical realist paradigm as its aim was to contribute to the conscientisation of society and the empowerment of marginalised groups by exposing some of the myths that have shaped the perceptions of society (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

### **3.1 Violence and femicide**

Violence against minorities is nothing new and certainly not a unique concept in the South African context. Major events in recent history span from the Holocaust, when over 6 200 000 Jews were killed by Nazi soldiers from 1939 – 1945 (Dawidowicz, 1975) to the Rwandan genocide during which approximately 800 000 Tutsis perished (Rwanda: How the Genocide happened, 2011). South Africa has a long history of violence that ranged from fraction fights during Apartheid in the 1980s to the clashes between Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and African National Congress (ANC) supporters in the 1990s. More recently, the country was rocked by political assassinations in Mpumalanga (Taylor, 2009: 3).

Poverty is often cited as one of the major contributors to homicidal violence (AgendaFM, 2018), but of significance in the understanding of violence is that, regardless of the perceived or speculated reasons for violence, the most vulnerable members of society are the most affected by it. The majority of South Africans are considered to live in economic distress and are subjected to violence perpetrated by street gangs, vigilante groups and even policing agencies who use excessive force (AgendaFM, 2018). Of those who are most vulnerable to violence are women who experience gender inequality that stems from the failure to empower them by properly addressing patriarchal repertoires such as homophobia (ENCA, 2014). Because most women have limited alternatives and cannot escape their violent communities, violence becomes a lifestyle that perpetuates into the next generation (Women Against Abuse, 2019).

In the journal article “*What’s in a name? Theorising the Inter-relationships of gender and violence*”, Karen Boyle (2018), by adapting Liz Kelly’s (1988: 64) ideas around the “continuum of women’s experiences of sexual violence”, argues that “continuum thinking can provide interventions to unsettle binaries, identify academic lacunas in women’s experiences, and avoid the ‘othering’ of specific communities such as lesbians”. Continuum thinking then allows for an understanding of the connections between violence and being a woman while it maintains distinctions that are important politically, legally and academically in journalist studies. As an investigation into feminist studies, Boyle’s (2018: 36) article introduces some examples of the key tensions in the definition and use of in GBV, including “the focus on commonalities among victims (violence against women), perpetrators (men who use violence), and meanings (gendered or gender-based violence or sexual violence)”. For Kelly (1988:76), the pervasive nature of the sexual violence perpetrated by men means that “women make sense of

individual actions in relation to a continuum of related experiences across their lifetime”. This fundamental understanding allows the identification of “...a basic common character that underlies many different events [such as ‘queercide’] and a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and cannot be readily distinguished” [such as the online reporting of ‘queercide’] (Kelly, 1988). The importance of Boyle’s (2018) work is in that it appropriates Kelly’s (1988) conceptualisation of ‘continuum thinking’ into a ‘representational continuum’. For this research, then, “continuum thinking help[ed] conceptualise the dual realities of pornography as both material practice (real bodies doing real things) and a form of representation (staged, photographed, filmed, written, drawn)” (Boyle, 2018: 137). A challenge is extending this appropriation from pornography to other representations such as those in text for online reports. As Boyle’s (2018) article relied on secondary sources to construct an argument and not on sources found in seminal research, there are no restrictive assumptions to limit ‘continuum thinking’ application. Supporting this extended application, Boyle (2018: 24) also postulates “how recent strategies to make the abuses of pornography – most explicit in debates about so-called ‘revenge porn’, a term which has become a media stand-in for the non-consensual creation or sharing of sexual images – have included a challenge to the conceptual utility of the term itself”, which is a comment on the openness of Kelly’s (1988) work. The strength of Boyle’s (2018) ideas on violence and gender is that they connect Feminist studies with the representation concept in media by discussing continuum thinking in terms of representation and allowing for further arguments that would support intersexuality between violence and gender and textual continuums and issues affecting the LGBTIQ community, especially the issue of ‘queercide’ as it affects lesbians. It further problematises visual representation that legitimises a culture of male sexual and violent entitlement. Some of the key questions that may pose some obstacles, though, refer to whether ‘continuum thinking’, as a Feminist theory, on violence and gender can directly apply to gay women from a standpoint perspective. This limits the ability of Boyle’s (2018) work to properly contextualise ‘queercide’. Boyle (2018) further proposes that ‘representational continuum’ has utility in creating spaces where men’s rejection of violent norms is possible but fails to introduce mechanisms of application. This limits any extension of the ideas of ‘representational continuum’ to utilise such mechanisms. For the research, this presented an obstacle in the development of an online reporting framework that denaturalises male violence as a ‘textual continuum’ in online reports. To address this, studies that directly related to LGBTIQ communities were considered for review.

South Africa has ‘normalised’ the tolerance of violence against gays and lesbians as the LGBTIQ community is viewed as ‘sinful’ and in contravention of cultural and religious tenements. These violent acts are often perceived as ‘corrective’ and therefore accepted (Sicetsha, 2018). More than half the LGBTIQ people surveyed in South Africa by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016 “had experienced discrimination at school while 44% [had experienced this] in daily life on the grounds of their sexual orientation”. The survey also found that 41% of the participants knew someone who had

been murdered because of their gender identity or sexual orientation (AgendaFM, 2018: 4). In the current study, the targeted murder of lesbians (and gay or queer individuals) is referred to as 'queercide'. The term 'queercide' is a neologism and a homosexualised portmanteau that is operationalised in the Conceptualisation chapter. An example of 'queercide' is the 'Sizzlers massacre' that occurred on 20 January 2003 at a gay establishment in Cape Town, South Africa. Nine men were murdered while one victim escaped. The High Court Judge and local police described the incident as "one of the most vicious massacres the city had ever seen" (Maughan, 2004: 2). Between 2011 and 2012 there were a number of serial killings in Johannesburg, Gauteng, where eight gay men were targeted and murdered in their homes in strikingly similar circumstances. The victims were all found with their hands tied behind their backs and there was no forced entry. The police stated that it was believed that these men had been targeted by a gang using online dating websites. They had probably pretended to 'hook up' with their victims and had obtained their trust, thus the victims had allowed them into their homes (Eyewitness News, 2013: 3-4).

Incidences such as those described above are not uncommon in the LGBTIQ community (Taylor, 2009). Based on a content analysis of serial killings in South Africa, Brin Hodgskiss (2003: 39) found that "violence in South Africa [was increasing] against the backdrop of a highly mobile population and a great increase in urbanisation". It may be that, as urban settlements became denser and grew, so did serial murder, and by extension, so did violence against women and the LGBTIQ community. In the article "*Lessons from serial murder in South Africa*", Hodgskiss (2003), who reviewed fifty case studies of serial killings over the last two decades in South Africa, writes that townships, as the most densely populated urban areas in South Africa, are worst afflicted with violence against women and that killings in these areas are often more than twice or triple the national average. According to Hodgskiss (2003: 44), violence in townships may be attributed to three major flaws in the structural framework in South Africa. He first flaw is "increased diversity and broadening of parameters as it [violence] occurs in situations of rapid social change which makes a society more susceptible to crime". This is evidenced in South Africa's shift from an Apartheid to a post-Apartheid society where the LGBTIQ community has received more legislative protection, freedom of movement and assembly, and increased global visibility in media. Another flaw is the relationship of 'queercide's' to other forms of crime, and a third flaw is the policing system. Significant contributions of Hodgskiss' (2003: 42-43) study in relation to the investigation of 'queercide' in terms of underreporting of crimes were references to high crime rates and the simultaneous lack of resources, linking ignorance to underreporting and apathy (especially when these issues fail to trend in the consciousness of South African citizens), and highlighting the vastness of non-urban areas that are often very sparsely populated and where crimes easily go unnoticed or unlinked. Hodgskiss' (2003) also contributed to this research on 'queercide' by grounding this phenomenon in the South African context and explaining how it is unique to similar events occurring globally. It is unique in the sense that more violent crimes that occur in non-European countries are

perpetrated in townships. This implies the necessity of a higher media concentration on cases of ‘queercide’ in those areas to establish the rates of such newsworthy events accurately. Hodgskiss’ (2003) study also corroborates Boyle’s (2018) claim that the murder of women is highly sexualised and therefore provoked by their sexual orientation. An obvious weakness of the latter study in relation to this study on ‘queercide’ is that it was conducted and published in 2003. Moreover, the study specifically focused on serial killers as perpetrators and not on online reporting of ‘queercide’ as an act perpetrated on the LGBTIQ community. Still, the study helped to highlight the context and the quality of the structural components of online reporting as they might apply to a study on ‘queercide’. Some statistical information provided by the “*Victims of Crime Survey 2016/2017*” report by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2017) helped bridge the divide caused by the outdated nature of Hodgskiss’ (2003) report. The Stats SA report (2017) used the Victims of Crimes Survey (VOCS) that applies the repeat victimisation index (RVI) to calculate averages and percentages of crime actuals and the perceptions of citizens, where RVI is equal to the estimated number of incidents of a specific type of crime committed, such as the murder of a woman divided by the estimated total number of victimised households or individuals. It is noteworthy that no formal data collection method for the murder of lesbians exists. This index is then used to calculate a data set to a percentage by multiplying it by 100. Some of the results that were relevant to the current study as well as Hodgskiss’ (2003) work reflected that an estimated 16 809 people were murdered in South Africa in 2017/2018. According to VOCS, ‘murder’ includes culpable homicide, which means that the South African Police Service (SAPS) determined the number of murders during the 2017/2018 period to be 20 336, as the SAPS also included unintentional murders. BusinessTech (2018) used this report to establish that murder rates of women in townships increased by 6.9% from 2017 to 2018.

In the journal article “*Reconceptualizing Femicidio: Border Materiality in Ciudad Juárez*”, Nina Maria Lozano-Reich (2018) reports that femicide has become a global phenomenon. Although not explicitly referring to gay women as is the intention with ‘queercide’, Lozano-Reich describes how women are more vulnerable to violence because of their socio-cultural position in societies as well as their limited ability to become economically independent in oppressive circumstances. Femicide is not a new phenomenon. The term, which is defined as “the intentional murder of women because they are women” (World Health Organization, 2012: 12), has been the focus of many in-depth analyses such as the one explicated in Jane Caputi’s book, “*The age of sex crime*” (1987), which reveals that femicide has been an issue that precedes the Twenty-First Century. Violence that is targeted against gay women includes killing, torture, arbitrary detention, and widespread discrimination (United Nations, 2016). The idea of violence against women because they are women, especially violence and murder of lesbians, coincides with that espoused by critical theoretician José Ortega Gasset, as is cited by Blanche de Puy in “*The cultural legacy of José Ortega Y. Gasset*” (De Puy, 1983). Gasset argues that the rise of the masses is accompanied by the decline of the intellectual. He views the masses as highly prone to



violence, which is indicative of this decline. His assumption, though based on European society and thus lacking the specificity of the South African context, states that there is an increase of violence against women and minorities (such as lesbians) in societies that are characterised by a growing density, as can be seen in South African urban areas.

In an article entitled “*What’s in a name? Theorising the inter-relationships of gender and violence*”, Boyle (2018: 17) states: “The basic common character underlying women’s experiences of abuse is not always a male perpetrator, but rather the broader social meaning of the abuse – that women are targeted because they are women”. This definition is one of the more common descriptions used when referring to GBV. ‘Femicide’ is an example that may be considered in this definition (Radford & Russell, 1992) as the defining of this term exceeds a mere semantic description as it also names a specific form of homicide: the targeting and killing of women, purely because of their gender. Femicide contextualises both who the victim is and why she has been targeted. Although femicide remains under-researched (Weil, 2016), one of the advantages of “conceptualising the murder of women because they are women – as distinct from female homicide – is that it allows for a better understanding of femicide on the continuum of (men’s) violence against women” (Radford & Russell, 1992: 66). The same can then be determined for the killing of lesbians because they are lesbian. Therefore, the use of ‘queercide’ focused this research more specifically on *what* form of crime that online reporters report on had to be investigated. Critical philosopher Rene Girard’s edict that violence does not only come from *without* but is embedded *within* the social fabric, as presented in “*Violence and society*” by Larry Ray (2018), therefore had relevance.

In a study conducted by the Trudeau Centre for Peace, Conflict and Justice (2015) on the framing of sexual violence in newspapers from February 2012 until February 2014 surrounding the violent rape and murder of Bradasdorp teenager, Anene Booysen, it was concluded that sexual violence and the killing of women are predominantly framed in the media as a gender issue which is perpetuated by a prevailing patriarchy. It was further argued, according to news reports, that the South African government, through the South African Police Service (SAPS), failed to curtail violence against women. This triggered an outcry from South African civil society, celebrities and government officials and a call for the protection of the rights of women. Ultimately, this public and media discourse on sexual violence did not have a lasting impact. In the recommendations section of a study entitled “*Asking for it: Evaluating the framing of the sexual violence epidemic in South Africa*”, the author states that media have to adopt a gender-neutral rights-based framework to capture the dynamics of sexual violence and murder of women to engage stakeholders (Mpalirwa, 2015). Although the article does not explicitly focus on the lived experiences of lesbian women – Anene Booysen was a heterosexual woman killed by her male partner – it does introduce an interesting idea for evaluating online reports on ‘queercide’ by looking for gender-neutral and stakeholder engaging elements. The findings of the latter study

contradicted those of Kim Johnson (2016), who took a sample of 54 issues from the *Cape Argus* and quantitatively and qualitatively analysed them. Johnson (2016) investigated how the perpetrator of violence against a woman, Oscar Pistorius, was convicted in the court of public opinion while demoting the importance of Reeva Steenkamp, the victim. Johnson argues that the media should not subordinate women but create a gender-specific framework from which their plight should be observed. Johnson (2016) introduces the idea of a ‘mega spectacle’ in the media. Conversely, the Trudeau Centre for Peace, Conflict and Justice (2015) sampled articles concerning the rape and murder of a young South African woman who received publicity because of the nature of the crime against her. In the latter investigation the victim was the focus and not the perpetrator. This difference was of significance to the current study regarding the newsworthy value of reports as proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965). This value, which was used to investigate online reports on ‘queercide’, investigated **meaningfulness** and not **references to the elite**, thereby highlighting a secondary but important focus of the Trudeau Centre for Peace, Conflict and Justice (2015) study.

In this theme, various contributions to the research are highlighted. For instance, Johnson (2016) and Boyle (2018) are specifically important as their works pertain to interpolating news values in contemporary, Twenty-First Century studies. The theme continues to present ‘continuum thinking’ as a way to unsettle binaries, identify academic gaps in the lived experiences of lesbians and the avoidance of “othering”, and connect Feminist studies with the Standpoint as well as the Framing and Representation theories. New contributions to the well-known Galtung and Ruge (1965) *news values* also expose the ‘mega spectacle’ and sensationalising of news in reports on the rape and murder of South African women.

### 3.2 Framing and representation of lesbian murders in the media

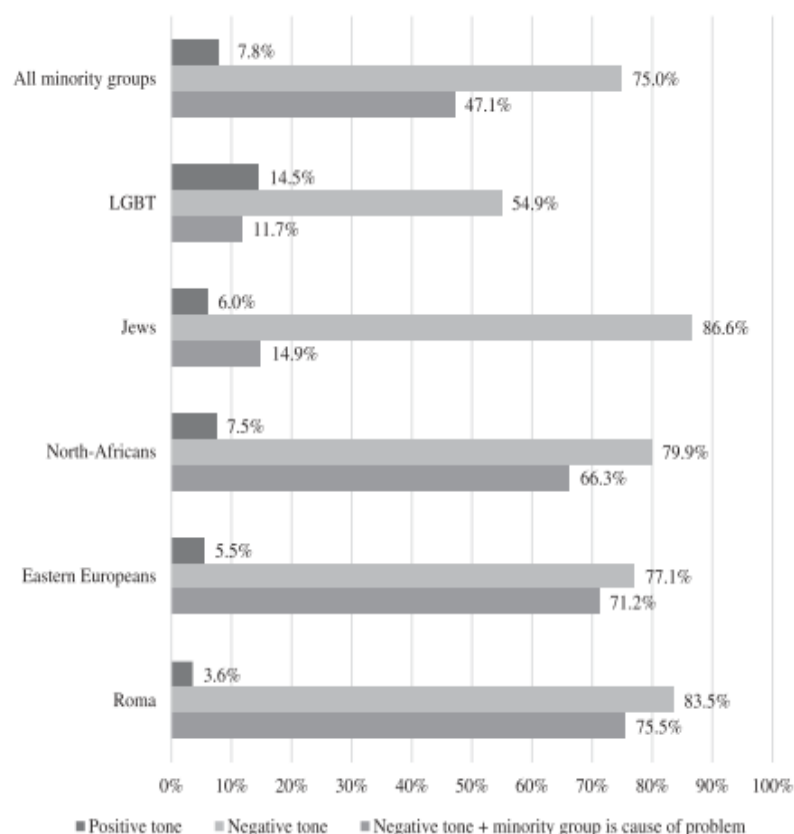
Academic articles pertaining to this theme contributed to addressing the research problem as they illuminated understanding of how studies have made use of frameworks to report on lesbian issues. Such articles are those of Cecil Meeusen and Laura Jacobs entitled “*Television news content of minority groups as an intergroup context indicator of differences between target-specific prejudices*” (2017) and Nathan Walter, Thomas Billard and Sheila Murphy entitled “*On the boundaries of framing terrorism: Guilt, victimization, and the 2016 Orlando shooting*” (2017). These articles explore the murder of lesbian victims and how these victims were represented.

In her unpublished Doctoral Thesis, “*The framing of homosexuality by two Ugandan newspapers: An analysis of New Vision and Daily Monitor*” (2016), Sara Namusoga investigates the frames that two media houses used when reporting on issues affecting the LGBTIQ community. She focuses on hate crimes and explore how reporting patterns changed between 2007 – 2011. The study spanned the

introduction of the 2009 anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda. In a content analysis of news reports appearing in *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor*, Namusoga (2016) broadens the application of Framing Theory to include studies involving the LGBTIQ community. As a result, Namusoga (2016) argues that the two newspapers used **human rights** and **religious** frames to report on LGBTIQ issues and that, although the selected reports did not ignore homosexuality or LGBTIQ issues, their reporting thereof was biased and negative, regardless of the topic or context. The most important of these negative attitudes that she observed in the two newspapers was that both ignored the LGBTIQ community and their supporters' views, providing them with little or no avenue to voice their opinions in the news reports. Instead, the reports focused on laypersons, politicians and religious leaders who were known to oppose homosexuality and were supporters of the 2009 anti-homosexuality Bill. Namusoga's (2016) study conscientizes the socio-political challenges a country's media face when reporting on LGBTIQ issues; however, the study also identifies journalists as "information processors" (D'Angelo, 2002: 877), meaning that they only select what to report about or what to omit in the environment in which they operate. Therefore, Namusoga (2016) posits that it requires a change in public attitude towards issues to change the way in which journalists report on them. The same will therefore be true for 'queericide' as an issue that impacts lesbians specifically. One limitation of the latter study was the socio-political and geographic environment prevalent in Uganda. This country is known as a much more oppressive country for members of the LGBTIQ community (Maregele, 2018) than South Africa. Therefore, an investigation of Ugandan media might yield dissimilar results to a similar study of online South African reporting on 'queericide'. Also, as newspaper stories are different to online reports in many respects, it is difficult to determine active audiences and the frames that were used. Online audiences seek out information of interest to them more selectively (Spector, 2017; McElhearn & Erwin, 2018), which influences *how* the reporter writes about an issue such as 'queericide' for instance. What is of significance of Namusoga's (2016) study is that it identifies an axiomatic trend, which is that media ignore the contributions of the LGBTIQ community and its supporters when constructing reports, which affects their utility as a credible source of information. This finding is important for the inclusion of frames of contribution such as 'comments', "Share" and 'like'. A further contribution of Namusoga's (2016) study is the comprehensive understanding of Framing Theory that it provides and how it can be used to investigate LGBTIQ issues.

In a study entitled "*Television news content of minority groups as an intergroup context indicator of differences between target-specific prejudices*", Cecil Meeusen and Laura Jacobs (2016: 12-13), Associate Professors from the University of Leuven argue that, although research has shown that "different types of prejudice are correlated, hierarchies of prejudice exist for individuals to differentiate between target groups". The research examined the relationship between television news coverage of minority groups such as the LGBTIQ community and attitudes towards them. All Flemish prime-time television news items (N = 1 487) that reported on five minority groups, including LGBTIQ, Jewish

and immigrant communities from Eastern Europe and Northern Africa and Romania were considered. The purpose of Meeusen and Jacob's (2016: 16) study was to code the tone and framing of these news items to identify patterns of prejudice and to evaluate these attitudes with the idea that "these minority groups are associated with problems and criminal threats". The study was in some ways similar to that of Namusoga (2016) and contributed to the understanding of Framing Theory within the homosexual context by stating that framing refers to how issues are presented in the news. The researchers contextualise frames as "central organising ideas" that provide meaningful insights into an issue". They assumed the definition by De Vreese (2005: 108) that "framing implies that certain aspects of a news story are being emphasised, favouring some interpretations over others". By doing this, television news reports on minority groups highlight specific arguments and offer a way for audiences to interpret these wiles, thereby promoting a specific ideology. Based on their study, Meeusen and Jacobs (2016) argue that, because of prejudice, minority groups are perceived as undermining cultural values and are less deserving of social support. A graph by Meeusen and Jacobs (2016) showing news threat frames of minority groups provides some statistical insight into the representation of the LGBTIQ community on television.



**Figure 1: Meeusen and Jacobs's (2016) findings on the news threat frames for minority groups on prime-time television in Flanders between 2003-2014**

In Figure 1, Meeusen and Jacobs (2016) show that the LGBT community incurred a 54.9% negative tone when television news media reported on them. The most obvious limitation of Meeusen and

Jacobs' (2016) study for the current study is the vast difference between the Flemish socio-cultural and political environment and that of South Africa. Their study also focused on television frameworks and did not provide any indication of the representation of the LGBTIQ community on online platforms. The latter researchers also contributed to the "feelings thermometer ratings" towards LGBTIQ people, while the research on 'queercide' considered the content of online news reports specifically. Of significance, though, is Meeusen and Jacobs' (2016) use of Framing Theory to investigate LGBTIQ issues and the tone of reports. The graph clearly indicates that minority groups were perceived as the cause of the violence they experienced. Contributions such as those of the latter study could inform the construction of a coding instrument for online reports on 'queercide' if the appellations used to refer to lesbians as well as the ideological approach to identify them are considered. The latter study further supports the philosophical anchor point of the work of Paulo Freire (1970) who believes that oppression of minority groups cannot be understood in the absence of a class analysis.

To better understand the response of online media – apart from the print media contributions by Namusoga (2016) and the exclusive television as broadcast media by Meeusen and Jacobs (2016) – in terms of LGBTIQ representation, a study that was conducted by Erin B. Waggoner (2017) entitled "*Bury your gays and social media fan response: Television, LGBTQ representation, and communitarian ethics*" was helpful. Waggoner (2017) had been studying women-loving-women (WLW) characters' deaths (N = 166) on television since 1976, with specific focus on online responses – as the Internet had become an outlet for such comments – to the deaths of those characters. Referring to social media sites *Tumblr* and *Twitter*, Waggoner (2017: 57) claims that, although "the visibility of these LGBTIQ community increased, there are still tropes used that can have harmful effects where these stereotypes and generalisations translate to online mediums". For online spaces, social change in attitude that informs behaviour happens more often when the action for lesbian issues target the economic impact of GBV. For example, in his article "*No female of any age is safe, just ask 70-year-old Mandisa Tsotsi*", Kenneth Mokgathle (2019) claims that GBV costs the South African tax payer approximately R42 billion annually. Whether readers are activists against GBV or not, this cost raises concern. The limitation of Waggoner's (2017) study is that *bury your gays* as a television trope to describe the role that gay, specifically WLW, characters play in television causes expectations among audiences and this may or may not translate into real world news occurrences of 'queercide' reported online. It therefore limits the contribution of the study in understanding the frames used in online reports. However, the study did provide more insight into lesbians as a standpoint through the concept of WLW, even though WLW did not form part of this study's conceptual framework.

In her Masters' dissertation, *Meaning of murder: Newspaper framing of hate crimes against lesbians* Grozelle (2014) argues that the limited information of online reporting on LGBTIQ issues continues to create a caveat in understanding how reporting on these issues, with specific reference to 'queercide'

as defined by this study, significantly contributes to the discussion surrounding quality news reporting. However, the latter study that was conducted in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, assessed the effects that the representation of lesbians in American newspapers had on societal ideologies. The study relied on two separate incidents of lesbian murders and observed how newspapers from North Carolina and Florida framed and represented the 1990 murder of Talana Quay Kreeger and the 2010 murder of Courtney Elizabeth Bright. The purpose was to illustrate the divergence between these crimes based on location and time. Grozelle (2014) states that the print news media's depictions of these murders provided insights into the under-representation of lesbians. For instance, she argues that when reporting on hate crimes against lesbians, reporters are more likely to discuss the victim's sex instead of their sexuality, and this representation causes these victims to 'become invisible'. This means that failure to properly represent and frame victims' sexual orientation becomes a factor that impacts the rate of hate crime proliferation against lesbians. Moreover, such reports lack salience within the wider society. Grozelle's (2014) findings are supported by Waggoner (2018) who also accentuates the importance of including the voice of lesbians as a standpoint in reporting on 'queericide'. Grozelle's (2014) study confirms that the media is the most important channel for the transfer of information to society. Moreover, the media historically represented certain communities in a particular light and this has impacted their treatment by the broader society to this day. The way in which society attempts to understand the world through events, such as violence against women and the gay community, are impacted by news representations (Fourie, 2001). Representation and framing of minority groups within the media generate social expectations regarding the identity and behaviour of such groups (Suter, 2008), and therefore the negative representation and framing of lesbians necessitated the investigation of online media elements in constructing and maintaining societal norms that impact the treatment of lesbians.

Grozelle (2014) drew from Goffman's (1978) analysis of gender display and argues that, when traditional standards of femininity are not met by certain women in media reports, then these women are framed and represented negatively. Lesbians in particular are depicted as women who are failing in their assigned gender role of being dependent on a male partner for sexual gratification – thus female sexuality is seen as something men are entitled to (Jackson & Gilbert, 2009). Grozelle (2014) further identifies that media representation of the LGBTIQ community reflects the ideological framework that serves the interest of heterosexual audiences. This, she argues, symbolically positions lesbians beneath heterosexual norms by 'heterosexualising' homosexuality. This is evidenced by the use of the phrases 'lesbian' and 'gay' interchangeably, which contributes to the omission of specific lesbian issues in news reports. Although not the focus of this research, the latter view illuminates a lack of care given to lesbian issues in reports. However, a shortcoming of Grozelle's (2014) study is that her research for her Masters' dissertation lacked rigour in creating a robust data set and it therefore lacked the comprehensive focus that a Doctoral study could have achieved.

When other researchers such as Goffman (1978), Fourie (2001) and Suter (2008) were consulted, their contributions became more relevant for the exploration of case studies to explore issues affecting the LGBTIQ community. Another limitation of the study is that Grozelle (2014) claimed to investigate heterosexuality, while the research focused on the execution of case narratives exclusively. The latter study was also conducted using an American sample, and thus the research results might diverge from data that are yielded from the socio-political, cultural and technological environments of South Africa. Grozelle's (2014) contribution to research is her comment that the *length* of articles provides evidence of quality representation when reporting on cases of 'queericide'. Thus short (0-400 words), medium (401-800 words) and long (801+ words) of reports on cases of 'queericide' may be indicative of the quality of online reports. This suggests that longer reports are required to properly contextualise incidences of violence involving lesbians. Grozelle (2014) further contributes to the research domain by highlighting how various media have failed to create accuracy for lesbians. In this context she claims that the labelling of lesbians in media reports tends to correlate events involving them with those involving gay men rather than with heterosexual women. This problematises violence against lesbians in terms of GBV.

The final study that contributes to this theme introduces the issue of violence against the LGBTIQ community as a journalistic discourse. In the study, *The voices of journalism and the LGBTQI movement in response to violence in same-sex couples: Towards the construction of a social problem?* Adolfo Carratalá (2017: 29) writes that "the Spanish media had highlighted homicides of gay men committed by their partners or ex-partners and that these murders had been classified by the term intragender violence". As a result of these reports, there were public discussions on how institutions, such as the police and government should deal with these murders. Carratalá (2017) problematises the perception of reality as created by the media by stating that social problems, which audiences identify as matters of concern, are not conceptualised spontaneously, but rather result from a process of signification and construction that enables certain issues, such as the murder of lesbians, to be problematised. The study states that the representation and framing of these issues must be continuously re-examined so that they can mobilise activism. Carratalá (2017) also argues that activism is only possible when the issue is described as a problem through labelling and defining it as such. The latter study suggests that journalism is an instrument not only for making certain realities visible, but also for promoting the perception of a particular audience and the issues and events that may affect them. Therefore, journalists, have the capability and the opportunity to promote the interpretation of fact and phenomena by contextualising them (Wondemaghen, 2014). This attracts the audience's attention to certain elements and shapes the way they perceive the nature of the problem. Journalists can achieve this directly "through **opinion pieces** or **weblogs/ activist news sites** and indirectly by how they present the opinions of the main claim-makers" (Carratalá, 2017: 29). Carratalá (2017: 37) found that the most frequent sources of reports on LGBTIQ issues had been from the immediate environment of those

involved, for example eye witnesses or family members, “while institutional or official sources and experts in the field were hardly ever consulted”. Nor were there quotes from LGBTIQ organisations which, he argued, makes it difficult to present the issue affecting the LGBTIQ community as a relevant social problem. Therefore, because the murders of gay individuals were reported in conjunction with other acts violence, these incidences were not framed and represented as unique cases with significant implications. The reports’ thematic setting was then only specified in a few cases that related to murder at only 12%. However, the writers did attempt to exceed the episodic character of the events by framing the general discourse within GBV. In these cases, the murders that had been committed in the context of gay relationships were added to the list of incidences of femicide (in itself problematic as ‘queercide’ needs to be established as a separate category) that had been committed in the previous months prior to the commencement of the study. The constraint of Carratalá’s (2017) study is that it was conducted on cases appearing in Spanish print media, which are culturally different to those of South Africa in that they focus more on symbolism to create understanding. Although symbolic interactionism might be relevant as a theoretical framework for the diffusive nature of the South African society, it was irrelevant for this study. The strength of the latter study, though, is that it presents the importance of meaning creation by the media using appropriate labelling and defining the instruments to do so. These elements might be used as criteria for defining ‘queercide’ and to construct reports on ‘queercide’ to promote them.

Using the data that were sampled from the articles, the current research was able to develop key emerging themes and codes which were used to construct a coding sheet for each online report of ‘queercide’ that I examined. Research articles that framed lesbian murders in South Africa on an online medium was used to contextualise the study. This research sought to understand frames that were embedded in reports and that were representative of the victims themselves. However, this research had to be cautious as those who are aware of issues relating to lesbians tend to perpetuate stereotypes and frame articles in a way that fails to create awareness of the real plight of lesbians (Collison, 2017). Against this background, the contribution of Namusoga’s (2016) study opened the possibility for this research to include elements of the coding sheet used, such as determining the number of words of the article. This proposal further expands on that of Grozelle’s (2014) and is also supported by idea of determining the qualification of the reporter as a writer of such events. Meeusen and Jabobs (2016) conclude that frames are omnipresent in news coverage and this stimulates certain interpretations, for instance that minority groups pose threats to society by challenging dominant cultural values, thereby causing anxiety and a moral panic. Waggoner (2017) addressed the deficit for understanding online representations in Namusoga’s (2016) and Meeusen and Jabobs’s (2016) works by discussing social media discourses that were relevant to lesbian issues. Moreover, Waggoner (2017) also introduces *how* online reporters can engage activism in their reports by appealing to the economic cost of inaction, such as *crimin injuria* and *the Pink Rand*, and abstract philosophical cost, such as *moral responsibility*.



### 3.3 Online reporting of news and gender-based violence (GBV)

Based on a survey that was conducted by Stats SA in 2016 (2017: 7), it was found that “one in five partnered women have experienced physical violence in the 12 months” prior to being questioned. The survey shows that GBV remains largely confined to the private sphere, and that this trend diminishes public discussions about violence. As stated in a political blog by Kashish Jadoo (2015), where there is an increase of reporting on GBV, this visibility creates awareness that leads to an increase in discourses within the community to address this issue. Online reporting has the power to shape public opinion while also having intensely political consequences. In her essay, *The feminist Standpoint*, Nancy Hartsock (1983) introduced the feminist standpoint epistemology as a “Marxian analysis of gender and power relations in society” and thus online reporting of ‘queercide’ is a weighty part of.

Two South African journalists who are actively writing about the murder of lesbians on an online platform are Siyavuya Mzantsi and Melanie Verwoerd. Organisations such as Luleki Sizwe, Sonke Gender Justice, Out.org and Mamba Online also proved significant in generating understanding of the nuances in reports about GBV and ‘queercide’. In a cursive search of Google Scholar, Ebscohost and JSTOR using the key words ‘online reporting’, ‘gender-based violence’ and ‘South Africa’, more than 900 articles appeared. Notable contributions on how violence is directed toward lesbians were written by Thabo Msibisi (2012; 2015 & 2016) as well as Denise Buiten and Kammila Naidoo (2016).

A thematic inductive analysis study entitled *‘I forgive him. It wasn’t easy for him’: Social representations of perpetrators of intimate partner violence in the Western Cape Province media* explored 21 articles reporting on male against female partners in the period September 2012 to February 2013. The findings revealed that these male perpetrators were mainly represented as victims of an unjust justice system and the reports masked their responsibility for the violence they perpetrated, and for this reason readers could possibly sympathise with them (Isaacs & Mthembu, 2018: 17-18). The study concluded that perpetrators of violence against their intimate female partners were absolved from their violent behaviour in media representations. According to the study, there are many different ways in which the media blame women for their victimisation. These methods include “exonerating the perpetrator by constructing men’s violence as a product of individual dysfunction” (Bullock & Cubert, 2002: 162), and GBV is therefore ascribed to the ‘breakdown’ of the perpetrator, which elicits sympathy. Rae Taylor (2009) supports this assertion by claiming that a male partner who perpetrates physical and emotional abuse does so due to emotional and financial stress. These perpetrators are then described in the media as suicidal, having sought psychiatric help, and being generally overwhelmed by personal failings and burdens before committing violence. Moreover, Cathy Ferrand Bullock (2007) notes that the media often assign blame to the justice system for releasing an offender who might have been remanded or even imprisoned for acts of violence, citing a negligent justice system. The

significance of this latter study is that it explored how reports represented perpetrators, which is of consequence when constructing thematic codes used in online reports.

Bullock's (2002) was a relatively recent South African study concerning violence against women. She drew on the social representation theory (Moscovici, 1961), which is a theory akin to the framing and representation theory which is used to better understand how a theoretical frame may be used to understand collected data. Her study supports the idea that media are important in introducing and rising the depictions of significant issues such as 'queercide'. Moreover, the qualitative nature of the study contextualised how men are absolved from culpability in the way they are framed in the media.

The above view was explored as an element in the coding sheet referring to the theme **accused**. It also corroborates a view expressed by Sisetsha (2018), who claims that sensationalism is a common tactic used by media – in this instance the non-culpability of the perpetrator. Against this background, this research investigated elements of sensationalism through qualitative ideological frames used in **headings** and in terms of the **accuracy** of online reports. The limitations of Bullock's (2002) study may be found in its description of intimate partner violence (IPV), which does not problematise the position of perpetrators accused of murdering lesbians in the act of 'queercide'. This exposes conceptual differences in the pathology of perpetrators as well as victimology in selected cases. However, her thesis focuses on case studies where the accused was not an intimate partner nor represented in print news. This is a limitation in terms of support of the current research, as online reports have unique features that influence reports such as distinctive differences in perishability (medium) and newsworthy values (journalist). Also, the study was underpinned by the social representation and not by the framing and representation theory. In part, the insights this research endeavour to address is Bullock's (2002) limited ability to create understanding of the applicability of the representation theory as it considered anchoring and objectifying representations to the reader and not the role of the reporter in shaping these representations.

A study that addresses some of the limitations regarding victimology as found in the study by Isaacs and Mthembu (2018), is *Responding to hate crime: Escalating problems, continued failings*, by Neil Chakraborti (2017). The latter study was conducted over a four-month period in 2015 and was funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It focused specifically on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) victims of hate crime based in Leicester and Leicestershire (United Kingdom). It was a longitudinal study and the researchers spent some time among various LGBT community hubs and venues in order to build networks with an assorted sample of LGBT people. The study utilised "in-depth face-to-face, qualitative interviews to explore expectations and experiences". The sample comprised a total of 50 people who identified as LGBTIQ. Of these, 50% (n = 25) were men, 50% (n = 25) were women. Of these 50 people, 10% (n = 5) described themselves as

transgender (Chakraborti, 2017: 40). The sample was made up of a diverse profile of socio-economic backgrounds, ages and ethnicities and also included victims of hate crimes who had a range of overlapping identity characteristics, such as being 'gay', 'Muslim', 'transgendered', and 'physically disabled'. In its conclusion, the study urged for new responses to hate crimes (such as 'queericide') as these crimes had become more prevalent with the number of incidents having risen to record levels both within the UK and outside its borders in countries such as Uganda, Russia and Brunei. The study relied on fieldwork conducted with more than 2 000 victims of hate crimes "...to illustrate the failings in relation to dismantling barriers to reporting, prioritising meaningful engagement with affected communities and delivering effective criminal justice interventions" (Chakraborti, 2017: 46). The study highlights that the sense of anguish felt by victims can be exacerbated by societal views and recommends urgent action, such as more effectual reporting, to close the gap between state level narratives and victims' lived experiences.

In the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU) referendum result of June 2016 was a catalyst for a surge in reports of targeted violence. "More than 14 000 hate crimes were recorded by police forces in England and Wales between July and September 2016, with three quarters of forces reporting record levels of hate crime during that period" (Record hate crimes after EU referendum, 2017: 39). The statistics revealed an upsurge in incidents across most police forces within the UK, both annually and when comparing the three months before and after the referendum. In ten police force areas there was a rise of more than 50% in incidences of hate crime and GBV. This trend also appeared in the United States of America (USA) following a build-up of tensions during and after the 2016 presidential campaign (Southern Poverty Law Centre, 2016) and across Europe in countries with populist political parties such as Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria and Hungary where an explosive anti-immigrant sentiment fuelled the scapegoating of particular minority groups (such as LGBTIQ individuals), creating anxieties (Record hate crimes after EU referendum, 2017; Dearden, 2017). This upsurge of violent hate incidents can be understood within a wider, structural process whereby expressions of hostility and prejudice are used to marginalise non-conforming individuals and to sustain hegemonic boundaries. The study describes how attacks against 'others' can feed off media stereotyping as well as economic instability and political scaremongering, to the point where violence becomes a mechanism that is used to reinforce power dynamics between dominant heteronormative patriarchy and subordinate groups. According to Perry (2001: 64), this creates "cultures of fear within unknown communities" and leads to other inequalities such as limited access to medical interventions (Chakraborti & Garland, 2012). Chakraborti (2017) further notes that academic contributions have helped to illustrate the complexities associated with hate crime by highlighting the relationship between institutionalised prejudices, structural hierarchies, and acts of hate. The academic contributions of Perry (2001) and Chakraborti (2017) illuminate how some hate crime victims can be targeted not only because of their particular identity, but also because they are seen as being especially different or vulnerable in

the eyes of the perpetrator on the basis of other aspects of self, such as the interplay of multiple identity characteristics. For example, men may have sex with men but do not identify themselves as gay. Situational factors and prevailing economic and social conditions within different micro-environments may also provoke such crimes.

The study by Isaacs and Mthembu (2018) is significant for this research as it refers to online reporting on GBV, and especially on the LGBTIQ community, that does not reflect the lived realities of hate crime victims. Events of significance, such as legalisation allowing same-sex marriage, lesbian human rights campaigns, and Pride events, can trigger violence (Record hate crimes after EU Referendum, 2017). One suggestion is that visibility might be a reason for extreme protectionist behaviour to sustain the hegemonic status quo of heteronormative patriarchy. The study also explains that violence against lesbians is qualitatively different when motivated by hate from those violent acts perpetrated as GBV. This illustrates a departure in how these issues occur and this was of interest to the current research as there is a significant difference between understanding the requirements for reporting on the issue of 'queercide' and that of heterosexual cases of GBV. The Isaacs and Mthembu (2018) study was limited insofar as it was conducted in the United Kingdom only. It also failed to contextualise the media-GBV relationship and relied on secondary sources to proclaim these findings.

Of all the studies that contributed to the current research, *Identifying markers of sensationalism in online news reports on crime* by Lezandra Grundlingh (2017) was the most obviously aligned with the research. The study explored four case studies of murders that occurred in South Africa between 2009 and 2016 to highlight both indirect and obvious exaggeration used in online reports. The aim of the study was to investigate whether objectivity was a key aspect of hard news reporting and whether reporters should only provide the reader with the facts and not allow their subjective “feelings about a specific event or crime to be identifiable in a report”. The study found that “...reporters sometimes used both obvious and more subtle techniques to increase the entertainment value of a specific event or crime in order to appeal to readers” (Grundlingh, 2017: 14). The study also found that melodramatic language and markers of judgement and attitude, which contribute to exaggeration, were easy to identify. However, these markers were often infused in the reports in such a way that the readers would be unaware that they were being manipulated to form heterosexist opinions. Therefore, by identifying the markers of sensationalism in news reports, especially news reports on crime, a researcher or sensitised reader may expose the subtlety or manipulation the readers of news reports are exposed to.

Another author who has contributed to the theme of **accused**, is Jewkes (2015: 44–45), who explains that media influence often infuses a consciousness of criminal activities or criminality in music lyrics, films and television dramas. However, crime reporting in the news is also important and is also shaped by the mission to entertain and hold the attention of readers. While there might be expectations of the

news to simply report the facts and provide accurate representations of case studies of crime, this is not the case. The reason for this incongruity may partly be “because the obligation of the reporter is not only to inform the public, but also to generate revenue [because] the primary purpose of news organisations is to make a profit”. The way in which reporters of crime then execute this objective, according to Jewkes (2015: 63), is to not only to refer to violence, even though it is the news value that is most common to all media, including online platforms. A story, according to Jewkes (2015: 26), often needs to “include other news values to remain relevant, since violence alone, no matter how serious, is often reported on in a basic manner with little to no follow-up or true analysis”. The latter study revealed that journalists often focus on the viciousness of the event, but they then also incorporate other news values to *sensationalise* the story. It is then when microaggressions such as ‘othering’ or nuanced pronouns such as ‘them’, ‘they’, ‘dyke’ and negative associations like ‘shame’ or ‘evil’ are introduced as a code to manipulate readers of online reports.

The contribution of the above study for the research was that it enhanced the research’s ability to identify reporters’ techniques of subtly and obviously sensationalising online reports of murders of lesbians and it provided insight as to what online news reports should accomplish to attain the ideal state. Such reports should first separate detail from narrative, then present an emotionally detached view of news and, finally, strive for impartiality and balance that are recognisable. The study further proposes that objectivity in reporting cannot realistically be achieved, thus reports should be checked against a record, otherwise the report will appear as ‘false objective’. Here, the Standpoint and Queer theories may be of significance to guide ‘record checking’. The Jewkes (2015) study further describes ‘ideal reporting’ versus ‘real reporting’ by explaining how ‘**code driven**’ (Constitution, journalistic code of ethics and awards as recognition) and ‘**user driven**’ (click bait, sensationalism, likes, advertising and fake news) reporting impacts report writing. Grundlingh (2017) references Jewkes (2004) as critical reading to better understand the Framing and Representation Theory as well as the Newsworthiness theory to add to the value that Galtung and Ruge (1965) brought to research. Elements that are included for consideration are: “threshold, predictability, simplification, individualism, risk, sex, celebrity or high-status persons, proximity, violence or conflict, visual spectacle or graphic imagery, children and conservative ideology or political diversion” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965: 104). Finally, the study provides insights into reading online reports for **length**, **photographs** and **headings** in terms of their contribution to both the quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of the research. Some gaps identified in the research are that it merely looked at hard news reports and that it did not investigate news-type (such as hard news or soft news) as a sampling parameter. It also used the Appraisal Theory to investigate media texts to determine units that were attitudinal and involved a negative or positive emotional state, or propositions that were epistemic and involved a degree of certainty of ‘sensationalising’ news. The current research investigated the frames that were used, standpoints considered, queer perspectives, and pure newsworthiness. The study was thus ‘journalism specific’ as it critically analysed, from an

intersectional perspective, the reporting of 'queercide' online. Grundlingh's (2018) reference to sensationalism, however, failed to operationalise the term in a way that would support research framing analysis.

Expanding on the findings of Grundlingh (2017), Nic Theo (2017) found that journalists who wrote anti-homophobic reports often seemed not to realise how their frames and representations might fail to encourage the empathic engagement of readers. Readers of these reports would then persist in their pre-existing homophobic biases. Theo (2017) thus argues that journalists use a semiotically subjective language that does not engage readers emotionally with LGBTIQ people in the real world. Through semantic and therefore emotional dissociation of readers from interviewees subjected to hate crimes, and a focus on the reporter whose voice becomes the consciousness with whom the reader engages, journalists therefore often fail to incorporate narrative frames of empathic engagement that represent LGBTIQ people beyond the identity-based categories of 'homosexual' or 'lesbian'. Therefore, through empathetic frames of engagement, a reporter could give LGBTIQ people a voice that acknowledges them as complex individuals. Therefore, a more compelling metatheoretical and journalistic framework for writing news about the LGBTIQ community is required to honestly address complex notions of 'queerness'. Such an approach will enable a journalist to act both as a pedagogue and as an agent of socio-political critique.

Theo's (2017) study also describes how the liberal South African Constitution promises protection on the basis of sexuality. However, persistent homophobic discrimination and violent sexual orientation-based hate crimes against them remain a testament of a deeply conservative and homophobic society. Theo argues that, in their role as the 'fourth estate', the South African media, which include the Internet, periodically publish articles and reports in response to discrimination, which furthers the homophobic agenda. Theo's study thus poses the question: "How can journalists who write to an unabashedly anti-homophobic agenda circumvent and/or disarm readers' pre-existing biases?" The study proposes a possible answer to this question as it recommends that news reports might adopt narrative forms that exclude 'homosexuals' from what is 'proper' and socially acceptable, and rather include them in approved or disapproved discourses of either liberal rights or moralistic and religious conservative discourses. This proposes that reporters of 'queercide' may narrate the lives of people subjected to homophobia in ways that allow their validation through news presentations that are abstracted from notions of whether they are morally intolerable or socially valuable. This process requires semiotic mechanisms that should represent all lives as important, thereby avoid defaming some (for example 'lesbians') as extra worthy of moralistic judgment. This would require a paradigm in which people are viewed in ways other than through the lenses of either journalistic best-practices or politics which, according to Theo (2017), currently evade notions of social acceptability of non-conforming sexualities, either by supporting or judging them. Theo (2017) also claims that contemporary media research

involves the effects of media on audiences as groups rather than on individuals by utilising socio-political research paradigms such as priming, agenda setting, and the Framing and Representation theory. These frameworks are relevant to policymakers whose activities in political and legal administration are aligned with the political goals of achieving policy change and legal reform. While policymakers have the contentious mandate to create party-affiliated and constituent narratives in reports in the news, journalists do not have this narratorial purpose, because news reporting is supposed to be positioned as exclusively non-fiction in which the professional standard of objectivity is pursued in the name of impartiality. Therefore, in linguistic-semiotic terms, journalists use both explicit and implicit rhetorical tools that need to make their stories seem verifiable and accurate. Due to this approach, according to Theo (2017), interviewees are relegated to providing 'invisible narrations'. When written as if 'objective', these accounts use quote-based narratives that imply that the report writers have no vested interest or subjective intentions in the content and ideologies they reflect, or are not themselves emotionally oriented, whether in support of or in opposition to the interviewees.

Although not an explicit purpose of this research, Theo (2017) concludes that the narrative framing by reporters of hate crimes fails to consider how news writing is a multi-directional communication process. This means that it needs to be a virtual conversation between reader, reporter, and interviewee. However, in his view reporters fail to take account of readers' worldviews and also encourage an emotive representation of the interviewee in terms that enable the reader to become part of the discussion. Theo (2017) purports that, in dealing with the dissociating effects of subjective language that is built into news narrations, reporters must engage in semiotic practices to connect with readers both cognitively and affectively, thereby enabling them to simulate the experiences of the interviewees while retaining their own emotions, thoughts, and desires. By utilising such practices, reporters could potentially allow readers to engage with the objects of homophobia as being similar-and-equal to themselves, yet at the same time being individual-and-different, by means of a complex imaginative method which entails taking up the subjective perspective of the people being reported on. By engaging with their reports at a semiotic level, reporters can thus implicitly acknowledge their narrations as diegetic and inclusivist rather than mimetic, and they can encourage a sense of engagement amongst readers who will then empathise with those subjected to homophobia. Victims of hate crimes could be represented at a deep level as choosing, what Judith Butler (1990) calls, 'social performances' that are based both on the dominant discourses and on their experiences, rather than being deterministically bound by essentialist characteristics. Here, Theo (2017) junctures with the work of Butler (1990) concerning the Standpoint Theory as they both claim that gender is socially constructed and produced from actions and behaviour that are constantly repeated. If such a narrative paradigm is applied, it could serve to re-orient readers. Theo (2017) further argues that semiotic construction could also serve as a self-perpetuating pedagogy against homophobia, as it challenges the essentialist idea that the LGBTIQ community is merely passive objects of discrimination. Instead, semiotic construction should confirm

that this community is instead valid subjects who are powerful, active contributors to the world. Such a 'queer' pedagogy entails risking the self by engaging with multiple identifications (rather than identities) from readers and this implies that, although not everyone might be 'queer', something queer might happen to anyone. Therefore, it is not the 'queer' pedagogy itself that changes the world – rather, the sociological worldview within which reader and reporter are immersed establishes the parameters of their empathetic experience (Butler, 1993). As it relates to journalistic professionalism and writer reputation, this implies that the semiotic structures that are engaged for reporting must be both useful in terms of the desired social change and be pragmatic in terms of how South African news reporting actually functions. In essence, reporters require constant evolution through paradigmatic crises to revise semiotic narrative representations that move beyond the mere popularisation of dominant stereotypes. This evolution requires mechanisms that will allow both the reporting of facts and the encouragement of discourses of human interaction. Journalists thus need to focus on subjectivity or objectivity and identity while they should also consider the historic present (where Foucault argues “we are merely actors”) and the values and codes of ethics that should underlie the specific narratorial or semiotic choices they make.

What was of significance to this research was that the study explains how the reporter of online news sets the agenda for readers, and not the victim or representative group. Theo (2017) further recommends the use of frames that reflect where and how online reporters consulted LGBTIQ stakeholders, as such consultation has often been avoided. As a South African study, Theo's study bridges the academic lacuna created by Chakraborti's (2017) more Eurocentric study, and it echoes how the ideological aim of liberal constitutions has not yet been reflected by the lived reality of minority groups. The study used the Framing Theory (along with the Agenda Setting and Priming theories) to investigate media effects on groups. Theo explains how this framework may be used to explain the collected data. The study also introduces codes to investigate where reporting should be more empathetic in order to reflect diegetic rather than sympathetic mimetics. These codes were then conceptualised under the **engendered, non-binary or neutral** and **ideological approach** themes. Finally, the study was of significance to the current research as it refers to the use of the Queer Theory as a pedagogy to engage with multiple identifications, which endears hate crime as a crime that could happen to anyone. A limitation of the study in terms of supporting this study, however, was that it specifically occupied a psychological discipline to affect change to journalistic narration, whereas this research firmly focused on communication and media fields. Also, the study called for a Russian Formalist approach, which was somewhat at odds with the critical relativist paradigm that the current research embraced and the former approach was therefore not considered. The main contribution of Theo's (2017) work was its elucidation of *semiotic subjectivised language*, and this understanding presented the research with an opportunity to bridge the gap in knowledge on *objective epistemic thematic frames* used in online journalism.



With reference to the works of Isaacs and Mthembu (2018), who clarified how perpetrators are framed in reports on GBV and fore fronted the impact of ‘accuracy’ and ‘headings’, and Grundlingh (2017), who referenced Jewkes (2015) as a principal progenitor of Newsworthiness, the theme of gender based violence (GBV) was explored in depth in the literature to highlight how online media content presents information on the killings of lesbians, and especially to elucidate the way in which LGBTIQ people are included in reports that are considered to be ‘newsworthy’.

### **3.4 Standpoints and ‘Queerness’: Attitudes towards LGBTIQ people**

Msibi (2011: 4) presents the following argument: “Being out, or outed, as LGBTIQ in many parts of Africa can be fatal”. For instance, in Mauritania, Sudan and in areas of Nigeria and Somalia people are sentenced to death for being homosexual. “Thirty-eight countries in Africa regard homosexuality as a crime which is punishable by imprisonment” (Jacoby, 2000: 68). Not only in Africa, but in countries such as Chechnya lesbians are commonly murdered in ‘honour killings’ (Power, 2019). Even in more liberal countries such as South Africa, “where homosexuality is protected by its Constitution, LGBTIQ people have been murdered and face frequent threats and abuse” (Msibi, 2011: 4). ‘Queercide’ is an extreme expression of social censorship (Teer-Tomaselli, 2019) and the journal articles and other texts included in the Background Chapter of this thesis contextualise how attitudes towards LGBTIQ people have been shaped by their historical persecution, framed as abhorrent in religious texts, and how legislative and socio-cultural practices and mores have left a legacy of life-threatening challenges, especially for lesbians. Against this background, this research sought to extract information from a range of literature sources to more fully construct the coding sheet that was used to gather data. The research also utilised various identified key concepts as a foundation for the study.

Having investigated the educational domain, Henry James Nichols (2016) claims that, after the ratification of the Constitution, the South African Schools Act of 1996 introduced an education system that challenges intolerance and discrimination. However, his findings demonstrated that, even though the Constitution allows for inclusive study, South African schools remain heteronormative and many LGBTIQ learners experience heterosexism daily. Thus, according to Nichols (2016), schools and classrooms still promote heteronormative and gender-normative behaviour, and thus LGBTIQ youth often experience emotional and physical harassment. The study used case studies and conducted “semi-structured interviews with eleven high-school learners at a co-ed school in the Gauteng province in South Africa” (Nichols, 2016: 13). From the data collected, Nichols (2016) found that high school learners have heterosexist and heteronormative ideas towards gender diversity and that unconditional acceptance of non-conforming sexualities are not taught in schools due to stereotyping, lack of knowledge, as well as ignorance. According to Msibi (2011), the LGBTIQ youth in South Africa have

negative experiences at school regarding their sexuality. These spaces are fraught with derogatory language, emotional segregation, bullying, physical violence and even murder. “Homophobia has become common – cases of ‘corrective rape’ are escalating and even extend beyond the LGBTIQ community to boys who are considered effeminate or girls thought to be ‘too butch’” (Van der Schyff, 2018: 45-46).

During the Apartheid era, millions of citizens were discriminated against. However, while numerous South Africans are actively trying to repair the legacy of Apartheid through programmes such as *Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment* (BBBEE), one group seems to be forgotten. Despite attempts to intervene and legislate the discrimination and prejudice against South African LGBTIQ individuals, homophobia continues (Nichols, 2016). Wilmot and Naidoo (2014: 117) praise the legislative attempts by South Africa to overcome homophobia, but at the same time lament the reality of persisting discrimination against this minority group:

“The fifth country to legalise same sex marriage and the first in Africa, South Africa is lauded for its commitment to human rights. In 1996, the Department of Education included an anti-discrimination clause to ensure the freedoms of all; however, this ideology is not practised in local schools.”

A study that was conducted by Dheevia Bhana (2014) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, found that one in five gay and lesbian school children had been raped or sexually abused at school, with 68% of them reporting victimisation. Of significance to the research was that the study showed how youths identifying as LGBTIQ were discriminated against at school. It is significant that many young people at the basic level of education experience homophobia through verbal and emotional abuse as well as physical violence and the real threat of murder. Clearly, as a minority group, the LGBTIQ community is not allowed to participate in the freedoms that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights promise (Justice.gov.za, 2019). Bhana (2014) argues that, even though learners believe in equality, being confronted with homosexuality still makes them uncomfortable and they express a heteronormative and heterosexist attitude. The latter study is supported by similar studies such as those of Groelle (2014), Theo (2017), and Isaacs and Mthembu (2018). All these authors agree that, in South Africa, policy does not match practice. Their findings in general also echo the insight provided by Balani (2018) that South Africans are being murdered as a result of their sexual orientation as a direct result of homophobic attitudes. For me, a limitation of these studies was that they focused on secondary school contexts (Grade 8 to Grade 10) and not on online environments. This means that the information provided by these studies could only be applied as insights to understand LGBTIQ lived realities.

In a journal article Valery Ferim (2016: 26) writes that South Africa “...is currently the only country in Africa where same-sex marriage is legal, whereas the rest of the continent largely detest, misunderstand,

criminalise and severely punish homosexuality [all sic]”. This, according to the article, is due to a “desire by closely knit African communities in preserving [sic] traditional African customs relating to family, marriage and procreation, hence reinforcing the belief that homosexuality is un-African”. Traditional patriarchy governments thus police sexual behaviour to entrench heterosexuality under the disguise of ‘African culture and identity’. This has resulted in “a culture of male’s entitlement to women and toxic masculinities which are more evident in rural areas of the country” (Ferim, 2016: 28). The latter study combined secondary and empirical data to interrogate how Xhosa traditions and institutions such as *okutwala* (abduction of young girls for the purpose of marriage), *ulwaluko* (a manhood ritual) and *lobola* (payment made for a bride) spread violence towards lesbians in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study supports the premise that the sexist and patriarchal nature of South African traditional practices predominantly accounts for the violence towards lesbians. The study takes into consideration the culture-based nature of the research problem and therefore interactive research methods such as key informant focus group discussions and interviews were used to gather the qualitative data. The study also refers to *3rd Degree*, a programme that was aired on e-tv, a South African television channel, on 5 July 2011, which showed the extent of homophobia in South Africa. Men who were interviewed were vocal about their hatred of homosexuals and publicly expressed their wish to kill all homosexuals and rape lesbians to purge what they considered to be a social ill. In the same programme, lesbians were interviewed who said they were terrified to walk in the streets as they had been beaten in front of police who did nothing to prevent or stop these attacks. The study found overwhelming evidence that, despite the legal stature of homosexuality in South Africa, the practice is still widely resisted within rural communities of the Eastern Cape Province. Also, violence towards gays is not as prevalent as violence towards lesbians. Lesbians in the Eastern Cape Province have been sporadically raped and murdered with the former being to ‘correct’ their sexuality and attempt to turn them heterosexual. As homosexuality is resented within many local communities (Sicetsha, 2018), acts of violence targeted at homosexuals seem almost always to be looked upon with apathy.

The insights of Ferim’s (2016) article were of significance to this research as it exposed systematic and ubiquitous attitudes of members of society who expressed murderous intent against LGBTIQ people, and lesbians in particular. This assisted the development of codes that were used in this research to investigate online reporting frameworks. The article also elicited understanding of a South African cultural context and illuminated why, for example, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) persistently condemns homosexuality as un-African, morally abhorrent, and a threat to family life. This organisation insists on the removal of homosexual rights from the Constitution (Section 9(3)). Ferim (2016) extends this understanding by stating that Christianity has also been identified as one of the supporters of homophobia. Her insights thus assisted the research in constructing codes of **secularism** versus **non-secularism** to guide the investigation of how online reports present and frame ‘queericide’ as an LGBTIQ issue. The major limitation of her study in support of mine,

however, was that her interviews were conducted through ethnographic means, whereas this research specifically wanted to explore case studies of online reports. Also, her study was heavily influenced by socio-cultural tradition (the Xhosa culture in the Eastern Cape), whereas mine would span across cultural and traditional divides (Craig, 2017). The current research investigation was also underpinned by the Critical Tradition of communication and thus perceives the achievement of objectives from a paradigmatic perspective that occupied different ontological intentions. However, Ferim's article supports De Beauvoir's (1959) notion that the lived experiences of lesbians and the LGBTIQ community interplay with the attitudes of the community – thus violence will occur in areas where intolerance resides.

Whereas Ferim's (2016) article considers the socio-cultural motivation behind homophobia, Francisco Perales's (2018) study suggests that there are other, more psychological reasons for prejudicial attitudes toward the LGBTIQ community. Perales (pp. 16-18) argues that "there are well-known correlations between low cognitive ability and support of biased and discriminatory attitudes". This journal article adds to existing knowledge "...by providing the first analyses of the associations between attitudes towards LGBT issues and cognitive ability in a non-American sample [Australia]" (Perales, 2008: 18). The study did so by comparing "three measures of cognitive ability and examining the effects of education and cognitive ability". These findings were based on a high-quality, national Australian dataset (n = 11 564) that indicated that "...individuals with low cognitive ability are less likely to support equal rights for gay and lesbian couples" (Perales, 2008: 20). A novel aspect that this study introduced is that intersections between education and cognitive ability could be investigated although it should be extremely sensitively done. A noteworthy suggestion by the Perales (2008) study is that, the longer respondents are exposed to education (from basic to university and colleges), the more it promotes the formation and consolidation of egalitarian socio-political attitudes. This might be through exposure to humanistic ideals, a meritocratic system of achievement, and liberal values (Carvacho, Zick, Haye, González, Manzi, Kocik, & Bertl, 2013; Schoon, Cheng, Gale, Batty, & Deary, 2010; Surridge, 2016). When Ohlander, Batalova, and Treas (2005: 83) investigated the attitudes of respondents who had participated in tertiary education, they exposed individuals who were leaning towards "...left political beliefs, such as feminism and support for civil liberties, and [they] promoted critical skills that helped counteract prejudice, such as perspective taking and cognitive flexibility". The study included data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics survey (HILDA) in Australia (Watson & Wooden, 2012: 3). The survey is a household panel study that collected annual information from a sample over the 2001–2015 period. It was one of the largest panel surveys in the world and part of the Cross-National Equivalent File. The HILDA survey featured a complex, probabilistic sampling design that included participants who were representative of Australians aged 15 and older. The information was collected through a combination of self-completion questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Watson and Wooden (2012: 24) state that the HILDA survey "captures attitudes towards equal rights for gay and

lesbian couples through a question asking respondents to rate their agreement with the statement that homosexual couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples do". The data revealed that Australians had a relatively high level of support for equal rights for gay and lesbian couples and showed that the greatest support for equal rights were amongst those with tertiary education qualifications. When both cognitive ability and education were introduced in the model, the scale of the  $\beta$  coefficient on the cognitive ability variable decreases by 18.4%, and the scale of the coefficients for the independent variables capturing highest educational qualification decreased by 35.7% for certificates or diplomas, 45.5% for exit level schooling, and 38.6% for respondents who had not finished their exit level schooling. The latter study, including its Australian survey findings, contributed to the current research by showing that education stimulates non-prejudicial thinking and thus suggesting that this may affect the way in which readers build frameworks. Hence, from a quantitative perspective, it is argued that the reporter uses factual information from where the most factual reports will reside (Perales, 2018). Watson and Wooden's (2012) study left an academic lacuna, though, as it is limited to findings from an Australian perspective. Moreover, Australia's same-sex prejudice is rooted in an environment where access to education and higher exit levels for schooling are more prevalent than in South Africa, and the findings may then have been expressed in a way that may be conceptually different to the South African context. For instance, Australia has an 85-90% pass rate for school leavers, whereas South Africa has battled to attain a pass rate of more than 70% for these cohorts (The Conversation, 2019). This research is not claiming a causality between incidents of homophobia and level of education in a country, but there is a correlation that require more investigation. In that sense, the article does link low cognitive ability and a lack of critically evaluating online content with prejudice against same-sex couples. For example, Australia has a higher acceptance rate for same sex relationships than South Africa, according to Perales (2018).

Heteronormativity and heterosexism are inescapable in the South African society. Both Ferim (2016) and as Perales (2018) confirm this statement, but neither of these studies describe how Queer Theory, which was a theoretical framework for this research, may be used to contextualise data from case studies. A study conducted by Mark Wilmota and Devika Naidoo (2014: 13) explored, "through a content analysis of widely used Grade 10 Life Orientation (LO) textbooks, if and how the content was framed by Queer Theory". The latter quantitative study examined the coverage of sexualities and qualitatively examined how sexualities were constructed and projected in the texts. They applied a mixed methodology that provided a robust understanding of queerness in text for school learners. The quantitative analysis revealed "a low percentage of statements devoted to sexuality overall and the normalisation of heterosexuality mainly through the exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) minorities", but also through techniques of hierarchisation, differentiation and homogenisation (Wilmota & Naidoo, 2014: 29). The qualitative analysis revealed a lacuna in "information about sexualities and, in its place, a moralistic ideological and simplistic approach" (Wilmota & Naidoo,

2014: 33). Wilmota and Naidoo (2014: 32) thus argue that “heteronormativity has led to the normalisation of heterosexuality in the curriculum”. By using the Queer Theory, they managed to expose the ‘message’ of underlying heteronormativity in school by highlighting that the curriculum is neutral and non-sexualised. According to Dennis Sumara and Brent Davis (1999), Queer Theory urges the responsibility of the curriculum to interrupt heteronormative thinking and Queer theorists have argued that “school curriculum should promote a culture of human rights and challenge heteronormative thinking to promote social justice and also to create possibilities for interpreting, representing and perceiving experience” (Epstein, O’Flynn, & Telford, 2001: 141). Many studies of the content in Life Orientation textbooks have noted that LGBTIQ sexualities have been associated with negative contexts. For instance, in 80% of texts, references to the LGBTIQ community relate to sexual abuse, prostitution, and sexually transmitted diseases. LGBTIQ individuals are depicted mainly as victims of social discrimination as they are generally referred to in these texts as ‘other’ groups that are seemingly ‘at risk’ of, for instance, depression and suicide, HIV and AIDS, and substance abuse. Discrimination in their context is defined only in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and race. Thus, the appeal that textbooks make for tolerance is not founded on a sound constitutional basis, as the call for tolerance towards LGBTIQ people appears to focus on personal conduct and choice rather than on their constitutional right that is fundamental to all citizens. Thus “heteronormativity and heterosexism strongly influence representation of all sexualities in the South African LO textbooks” (Wilmota & Naidoo, 2014: 16).

It may be argued that the normalisation of heterosexuality occurs as a result of, first, the overt omission of reference to LGBTIQ sexualities in textbooks and, secondly, the strong assumption of heterosexuality in content regarding relationships of marriage, safe sex, dating practices and the family. LGBTIQ learners are unfairly represented or underrepresented altogether in these textbooks. “The normalisation of heterosexuality through exclusion, and heteronormativity through the making of heterosexual assumptions” create, what Alan Sears (2003: 186) refers, to “a toxic environment for young people who are LGBT and others who are non-conformists”. Thirdly, the normalisation of heterosexuality in the textbooks leads to the ‘othering’ of LGBTIQ sexualities from heterosexuality and an artificial homogenisation of two separate types of sexualities. Finally, heteronormativity occurs through the placing of heterosexuality as superior to LGBTIQ sexuality through devices such as normalising exclusion and judgements, which perpetuate heterosexism.

Wilmota and Naidoo’s (2014) study provided the current study with insights into using mixed methodology to interrogate a research problem and issue within a South African context. It also supported the use of the Queer Theory to frame gender narratives and representation in the public sphere. The study also significantly exposed negative representations of homosexuals at the basic level of education. Homosexuality is purported to be a matter of personal conduct and choice and not a

fundamental constitutional right. However, the study was deemed inadequate for additional guidance of this study as the corroborating sources were rather dated – many were older than 2005. On the positive side, the study illustrated the importance of investigating negative frames used in texts concerning the LGBTIQ community, and this insight guided the investigation into the frames used in the reports that this research perused. Also, because the study investigated Life Orientation instructional textbooks to extract data, it was limited in scope and could not be used to validate the data extracted from various online reports on 'queercide'.

A study that I referred to that posed a critical argument for the use of the Standpoint Theory was conducted by Yin Paradies (2018). This study built upon the proletariat perspective of Marxism (Cockburn, 2015) and explained the Standpoint Theory as arising in the 1980s from feminist concerns about an existing masculine monopoly of knowledge (Hartsock, 1983). According to Paradies (2018), the Standpoint Theory seeks to de-centre 'truth' as monolithic and to disrupt the notion that exists in bodies that conform to normative ideals. Such ideals are, for instance, epitomised by those who are young, male, heterosexual, White, slim, able-bodied, and affluent (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991) and thus who ultimately those who occupy a powerful position due to their background and/or appearance. Even though the theory was developed with concern for the oppressed – as it junctures with the ideas of Freire (1970) – there is the contention that it is inherently inclusive as it is about both equitable resources and opportunities for all people and about recognising societal power (Braun, 2016: 81-82).

Therefore, despite its clear social justice lineage and critical origins, it can be argued that the Standpoint Theory fails to transcend power relations and, instead, inverts them. The 'centre-margin' binary that is intrinsic to the Standpoint Theory (Hancock 2016) suggests the very positivism it seeks to invalidate (Hills-Collins, 2000) and is indicative of the origins of this theory in 'enlightenment' (Hekman, 1997: 401).

What Paradies (2018) perhaps fails to suggest is that the truth must be presented persuasively, because no opinion is intrinsically more compelling than another (Hekman, 1997). This suggests that online reporters have the opportunity to sway public opinion because, beyond the challenges posed by complex dynamics and the intersectionality of marginalised groups and those in power positions, standpoint epistemologies are not equipped to deal with the rising fluidity of singular identities, for example the rise of transgenderism. In this context, Paradies (2018) asks how the standpoint of a woman who was once a man compares to the standpoint of those who were raised as female from birth. Rather than being novel, the mutability inherent in such intersectionality merely adds gender to the list of already existing identities which could vary over time for any one individual. Therefore, with the Standpoint Theory as the foundation, the current study claims that the Internet acts as 'a mutual affirmation apparatus' that is powered by the social media economy through recursive algorithms that value the 'logic of big data'.

This view echoes that of Baudrillard (1965), who claims that, in a neo-liberal, hyper-capitalistic online environment, society has become less critical while fighting over superficial opinions. Paradies (2018) therefore argues that academics, and by extension reporters of news events in this research, need to consider issues of affect, emotion and action (Paradies, 2018). Her views that are based on her findings thus enhanced understanding and knowledge of the Standpoint Theory, as she describes intersectionality as a challenge of the Standpoint Theory that needs to be considered when an observation becomes too focused on prejudice and discrimination along a single axis of power and oppression. When this occurs, there is a lack of acknowledgment that all people have multiple identities and occupy multiple locations.

A limitation of the Standpoint Theory is that it fails to explain the positionality of lesbian women regarding online reports on 'queericide'. In the latter context, the contribution of the Standpoint Theory would be to interfere with pure scientific facts as a tool of oppression, which is the idea behind the 'post-truth' society in the Twenty-First Century. Thus, according to the assumptions of Standpoint Theory, objective facts are more able to shape public opinion than to appeal to emotional and personal beliefs. Attitudes toward lesbians that have been shaped by 'objective facts' have thus created a reality wherein violence may be expressed without much recourse for the victims in the media (Morris, 2017). However, the Standpoint Theory can still provide insight into the 'ideal'. Therefore, even though post-truth Internet reports are a staple Twenty-First Century media tool, the naïveté of the Standpoint Theory, in this regard, may provide some support to create a journalistic framework, with additional considerations of **affect**, **emotion** and **action**. The article by Morris (2017) further provides insight into how the Internet acts as an important medium to spread dominant opinions, and this underscores the importance of critical reading and fact checking to identify elements that impact and convey the 'truth' in online reports of 'queericide'.

A limitation of the study by Paradies (2018) for the research was that it rejected the traditional Standpoint Theory and opted to include more imaginative elements to disturb the present torpor of academic scholars. Also, she neglected to support the recommendations with the scientific rigour required to properly critique the theory and recommend interventions. Paradies' (2018) work did, however, further equip the research with critical insight into the Standpoint Theory in a way that broadened the theoretical scope for application in this critical relativist study.

According to the articles/studies/reports by Msibi (2011), Wilmot and Naidoo (2014), Bhana (2014), Grozelle (2014), Nichols (2016), Theo (2017) and Mthembu (2018), openly gay women in South Africa are discriminated against in some of the most violent expressions of discrimination and hate. These persistent attitudes are seen in cultural and religious aspects of the South African landscape and create an ideal breeding ground for 'queericide' to erupt if citizens remain uneducated (Perales, 2018). This



theme contextualises the use of the Queer Theory and the Standpoint Theory as supports the defence and practical utility of investigating the topic through a mixed methods approach. The theory also enhanced the research's ability to problematise how violence against LGBTIQ people in general, and lesbians in particular, is framed in South Africa.

### **3.5 Coverage of LGBTIQ issues in South Africa in general, and those of lesbians in particular**

It may be argued that the news media in South Africa are some of the most active in the world as reporters were engaged as key allies in the fight against Apartheid and have been integral in the process of becoming free and independent by challenging political oppression and civil inequalities (Du Preez, 2013). However, the visibility of marginalised groups and the hardships they face are often underreported. According to Michael Morris (2017), an independent journalist, the significant economic impact of the LGBTIQ community's buying power, the so-called 'Pink Rand' is hardly researched or stated in the media. Conversely, great emphasis is placed on the discrimination against them and the risks that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are confronted with daily. It was these factors that frames the 'queer' narrative in this thesis. Stanley Cohen (1972) first proposed the term 'moral panics' to explain how groups are identified as a threat to dominant social values and cause deep-seated anxiety, and how the media may amplify this threat by presenting audiences with negative stereotypes. Disasters and periods of distress are often blamed on these "folk devils as scapegoats" (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). Although Cohen was not specifically referring to the LGBTIQ community in 1972, lesbians were – as they still are – ostracised and vilified (Lake, 2014).

The Christian Right movement is looking to Africa for its pro-family politics, which is explicitly homophobic, with people like Pastor Steven Anderson from the US delivering anti-gay rhetoric calling for Africans to "kill gays and lesbians" and to mobilise support for the movement (*DW News*, 2014: 3). According to Lake (2014: 77), "South African lesbians are recognised as a vulnerable minority and are victims of 'corrective rape' and other forms of discrimination. South Africa's transition to democracy has been fraught with sexual identity struggles", including the lack of information about how issues affecting this group are being reported, who write those reports, and what the nature of the narratives is of the reports being created (Du Preez, 2013).

The dearth of research on how online reporting of GBV and LGBTIQ issues (including 'queercide'), were framed and about who wrote these reports highlights the relevance of the current study. This thesis is that there should be a coalescence of the 1996 South African Constitution – which promises freedom from targeted and violent discrimination for all – and the responsibilities of journalists and civil advocacy groups when lesbians' rights are considered. The South African legislative landscape thus creates a context wherein online reporting, ideally, is under affirmative obligation to comply with issue

reporting and must investigate, talk about and combat 'queercide' based on a synthesis of the Constitutional and South Africa's journalistic standards on news reporting. Such reports should also include the reader as an active 'fact checker' to hold reporters accountable for the ideals espoused by theorists, activists and politicians. If this corrective commitment is imposed, queer women will be able to exercise their freedom, fully and freely, as promised to them in a post-Apartheid South Africa where victims such as Eudy Simelane and Noxolo Xakeka now have a voice. The following studies were perused and provided understanding of how the media in South Africa cover LGBTIQ issues.

Amy Adamczyk, Chunrye Kim and Lauren Paradis (2015: 198) found "a wealth of information about the extent to which global communities disapprove of homosexuality". However, their study did not reveal much about the frames through which gay and lesbian couples were viewed in reports. The aim of the study was to better understand the LGBTIQ community as framed in the public press, and they included online reporting to determine how different contexts shaped gay and lesbian discourse. From an analysis of approximately 400 international newspaper articles, the study found that homosexuality was framed differently in the United States of America, Uganda and South Africa. These nations were selected for the study because all three had a high level of religious belief but were at different economic developmental stages. Adamczyk *et al.* (2015) drew from cultural sociology and sociology of religion and found that the United States of America was more likely to frame homosexuality as a civil rights issue and that it used claim makers and entertainers more readily for awareness campaigns than South Africa and Uganda. In this context it is noteworthy that the media occupy two different but interrelated positions. That is, they have the potential to influence an individual's as well as collective attitudes, but they can also express the "collective consciousness" of a nation's values (Edelstein, 1982). This then presents the media as co-existing with constituents in the same cultural system.

Discourse about the morality of homosexuality has changed in the last 50 years, which has in turn reflected a change in global attitudes (Thomas & Olson, 2012). Therefore, because newspapers are sensitive to the shifting values of their readers, the media professional is the instigator of how the LGBTIQ community is framed. A study by Adamczyk *et al.* (2015) tested the hypothesis that South Africa will be less likely than the United States of America to discuss homosexuality in the context of civil liberties and rights. The study found that, after decades of colonisation, the discourse emerged in many sub-Saharan African countries "that LGBTIQ individuals should be given the same rights and privileges as the West" (Shoko, 2010: 37). The article speculates that one of the reasons for this emulation might be that "some African nations feel bullied to conform or that, historically, countries from the global North have always had greater political, media and economic power, which they use to influence other countries" (Shoko, 2010: 45). These dependencies will subside as African countries become more developed. The study therefore found that South Africa, as the strongest sub-Saharan African country, had the highest economic independence and would risk losing its ties with more Northern influencers to grant rights to LGBTIQ individuals based on its own Afrocentric ethics. What

was not known at the time, was how this independence manifested in online reports of LGBTIQ issues, such as the ‘queercide’ of lesbians. Still, the study found that South African newspapers were 22% less likely to discuss homosexuality in the context of rights than, for instance, *USA Today*, an American newspaper. It was also found that newspaper articles that discussed homosexuality in terms of rights often mentioned that policy was misaligned with public opinion as it did not support, for example, same-sex marriages. The study showed how South African attitudes, being situated between the liberal United States of America and the more conservative Uganda in terms of gays and lesbians, demonstrated acceptance of the rights of minority and marginalised communities. The study also showed the relationship between audience temperament and values and the media's influence through representation in the way it reported on LGBTIQ issues. Finally, it described how economically more depressed areas, such as Uganda, tended to have more prejudicial attitudes toward lesbians. The more obvious limitations of the study, as it related to the current research, was its focus on religion, morality and homosexuality, whereas this research focused on the framing and representation of ‘queercide’ as a LGBTIQ issue in online reports and how this knowledge could contribute to the development of a journalistic framework.

Tommaso M. Milani is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa and is the Co-Editor of the journals *African Studies* and *Gender and Language*. Milani's (2015) explored an incident that took place at the Johannesburg Pride in 2012. Activist group *One in Nine Campaign* attempted to stop the Pride parade by means of a die-in protest, resulting in violence and resistance from the participants. The non-governmental organisation defines itself as “a feminist collective motivated by the desire to live in a society where women are the agents of their own lives” ([www.oneinnine.org.za](http://www.oneinnine.org.za)). During the Pride parade, a group of mainly black women carrying life-sized figures, lay flat on the street tarmac before the procession, creating a human roadblock of bodies in front of the incoming celebratory pageant. Carrying the signs “Dying for justice” and “No cause for celebration”, a few other women stood behind the strip of bodies and asked participants to stop marching and hold a minute of silence in memory of all the Black lesbian women and gender non-normative individuals who had been killed in South Africa because of their non-compliance with gender and sexual normativity. This led to conflict between the non-profit organisation and Pride-goers. The intention of the article was to offer a more multifaceted reading of the event than the media representations, which espoused a clear distinction between a depoliticised Pride and a politically charged protest. Milani's (2015) argument in the article is that the Pride parade and the *One in Nine* protest were both public enactments of a homosexual discourse, or what can also be called ‘sexual citizenship’. The idea of sexual citizenship seeks to encapsulate the human-spatial synergy, together with its semiotic and political implications. In the article, Milani (2015) explains that the two strands of socio-linguistic investigations, namely language attitudes and language policy, omit sexuality, being more concerned with multilingualism. This semiotic phenomenon, argues Milani

(2015), is tied to ethnic tensions in nation states but does not necessarily reflect on sexuality or gender. Therefore, in many South African media texts, sexuality and the violence committed as a response to gender non-conformity, reflect an “absent presence” (Derrida, 1997) that can be mobilised to bring language and citizenship and linguistic landscape research into dialogue. According to Milani (2015) sexual citizenship should include a “parallel discursive area where members of subordinate groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser, 1992: 123). Post-Apartheid South Africa is an example of how a political and media entity can control its anti-homosexual rhetoric by regulating itself and internalising human rights (Mutua, 2002: 10), including the rights of lesbians. Milani (2015) reiterates the findings by Msibisi (2012; 2015; 2016), Buiten and Naidoo (2016), and Chakraborti (2017) that studies interrogating the coverage of South African LGBTIQ issues in general and lesbian issues in particular, remain sparse and fail to present robust investigation to the how and why of such issues. Milani’s article contributed to the research by guiding the way in which a case study could be investigated using the Queer Theory to contextualise and understand the data. This article introduces the term ‘sexual citizenship’ that is defined as “a queer, anti-normative linguistic tactic that seeks to capture the spatial nature of sexual politics as conveyed through different forms of meaning making”. In essence, this means how urban spaces are used to present language to create acknowledgement of LGBTIQ issues (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016: 15). However, the significance of this research was vested in the two strands of sociolinguistics, namely ‘language attitudes’ (thus, the reality) and ‘language policy’ (thus, the ideal) as reflections of a queer stance in discourse studies. Also, the article discusses the appearance and significance of fake news in supporting heteronormative power positions by explaining that often, even LGBTIQ stakeholders (thus, gay and lesbian websites writing reports about LGBTIQ issues such as ‘queercide’) fail to create activism and support for those issues in a *habitus* or *rapture* (or *momento mori*) dichotomy. The article more explicitly bases its findings on the practice-observation, which did not align with the methodology utilised for this research. Many supporting sources referred to are also dated as they are older than 2007, which affects the reliability of the article and its validity in terms of the current research. To overcome this limitation, this research appropriated specific elements of sociolinguistics when in constructing the framework of online reports focusing on ‘queercide’. To support this development, James Lotter’s (2018) definition of ‘homopopulism’, which was formulated after the Orlando shooting in the US, best supported the construction of ‘sexual citizenship’, thus introducing probative language use to uncover reporting attitudes. Here, ‘homopopulism’ refers to the inclusion of the politics of fear of the ‘other’ against the backdrop of a declining neo-liberal world order, where the visibility of lesbian rights causes resistance and creates new marginalising structures that threaten *bona fide* citizenry. ‘Homopopulism’, therefore reveals the queer logics of the fearful queer sovereign subjects that authorise populism, and the fear-based sovereign leaders who deploy it.

It is undeniable that a passionate opposition to gay rights persists in South Africa. The studies included to explore this theme support the idea that these attitudes range from an increase in positivity and acceptance and improved visibility in the media to disapproval and active campaigns to eliminate LGBTIQ individuals. Milani (2015) argues that there are conflicting ideas about how to address the problem even within the LGBTIQ community, and the article cites Lotter (2018) and Adamczyk *et al.* (2015) to punctuate how important media are in fuelling, through homopopulism or education, societal perceptions and attitudes.

### **3.6 Online consumption of reports: Eco-chambers or fact-checkers?**

Although not an explicit objective of this research, considering the online media audience of reports on 'queericide' was significant in contextualising the implications of the frames identified in this research on journalistic principles for online writing. Therefore, this theme is not part of the research proper, but rather supports the recommendations chapter. When the research on the works of Freire were considered as an ideological foundation for this research, the Standpoint Theory and the structural capabilities of the online medium, there was no way to avoid the active reader-audience contribution to the construction of a journalistic framework for the improvement of quality news reporting online. Although exclusion became a critique on the capabilities of this research to construct a fully developed journalistic frame. The public marketplace is where conversations about issues such as those affecting the LGBTIQ community have been transformed into virtual spaces whose infrastructure and framework are controlled by private interests to censor and survey the information being presented to audiences (Hamelink, 2015: 255). It is this space that controls how those audiences then consume, judge and spread that information. The following articles were therefore perused as they presented new findings concerning online spaces as dialogic spheres for message construction.

The first article perused was based on a recommended course outline developed by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The course framework was criticised by Louise North (2010: 20) for "the absence of substantive education about gender issues and newsroom culture in university journalism courses" as this "helps to maintain systemic gender inequality in the industry" and extends to reports written online (North, 2010: 21). More recently, Sustainable Development Goal 5 also referred to the role of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in women's empowerment which, by extension, includes lesbian women. Thus, research into developing a course outline offered the recommendation for changes towards more gender sensitive media and ICT policy. These changes are to meet the needs of communication and information industries and should be adopted to educate emerging media reporters and journalism practitioners about the importance of creating gender sensitive media structures and content that reflect ideological imperatives. Changes in the media have primarily concentrated on technological innovation in reporting

but not on the implications of the production of content for LGBTIQ rights. However, gender sensitivity in media and journalism education is not necessarily regarded as the starting point for changing media operations and content. Because of the influence of feminist scholars such as De Beauvoir, Butler and Dorothy Smith who, together with activists and women media workers created salience for gender issues, education has been recognised as a strategic domain for the promotion of change (Freire, 1970). According to the coursework recommendation, “gender mainstreaming in journalism was first adopted by the *Inter-Press Service News Agency* which implemented the policy in 1994 to improve gender equality in both news content and media structures” (Gertseema, 2014: 72) and this approach was later also adopted by *Media House Policy*, “a resource to promote gender-ethical journalism”. The training outline is based on the contributions of educators, scholars and media practitioners globally. Some of the guidelines include implementing the gender mainstreaming principles in the media and journalism education field, and habituating a diversity of dimensions. This involves an institutional normative framework where “gender equality and gender mainstreaming principles are implemented throughout the curricula, including the adoption of a code to prevent discrimination, harassment, [and] unequal treatment” (Gertseema, 2014: 75). It also proposes to foster consistent content and gender-responsive pedagogical approaches. Some of the recommendations are:

“...[the promotion of] parity of male and female students at schools in all activities, programmes, curricula development and course content which actively focus on gender specific courses within programmes that should be dependent on a gender-sensitive perspective, as well as training lecturers on feminist theories and methodologies to build on the richness of gender analyses and approaches through relevant learning materials such as readings and texts on intersectionality in gender” (Made, 2009: 92).

According to findings by UNESCO (2018), female students at universities outnumber their male contemporaries when they enter the professional field. However, these women tend to have lower status as they are employed to occupy lower income positions and generally find it difficult to reach equality within media and ICT industries. Only a very few are ever promoted to senior and managerial roles in media organisations. Therefore, without women occupying these higher ranked roles, media content is often negatively affected. To train a more gender-aware generation of professionals that may contribute to implementing gender equal principles and gender equal practices in both media content and structures, UNESCO, in partnership with organisations such as UniTWIN University Network on Gender Media and ICTs, has urged member states, universities and other training institutions to adopt a policy and a plan of action on gender equality, particularly where “journalism and communication programmes are offered to guarantee gender mainstreaming in their journalism and communication programmes, with special attention given to digital transformations that have gendered implications for the profession” (Made, 2009: 103). This article suggests that there is a need for a change in journalism curricula for online writing to address gender inequality. Historically, gender mainstreaming for online

content was already of importance in journalism and the digital media industry in 1994 with the *Press Service News Agency*. Media policy and curricula in developing countries such as America also called for the inclusion of feminist theory, such as the Standpoint and Queer theories, to improve writing that is gender egalitarian, critically analysed, and involves intersectionality (Jackoby, 2000).

Although there exists a hypothesis that there are more female online media content writers than males, the patriarchal nature of the journalism industry still means that fewer women occupy managerial roles than males (Boumans, Trilling, & Vliegthart, 2018). This could explain why there is a ‘gaze is male’ perspective in online media content. The article reinforces the idea that there is a need to train online content writers so that they are more gender-aware and implement gender equality principles and practices. A limitation of this article for the current study was that it did not address the research problem explicitly, although it contributed to the findings and recommendations chapter as the results addressed gaps in the journalism curricula of universities and other training facilities, which was tangential to the purpose of this research.

The second and final article by Andrea Mariko Grant (2019) describes websites as providing important spaces of aspiration, self-making and active debate. These online platforms for instance allow Rwandans to participate in transnational networks of cultural production and they can therefore participate as connected and ‘modern’ global citizens. Unfortunately, these spaces are often irrational and undemocratic and are heavily gendered and seem disproportionately concerned with policing the behaviour and dress of young women who do not conform to normative standards from a socio-cultural, heteronormative and patriarchal perspective. By their very nature, these online spaces reveal on-going anxieties about women’s sexuality and place in the public sphere and create a moral panic which is especially prevalent when lesbian issues are discussed. Grant (2019: 12) therefore states:

“It seems clear that there are limits to what can and cannot be said in Rwanda’s public sphere and that a few authors have turned their attention to popular culture in the country and how digital technologies and social media might offer other possibilities to discuss gender in a neutral way, particularly for the Rwandan youth.”

Grant (2019) also claims that media technologies are more than mere transmitters of content as they have the ability to represent cultural ambitions, modes of leisure, political machineries, relationships between the body and technology, and the economy. Media technologies create infrastructures and uniquely ideal and perceptual environments and their effects cannot be controlled in advance and are always in some ways excessive. It may be hypothesised that online debates about how women behave, dress and generally perform their *femaleness* reveal on-going anxieties about women’s sexuality and place in the public sphere. The article argues that, although the Internet in Rwanda can create new

spaces of debate and self-making for sexual minorities such as lesbians, it remains heavily influenced by heterosexism. The broader study comprised a 16-month ethnographic fieldwork period in Rwanda between 2011 and 2013, and the data were obtained from interviews with artists, Internet users and entertainment journalists. The article suggests that new media entrepreneurs are constrained by the limits of the technologies – such as dysfunctions of information – available to them, which is apparent when observing how such a media entrepreneur tries to develop a website using slang, entertainment and everyday values of urban life in Kigali, Rwanda. The content of the website used in Grant's (2019: 46) study includes "rumours and gossip about young women and their sexuality" which, although not a new phenomenon, is more visible and easier to track with the Internet and social media. In Rwanda, this means that "young women are criticised for acting without values determined by patriarchal cultural contexts" (Grant, 2019: 48). Entertainment websites reveal that tropes about 'loose women' or women that 'behave more like men' continue to circulate, suggesting that the digital youth convened by entertainment websites remains highly patriarchal. This phenomenon reveals a gap between more liberal gender rhetoric and its practices. Although online coverage of female celebrities works to enforce patriarchal understandings of their role in society through story narratives, this does not mean that other viewpoints could not be expressed by those who actively oppose such representations, particularly in the 'comments' section. The significance of this study is that it shows online content to have the potential, even in stifling LGBTIQ geo-political contexts, to create awareness and social change as a 'bottom-up' practice where communities in remote locations are able to set national agendas. The study was based on investigations of primary and ethnographic fieldwork on entertainment journalists, Internet users and artists, who all provided robust primary data from an African perspective. However, it was found that the ability for online reporters to affect any influence through their writing in the developing South was limited by partial access to technology and that this warranted the development of interventions to bridge the digital divide between areas situated in the more liberal North and conservative South. In developed countries, where Internet technologies are more advanced and their use more ubiquitous, there is better evolved collaboration in the discussion surrounding gender issues. It is therefore important to consider the stories and slang used in local areas to fully understand the local realities of a country's citizenry, including the South African LGBTIQ community. In Rwanda, as is the case in South Africa (Sicetsha, 2018), women are confronted with a highly patriarchal online public sphere. This is, however, somewhat mitigated through 'comments' sections, where available. This supported the use of 'comment' elements in the quantitative section of the thesis.

The article made it clear that the democratic potential of the Internet should not be naively accepted, and more research is required about online content and feminist discourse. The study that was conducted in Rwanda regarding LGBTIQ rights is limited in the sense that these rights lag far behind those accorded women in South Africa (Msibisi, 2012), and this might affect frames used in online reporting of case studies on 'queericide'. However, this article does refer to how the political environment, from



an epistemological perspective, influences the way in which online reports will be written. Rwanda's journalistic practices are considered more restrictive than South Africa's commitment to freedom of speech. Here, the focus is on popular culture and not hard news and or reports on 'queercide' by interest groups.

Because of the Freirian underpinning of the ontological belief in how this critical investigation of the issue of 'queercide' had to be investigated, coupled with the use of Standpoint and Queer theories, there was a post-research obligation to recommend the inclusion of *audiences* in the creation of a journalistic framework for reporting on LGBTIQ issues. Moreover, this should occur through extreme collaboration.

In summation, proclamations of how the South African Constitution, liberal and transformative as it is in its intent, fails to protect and prosper the LGBTIQ community in their lived experience and the proposition that there are Machiavellian, heterosexist forces actively at play in society to target lesbians for murderous purposes, are serious. These claims need to be weighted and critically considered for evidentiary support. The themes introduced in this chapter proposed renewed interest in the *news value* of certain events to determine why they were selected and in what manner they legitimized the theory of Newsworthiness in reports. Through the discussion of recent studies, including those of Jewkes (2015), Grundlingh (2017), Theo (2017) and Mthembu (2018), the topic was framed within the realities of the lived experiences of lesbians in South Africa, and the need for disruptive thinking about online writing about LGBTIQ issues was underscored. The discourse furthermore described the technical values of online reports, such as word count, 'social plugins', the accuracy of online reports, and engaging headlines as 'codable' themes. Finally, discrimination against lesbians and the formal acknowledgement of 'queercide' as a despicable form GBV was grounded by unpacking the studies conducted by Msibi (2011), Milani (2015) and Lotter (2018).

### **3.7 Conceptualisation**

As a hyponym for concept, the conceptualisation section of a research report is important as it guides understanding of the ideas or area of thought that gave impetus to an investigation. The process of conceptualisation takes place in contexts and phases and includes a denotative definition and broader connotative and mythological descriptions. These descriptions clarify indicator selections, and therefore each concept will follow these (Onen, 2016). Each of the key concepts of the research are therefore discussed to contextualise it within the broader philosophy of how online reports on 'queercide' are constructed structurally and ideologically.

### 3.7.1 'Queercide'

The term was first used by Schuhmann (2015) in a lecture in an attempt to identify the victimisation of gay, lesbian and transgender people in South Africa. Why, then, not use 'homicide', 'femicide' or 'hate crime' to refer to the violence targeted against members of the LGBTIQ community? According to the Queer Theory, the term 'queer' was a colloquialism for homosexual, which was a clinical term describing what was deemed an illness, while 'queer', which denotes 'strange' or different', became a unifying term describing gays and lesbians (De Lauretis, 1990). 'Queercide' also describes a difference between femicide and other forms of GBV in that this particular type of violence against women highlights the vulnerability of lesbians in South Africa (Sicetsha, 2018). In the case of Noxolo Xakeka, one of the cases of murder of lesbians selected for this research, the Magistrate found the accused guilty of unlawful murder, but not guilty of a hate crime (Reynolds, 2018). This judgement would void Xakeka's case study as explicitly 'queercide' by the definition provided. However, in the selected online reports on the case, and for the time period of the selected online reports, the story was approached as *the murder of a lesbian*. This frame, which is what the research investigated, qualified the case as an LGBTIQ issue of 'queercide'. Whether the intention was explicitly homophobic or not, the context of ease-to-kill a lesbian, the institutional (police, court, media) response in dealing with the case, and the socio-cultural fallout from the incident place it within the parameters of 'queercide'. The term 'queercide' is thus used in this research to refer to the murder of lesbians as an LGBTIQ issue that is reported in an unknown way in online reports. It can be defined as a 'hate crimes' which, according to the South African Constitution Chapter 2 Section 16 (Republic of South Africa (1996), has specific punitive implication. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (2019) in the USA, a 'hate crime' is defined as a crime "motivated by bias against race/ethnicity/ancestry, gender and gender identity, religion, disability, or sexual orientation, including those committed by or directed toward juveniles". In this research, 'queercide' was investigated to show the frames used to contextualise it in online reports as hyper-ritualised or as true, real lived experiences from lesbians' perspective. Because 'queercide' is a relatively new term, 'lesbian murders' or 'the murder of lesbians' is also used.

### 3.7.2 Gender based violence (GBV)

GBV is described as a hate crime against women and children, although it is excluded from hate crime policy templates in South Africa because the victims often know their attacker (McPhail 2002). Even though GBV in general was not the focus of this research, the results address 'queercide' within the larger conversation of violence perpetuated against women. Isaacs and Mthembu (2018) explain that the media tend to blame women in general for their own victimisation by exonerating the perpetrators. By doing this, various media position female accusers of the violence perpetrated against them as a product of individual dysfunction, such as depression and alcoholism, and a breakdown in society, such

as unemployment. This phenomenon, amongst others, necessitated this investigation into how the accused of ‘queercide’ were represented in online reports to determine whether the trend of absolving perpetrators of their culpability persisted. Other forms of GBV include femicide, which is the killing of a woman as a result of her sex, as well as ‘corrective rape’, which refers to the sexual assault on women in the attempt to rectify a perceived deviant behaviour (Al Arabiya News, 2014).

### **3.7.3 The Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer community (LGBTIQ)**

The LGBTIQ acronym consists of five composite terms that represent minority groups within the broader community. Although these groups each faces its own unique challenges, they tend to incur similar opposing narrations and arguments from right wing conservatives. Depending on the source preference, LGBT, LGBTI and LGBTIQ will be used interchangeably in certain sections of this thesis, deferring to LGBTIQ because it includes the most current iteration of the acronym (Lind & Pazmiño, 2009; Solomon & Kurt-Costes, 2017; Naidu, 2019). Also, because there are so many uses and interpolations of the acronym, the definition for the LGBTIQ acronym is defined by the University of Queensland Union (2014) as “sexual and gender minorities”. The lesbian group, which is the focus group of this research, is defined by the American Psychological Association (APA) (2019: 3) as “a sexual orientation whereby there is an enduring pattern of romantic, emotional and/or sexual attractions of women to women, and ‘gay’ is generally then for the attraction of men to men, and ‘bisexual’ is whereby men or women have an attraction to both sexes”. The APA also defines ‘transgender’ or gender non-conforming as “a general term for people whose gender identity or gender expression does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth” (APA, 2019: 3). ‘Intersex’ is defined by MedlinePlus (2019: 2) as “a group of conditions where there is a discrepancy between the internal genitals – the testes or ovaries – with the external genitals”. These individuals used to be believed to suffer from hermaphroditism, but medical experts prefer to use the term ‘disorders of sex development’ (DSD). Finally, ‘queer’ is a term people use because it is not specific to a gender identity or sexual orientation, but rather a term people feel comfortable with when they do not feel that they conform to a heteronormative description. The word ‘queer’ is used pejoratively to demean someone and is often followed by violence. However, the LGBTIQ community has reclaimed the word as a symbol of pride (Grisham, 2015). This research refers to ‘LGBTIQ issues’ when addressing ‘queercide’. The issues the LGBTIQ community include verbal abuse, physical abuse, isolation, discrimination, and murder. These issues are systemic, institutional and targeted (Sicetsha, 2018). ‘Queercide’, being the central phenomenon of the manner in which online media report on the phenomenon of lesbian murders, is characterised as an LGBTIQ issue. In terms of the Queer Theory, Butler’s (1990) work revolutionised the visibility of how oppressed people of the various categories of gender were, and this necessitated new gender performative descriptions of each category (Johnson & Otto, 2019).

### 3.7.4 Online reporting

Online reports are written pieces which are posted and appear on the Internet after a specific *Google* search. This was done to trace articles written about four selected case studies of lesbian murders. The online reports that were selected were considered based on certain criteria and they were selected for their researchable properties according to the objectives that were established. The Internet provided a wealth of articles as social media posts that had been written on the murders of lesbians (Inmemoriamlesbian.blogspot.com, 2008). The term ‘online reports’ is often substituted and used interchangeably with ‘online articles’, ‘weblog posts’, ‘reports’, and ‘units of analysis’.

The purpose of this research was to critically evaluate each online report as part of an accessible population of reports to explore the frames online reporters used (and still use) when publishing reports on issues affecting the LGBTIQ community. The importance of traditional media platforms such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television, is acknowledged, but new online, digitised media platforms are growing in popularity (Jordaan, 2017) and recruit large audiences, especially among the youth in urban areas who prefer to consume the news in this format as it is malleable to their interests (Peters, 2019). The Internet did not only provide a combined corpus of 11 681 online reports of the four case studies identified, but also presented a medium with many new writing- and reading features for investigation. What was problematic, though, was that the online reports on the incidences often included very brief descriptions or references to the victims. Many provided readers with an introduction to the name that, as a key ‘search’ word, often yielded only a brief online reference as a result.

### 3.7.5 Frames

According to Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy, Frederick Fico and Brendan Watson (2019: 62), the Framing Theory suggests, that the manner in which media present events and issues to audience in ‘frames’, influences “the choices audiences make about how to process information on those events and issues”. Therefore, a frame is an abstraction that assists the reader to structure the meaning behind a message. Riffe *et al.* (2019) explain that the structural examination of these messages is central to understanding how these messages – for this research, online reports of lesbian murders – were constructed. This can be done by observing factors such as professional values and routines and even industry acknowledgements and societal and ideological forces. This thesis refers to the frames, technical and ideological, in a multitude of ways as it explored the structure and ideology of each report to determine which frames, according to Entman (1991), were used as a framing and representation convention. The research also endeavoured to determine which news values had been used to select ‘queericide’ as a news story.

First, this research explored the technical composition of the online reports on ‘queercide’ to uncover significant trends and to gain insight into how these reports were structured. Using the selected theories and literature as a guide, a list was constructed that contained the elements that needed to be explored. These elements included aspects such as the length of each report (Grozelle, 2014), whether the reports provided readers with a ‘Share’ feature (Almgren & Ollson, 2016), the format of each report (e.g., whether the online report appeared on a news website or a weblog), whether sources were consulted in these reports, originality of the online report, whether the report received any industry acknowledgement (Somdyala, 2019), whether there was any proof that the report included self-regulation as recourse for readers to report suspicious articles (Grozelle, 2014), and the types of photographs that were used (if any) (Boyle, 2018).

Secondly, ideological frames were explored to determine if elements of power were present in the online reports on ‘queercide’. The research did this by investigating whether these reports were presented as information or infotainment, which was established by exploring the trend that could be observed in the quantitative ‘format’ of the report section, how lesbians were referred to in the reports, and which pronouns (whether gender specific or neutral ) were used (Halberstam, 1998), as proposed by the Queer Theory. This research also determined which news values (in terms of Newsworthiness) were evident to establish how and why the online writers reported on each particular ‘queercide’ incident (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Jewkes, 2004; Grundlingh, 2017). Moreover, the research unpacked the manner in which the headlines were written (Grundlingh, 2017), in what way ‘Comments’ featured as a self-regulatory measure (whenever they appeared and if they were used), and which ‘Share’ features appeared at the end of the report to provide another avenue for readers to trend and join in the issue under discussion (Almgren & Ollson, 2016). Other ideological frames included investigating the accuracy of the frame (as a qualitative investigation of the ‘originality’ of the frame) according to a timeline of the events described in each report, whether the report had an overt or covert reference to religion (Solomon & Kurt-Costes, 2017), how the accused of the crime against the victim was referred to in the report, and if the frames (as proposed by the Framing and Representation theories) included evidence of “human interest, conflict, morality, attribution of responsibility, and economic consequences” (Entman, 1991). Finally, the research determined if and which sources had been consulted in the construction of the report and if any evidence existed of an ideology in the online reports of ‘queercide’. From the Standpoint Theory (Butler, 1993), this was important to better understand who occupied power positions in the narrative surrounding this LGBTIQ issue.

### **3.7.6 Social ‘plugins’**

Almgren and Ollson (2016) refer to online features such as reader comments, shares, saves and pins,

which are the most common ways for users to contribute to online reports, as ‘plugins’. Although not an explicit concept of this research, social ‘plugins’ are referred to as they informed the mixed method approach that was used to investigate the technical side of the frames used in the online reports under investigation. In fact, the use of social plugins directly contributed to the conclusion of the research and also informed aspects in the recommendations chapter. The prevalence of social plugins also underscored the need for ‘fact checkers’. Features such as ‘comments’ and ‘share’ support critical readers to develop a high level of media literacy (Byerly, 2018: 15) and ‘sexual citizenship’, which refers to “a queer, anti-normative linguistic tactic that seeks to capture the spatial nature of sexual politics, as conveyed through different forms of meaning making”. This refers to how urban spaces are used to present language to create acknowledgement of LGBTIQ issues – see James Lotter’s (2018) definition of ‘homopolism’.

### **3.7.7 “Code driven” media in ideal writing and “user driven” media in real reporting**

In the quest to contribute to continuous debates surrounding online journalism and news reporting quality, the research refers extensively to the works of Jewkes (2015), who describes how journalists often use hard news values to record events at the expense of larger socio-cultural ideals. In doing so, reporters tend to disregard ‘users’ or audiences. Grundlingh (2017) warns against social activism that may replace the requirements needed to satisfy ‘ideal news’ writing according to a journalistic code. This research therefore attempted to determine whether the online reporters of ‘queercide’ wrote according to ‘code driven’ criteria in media and produced ‘ideal writing’ that might be regarded by the industry as worthy of an award – which could have assisted readers in judging the credibility of a report – or whether the reports were written with the audience as the main consideration, thus becoming a dialogue through using social plugins. In this process questions were raised such as, “Which features were more or less evident in the online reports on ‘queercide’”? “What data supported these findings?”, and “In what way do these findings become significant in quality online reporting?”

### **3.7.8 Perspectives from sources**

With reference to the Standpoint Theory and the works of Freire (1970), this research was interested in uncovering which sources were consulted to construct the online reports on ‘queercide’. This interest was provoked as the answers would set the tone for the narrative of the report as it was presented to the audiences as a frame. The significance of these perspectives was not scrutinised, but merely highlighted as this research explored the ideological trends that could be observed within the parameters of the accessible population and the scope of this research. The two source perspectives referred to are the ‘objective epistemic perspective’ and the ‘subjective epistemic perspective’. The former perspective

was adapted from Freire's (1970) work and refers to the objective epistemic *privilege* of sources as it contributes to the process of emancipation of oppressed groups. Here Freire (1970) describes how solutions, discourses and activities surrounding issues of oppression have origins and drive from those who occupy power positions and who, by being oppressors, remain complicit to the enforcement of power structures. Philanthropy and sympathy, in this approach, are negligible. Moreover, they have little effect and will fail to be transformative.

For example, if a medical practitioner who treated a lesbian victim of a homophobic attack that later succumbed to her injuries were interviewed for details surrounding the event, he/she would have an objective view of the situation. This doctor is neither a victim nor the perpetrator and can only offer an expert contribution to a portion of the event that occurred. Such 'participants', according to Freire (1970), lack the ability to evoke truth as to what the victim experienced, resulting in a context where emancipation could occur. According to the assumptions of the Standpoint Theory (Allen, 2017), only the victim and the people who become victims as a result of the event will be able to contribute to real, lived experiences of the victim, as knowledge is socially constructed and only such victims would be in a unique position to elicit understanding of the event. In this example, transcripts from the victim before she died would have provided the reporter of the event with a subjective epistemic position to view and conceptualise 'queericide'.

The Queer Theory also supports Freire's (1970) ideas as it explains how the oppressed have a subjective epistemic privilege – from which the *subjective epistemic perspective* in this research is adapted – to emancipate themselves. Thus the 'true' revolution can only be led by the singular vision of a marginalised group (Hartsock, 1998; Smith, 2005; Sisetsha, 2018). To address the research objectives, it was of significance to investigate the perspective of the consulted sources (in the cases where sources were consulted) to establish which ideological approaches were used by the online reporters on 'queericide'. This would contribute to addressing the academic lacuna that exists concerning the inclusion of marginalised groups in writing about LGBTIQ issues online.

#### 4 CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

“Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.”

- Michel Foucault -

(Foucault, 1976: 93)

In the rigorous exploration of online texts on ‘queercide’ to uncover significant aspects in its technical and ideological frames and the return it holds for how online reporters produce works of journalistic value, the literature that was interrogated and the theoretical framework that was employed informed the paradigm and design of the research. Also, for the format and execution of this chapter, Susanne M. Almgren and Tobias Olsson’s (2016) article *Commenting, sharing and tweeting news: Measuring online news participation*, functioned as a point of reference for the topic of this research. The latter article was also a progressive contribution to this methodology chapter in terms of format and presentation. The major findings elicited from the literature review prompted renewed interest in the *news values* of online writing and its ability for ‘continuum thinking’ (Boyle, 2018) to unsettle binary thinking about lesbian experiences in South Africa. The findings also guided this research towards exploring technical descriptions for online reports such as *word count*. The question was posed whether the existence of non-secularist ideologies in reporting on contentious issues remained as this could lead to moral panic. The contributions of the Framing and Representation Theory are also iterated with particular reference to the work of Shefeule (1999), who describes how journalists present audiences with news through a process of input (from socio-cultural environments), throughput (by assigning descriptions, monikers and composition to their texts), and outputs (by reinforcing, often conservative, beliefs). Other findings from the Literature Review chapter that are foregrounded are those of Jewkes (2015) and Grundlingh (2017) who highlight that the accuracy and headlines of online reports attract reader attention and are either used to create salience or disengage readers through a lack of attention to detail and generic captioning. To contextualise the violence perpetrated against lesbians, the works of Msibi (2011), Theo (2017) and Mthembu (2018) necessitated the inclusion of the Standpoint and Queer perspectives to properly understand this investigation into an LGBTIQ issue (that is, the murder of lesbians), while Milani’s (2015) and Lotter’s (2018) works also facilitated understanding of the term ‘queercide’ which refers to the phenomenon of males targeting and murdering lesbians.

The main assumptions of this study that needed to be investigated were derived from the Framing and Representation Theory which principles the elements of salience and selection that were analysed by means of five frames as proposed by Entman (1991). Moreover, the typography of photographs used in online reports was also interrogated, as proposed by Batziou (2011). For Newsworthiness, as the principle progenitor, the news value (that is, the meaningfulness, conflict and reference to elite persons)



as proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965) of each of the selected online articles was also critically evaluated. These evaluations included contemporary contributions by Jewkes (2004) (sex and conservative ideologies) as well as Collins and James (2011) (violence). In the application of the Queer Theory, which is referred to by De Lauretis (1991) as a disruption to gay and lesbian studies, an exploration of what was being said about the victims, who did the talking, and what was natural and what was naturalised had to be conducted. Here, the works of Foucault (1976) and Butler (1993) assisted in framing the data to elucidate findings that partly addressed the research problem. Finally, the application of the Standpoint Theory, as utilised by Jaggar (2016) to investigate non-secularism in setting the agenda and judgements as a result for LGBTIQ issues, illuminated online reporting on ‘queercide’ from a subjective epistemic vantage point – thus, were lesbians, or those with a vested interest, consulted in the execution of these reports? The discussions in this research are grounded in Freire’s (1965) work on emancipatory conscientisation which, he argues, occurs only through the active engagement of standpoints from the oppressed. The questions that were elicited from the results of the consulted studies as well as the critical analysis of the theories proposed some further key questions regarding the homogenous vision on what the structural components of a quality online report would be, which frames online writers would use to report on ‘queercide’, and what significance those frames would have for online reporting on LGBTIQ issues.

#### **4.1 Conceptual design**

An initial *Google News* search of “lesbian” + “South Africa” + “murder” + “killing” produced approximately 1 960 000 results. For an investigation of online reports on the killing of lesbians, and to identify South African case studies, it was argued that a *Google News* search would be more beneficial than other search engines such as *Aardvark* or *AskJeeves*, or even the major Russian search engines *RT* and *Sputnik*, because *Google News* uses the most specialised algorithms and is the most popular online search engine, according to Kevin Carty (2017), a researcher at the Open Markets Institute. Even though *Google News*, in 2012, claimed that there were 50 000 sources, it is not without limitations. *The Guardian* noted in 2013 that *Google* had a “crippled communication machine” that struggled to justify the benefits of *Google News* to news media. It is undeniable that its 72 editions in 30 languages, drawing six billion visitors per month, has some significance regarding online reporting and news (Carty, 2017). In comparison, *The New York Times* attracted just 40 million visitors monthly in 2013 (Christian, 2017). In the article *How Google news stories are selected* (*GoogleNews*, 2019), it is explained that computer algorithms select what appears in *Google News*. The algorithms determine which images, stories and videos are shown, and in what order. It is acknowledged that *Google News* has many limitations that might have influenced this research, especially concerning the accuracy with which it ranks stories. However, *Google News* tries to determine important story clusters, such as those of murdered South African lesbians, by looking at which individual reports are being featured prominently in various

publications. When these publications begin to feature new stories, this in turn influences the creation of new story clusters that get first page placement on *Google News* (Sullivan, 2009).

The researcher further narrowed the results from approximately 1 960 000 possibly relevant reports by searching for case studies (with no fewer than 10 reports), in which a South African victim was identified by [name]. The search then determined if there was a specified murder [date] (that was set as the start of online report collection), if the victim was [openly lesbian] or [identified by reports as lesbian], if she was [South African], if an [accused] had been arrested, and if there was a court appearance [date] of the alleged perpetrator (that was set as the end of online report collection). Additional searches excluded multiple reports on each victim to only reveal singular cases and results that were recorded in the 'News' navigation section of *Google*. This search resulted in the identification of eight case studies, namely those of Unathi Bix, Noxolo Xakeka, Noxolo Klaas, Noluvo 'Vovo' Swelindawo, Anisha and Joey van Niekerk, Nonkie Smous, Lerato Tambai Moloi, and Eudy Simelane.

This research aimed to explore the structural as well as thematic way in which online reports frame 'queercide'. Many of the case studies were similar in victimology, demographics, situation of killing, and geography. The conceptualisation of the research provided a broad enough scope to perform a robust investigation by including cases that were representative of diversity of race and economic dispensation. Therefore, similar case studies were reconsidered and only one was selected based on its relevance [timeliness] and [most amount of online reporting]. These considerations resulted in the final identification and selection of three cases: Noluvo Swelindawo (kidnapped from her home by a known assailant), Anisha and Joey van Niekerk (White; couple) and Eudy Simelane (well-known South African sports figure). These cases were unique from the other cases while the other five cases were very similar in terms of who the victim was and the particulars surrounding their killing (that is, Black and murdered after an altercation at a shebeen [bar]). Noxolo Xakeka was selected because the highest number of online reports appeared on her case. Finally, these four case studies were selected, resulting in 70 online reports. The four case studies were also selected based on online news reporting activity, the diverse demographic characteristics of the victims, and the differing circumstances of their deaths, including the actual method by which they were killed.

Through the selective coding of reports on the murders of these selected women where a priori code, that correspond with the reporting being observed were utilised, essential codes were then used as a guiding principle in selecting key concepts. All additional coding of the data was based on the key concepts generated through the Background, Research Problem, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework sections of the research. The work of Albert Camus (1975) to gauge the 'truthfulness' and accuracy of [online] news reports from a quantitative philosophical underpinning assisted in this endeavour. The collected data were then analysed using a content analysis process to uncover some

significance of the structure of each online report as it related to the research problem. Aspects of the frames used in the selected online reports were also interrogated. To improve the currency of Camus's (1975) work, the research also incorporated the work of Normala Jamil, Iskandar Ishak and Fatimah Sidi (2017: 26), who argue that "veracity is a way to find the availability, accountability, truthfulness and authenticity" of a report, while the discovery of deception in a report is a way in which the overall content can be judged as truthful or not. Therefore, data veracity or deceptive elements such as inaccurate information or value laden monikers of the victims can be unearthed in digital news reports thorough rigorous interrogation.

The treatment of each case study occurred in two stages. First, the quantitative component of the study investigated the technical treatment of each report to identify newsworthy elements relating to the research problem as well as other structural elements such as format, length, source consultation, photographs and the inclusion of social plugins that readers of the online reports could use. Secondly, the qualitative investigation examined the ideological treatment of each online report. In this investigation the Framing and Representation Theory, the Newsworthiness perspective, and the Queer and Standpoint theories were used to uncover themes that addressed the research problem.

Once the 70 online reports had been selected for the quantitative investigation, data were collected, coded and analysed. A further purposive sampling exercise was then conducted using an emergent Venn-diagram to select 16 online reports for the qualitative investigation. The selection criteria were determined by using the following themes: [News Outlets], [Sources Consulted] and [Seminal Work] (see the quantitative coding sheet). This was because ideological frames could only become useful in the study if they were referred to as standardised origins of these online reports. Therefore, weblogs might have presented a different reporting style than other reputable news outlets where sources were consulted. The Standpoint Theory was thus utilised to investigate whether ideologies were present in the online reports and to determine whether these reports were the writers' original intellectual property, particularly as economy of scale online reports, though significant for structural purposes, might have skewed qualitative results due to duplication. It is acknowledged that certain elements, while significant for technical findings of online reporting, would have become problematic for the ideological investigation as they would have been difficult to standardise.

#### **4.1.1 Research paradigm**

The research was conducted within a queer-feminist discourse by ascribing to Robert Craig's (Littlejohn & Foss, 2017) description of the Semiotic and Critical traditions of Communication Science research. Craig's concept of Semiotic and Critical traditions was used to look at the sign-signifier-referent relationship in reporting on 'queercide' and at the frames used to report on GBV against lesbians. Craig

(in Littlejohn & Foss, 2017) also describes how the Critical tradition in Communication research may incorporate Newsworthiness (in this research, Newsworthiness was consulted in the works of Galtung and Ruge [1965] and Gitlin [1980]) to investigate the marginalisation of lesbians. This resulted in a content analysis in the quantitative component of the research. However, to uncover ideological themes, the qualitative component of this research involved thematic analysis. Therefore, the study reflected a critical relativist paradigmatic investigation that was influenced by Foucauldian and Freirean theoretical frameworks.

Using the Framing and Queer theories as well as Newsworthiness, discursive themes can be identified through content analysis of reports on the murder of lesbian women. However, through developing a framework for quality reporting, one may also uncover power structures as they emerge from such reports. A discussion involving intercultural communication between the heteronormative cultures promoted in South Africa and the more marginalised homosexual culture as they are represented in online media, always highlights power relationships. In this regard, Martin, Nakayama, Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn and Schutte (2013: 183) state:

“In considering online news reporting, research needs to not only consider the ways that these reports are consumed, but the way these reports represent groups in specific ways. What reports appear in which format, written by whom, saying what?”

Therefore, the philosophical underpinnings of this critical realist study also considered third wave feminism as expounded in the works of Simone De Beauvoir (1949), Paulo Freire (1970), Michel Foucault (1976), and Judith Butler (1993). The epistemological position of the researcher was that power structures existed where lesbians were positioned as oppressed and that media, through their structural and ideological composition (particularly at this point in South African history) echoed that subjugation. It was the research’s contention that these structures could be uncovered by interrogating carefully selected media texts relating to the murders of lesbians.

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014: 172):

“The epistemological position of critical realism is that knowledge should aim to spark action from audiences and should therefore have practical value. Critical realists argue that power relationships, where one ideological framework such as heterosexism dominates and oppresses another, such as lesbianism, are based on distortions and illusions about how society operates.”

Critical relativists also prescribe an ontological reality that is contextualised through power structures. The research thus sought to identify those dominant elements in the way online writers wrote their

reports on 'queericide'. "The methodological position identified in critical realism proposes that research starts with a critical analysis of existing knowledge of the issue, believing that knowledge in itself should be questioned to further investigate the technical relationships that exist" (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014: 161). Therefore, the ability and functioning of the Framing and Representation, the Queer, the Standpoint and the Newsworthiness theories to investigate, explore and uncover these power relationships made them suitable as a framework for this paradigm.

This research argued that neither the technical properties of a positivist investigation, nor the pursuit of purely subjective lived realities of interpretivism would be sufficient to properly report on the research problem. Critical relativists value the ability to uncover power relationships in order to emancipate those at the base level of these structures (Littlejohn & Foss, 2017). Therefore, the axiological perspective of the research endeavoured to illuminate significant insights into the structural and ideological composition of online reports on 'queericide' in order to contribute to the wider journalistic debate surrounding reportage on LGBTIQ issues using newly developed communication platforms.

#### **4.1.2 Research design**

The research adopted a mixed-method approach, also referred to as the 'Q Method', in order to fully address the processes required to address the research problem. The technical information, which was collected quantitatively, was collated and analysed to better understand the layout of the selected online reports. The layout would inform the research question of what the technical constructions of the online reports on 'queericide' were. Then, the ideological information was collected and analysed by scouring the texts to identify themes as they emerged from codes that had applied to these texts. Both these approaches were executed through the application of a coding sheet that had been designed to elicit data for a critical content analysis process in order to explore the research problem. By applying a mixed methodological approach, this research was able to address the limitations posed by the rigid, empiricism of pure statistical study, while also attempting to overcome the porous nature of purely qualitative studies. In designing a coding schedule for the quantitative component of the report (which was non-experimental and descriptive) and a separate schedule for the qualitative component of the report (which was non-interactive) this research was mindful of the design requirements of each, and how these tools would allow the research to more accurately uncover data to properly react to the research problem (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

By putting the eight selected case studies under the lens, population characteristics were applied to reconsider those that were found to be similar in victimology, geographic location, events surrounding the killing, and economic status of the victim. For those case studies that were found to be quite similar, this research eliminated those with the least amount of online reports.

Due to the nature of desktop research and the availability of reports online, a cross-sectional time dimension was used. Cross-sectional studies, according to Philip Sedgewick (2014), are generally quick, easy and cost effective to perform because the artefact needs only be investigated once. However, cross-sectional research may be prone to non-response bias if participants who consent to participate in the research differ from those who do not, resulting in a sample that is not representative of the population. For the purpose of this research, and the use of online reports as units of analysis and not respondents, the time dimension used was relevant and would not result in a bias limitation. Another advantage of this type of cross-sectional research is that it was possible to record exposure to many artefacts at one time in order to investigate multiple risk factors and to assess more than one outcome (Sedgewick, 2014).

Because data on each online report were recorded only once, it would have been problematic to infer the temporal associations between risk factors and outcomes at different time junctures. Therefore, only an association and not causation could be inferred. This still occurred within the scope of the research problem. Therefore, as a result of the associative nature of the research, it was basic and not applied. There was no urgent or practical issue that needed to be resolved; rather, the research sought to contribute to the conversation surrounding the technical and ideological frameworks used in online reports on 'queercide'. The aim of the research was to critically explore online reports on the four selected case studies of 'queercide'. Exploratory research is generally conducted for a research problem that has not yet been studied more clearly, has not developed operational definitions, is intended to establish priorities, and may improve the final research design (Raaijmakers, Krywkow & Van der Veen, 2008). This research investigated the novel concept of 'queercide' and the manner in which it was reported on online platforms as a LGBTIQ issue in South Africa. This issue was problematic in that there was relatively little information in the literature on how reporters approached the issue. Therefore, it was axiomatic to identify the study as basic, but also explorative and inductive, as the findings would contribute to online journalistic frameworks that are used to report on LGBTIQ issues, with particular reference to 'queercide'. In so doing, the outcomes of the research will operationalise the newly coined term 'queercide'. The research design was strengthened by defining its intentions and validity.

Inductive reasoning was applied in the evaluation of the data. This research therefore constructed data collection instruments and appropriate analysis techniques to operationalise novel concepts, devise new methods, and offer contributions to existing theories. Even though assumptions of the Framing and Representation, Newsworthiness, Queer and Standpoint theories were used, they were not applied to the case studies as much as they were used to contextualise and understand the data. These theories thus underpinned observations and assisted in identifying patterns. Criticisms of the theories are referred to in the Findings and Recommendations chapters to assist future studies involving active audiences and

online writing frameworks.

The aim of the research was to explore new information on an under-researched concept ('queercide') involving rapidly evolving online media, therefore the outcomes will "identify the boundaries of the environment in which the problems, situations and opportunities of interest are likely to reside [and it will] identify the salient factors that will be found there and be of relevance" (Van Wyk, 2013: 87). This was achieved in a cross-sectional time dimension as the reports, which existed online, were downloaded on a specific day (18 March 2019) to ensure the standard retrieval of each case study using the search parameters described above.

#### **4.1.3 Justification**

The philosophical aim of the research was to address the research problem by investigating the power structures that were evident (and often not so evident). A deeper scrutiny of those power structures was subsequently conducted by looking at how the correspondents of online reports on 'queercide' wrote these reports not only to attract an audience, but also to determine whether they had self-indulgent or eudemonic motivations. This research therefore interrogated these texts to determine if the writers wrote content that provided opportunities for personal insight, self-reflection and contemplation (or para-social interaction that is the 'interaction' between the audience and the characters in media content) or whether they reported on 'queercide' in a salacious way to commodify the issue in a way that is more palatable to a heteronormative audience. In this process this research explored the writers', and not their audiences', perspectives. With this intention, the research selected four relatively diverse case studies to interrogate the integrity of phenomena which would emerge from the data through their syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships.

In syntagma, the researcher tests a syntagmatic association where "signs occur in sequence or parallel and operate together to create meaning, and the sequential nature of language means that linguistic signs have syntagmatic relationships" (Bredin, 1984: 235). Syntagmatic relationships are often governed by strict rules, such as spelling and grammar rules, but they also occur in terms of lesser relationships such as those of newsworthy elements and self-regulation. In testing syntagma, it then also necessitates the critical evaluation of paradigmatic relationships, which occur when an individual sign may be replaced by another. For example, individual monikers have a paradigmatic relationship with other nouns, for instance when one noun is used such as 'lesbian', another may replace it such as 'woman' or 'victim', even though this could change the meaning and would have ideological significance. "An individual sign [a unit] has no separate meaning, and only delivers value in relation to other units in related sets. Thus, a gay woman has meaning only in relation to other types of women" (Bredin, 1984: 237). A limitation of this type of investigation is that letters and numbers do not have a paradigmatic

relationship. Therefore, only the qualitative component of the research was utilised to scrutinise this phenomenon. It is, however, noteworthy that this was a multi-disciplinary research project that cut across various domains including media, communication, journalism, social development, philosophy, and education and that its influence and applicability will therefore be widespread.

## **4.2 Online reports on ‘queercide’ as journalistic and social artefacts**

To properly investigate the research problem, it was necessary to identify which artefact was most valuable in producing significant data. Describing these artefacts is necessary to contextualise their value as they were done through descriptions of the population, target population, population parameters, accessible population, sample, and unit of analysis (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

### **4.2.1 Population**

A cursory overview of murdered lesbians can be found on the weblog [inmemoriamlesbian.blogspot.com](http://inmemoriamlesbian.blogspot.com), where there are over 200 names and stories of lesbians who were attacked and killed. Therefore, the population includes all lesbians who have been killed because of their sexual orientation. As a population parameter, this becomes problematic as there is no South African recording body, and therefore no available statistics, nor proof of motivation for all lesbian murder cases. These online reports appear on online news outlet sites, blogs as well as advocacy- and special interest group sites. This then excludes online journals (such as the *African Human Rights Law Journal* (AHRLJ) which publishes journal articles, for example “*Realisation or oversight of a constitutional mandate? Corrective rape of black African lesbians in South Africa*” written by Lea Mwambene (2015). To be included in the study, the online report needed to appear in English (including those translated from Afrikaans and Zulu). It also excludes press releases, online chapters in books, and advertisements placed as well as any other multimedia, interactive or hypertextual elements, as well as any article where the reader has to pay for accessing it. There is no geographic location more specific than the country of South Africa as all selected artefacts appear online. One of the population parameters include temporal parameters, where the online reports were published from the date of the murder (case studies of four victims) up until the date where the suspect(s) first appeared in court. The eight initial case studies generating online reports from the date of killing up until the first appearance of an accused in court, included those of Unathi Bix (shot dead in 2017), Noxolo Xakeka (stabbed to death 2018), Noxolo Klaas (stabbed to death in 2018), Noluvo “Vovo” Swelindawo (kidnapped and shot to death in 2016), Anisha and Joey van Niekerk (kidnapped, tortured and strangled in 2017), Nonkie Smous (raped and murdered in 2017), Lerato Tambai Moloi (stoned to death in 2017), and Eudy Simelane (raped and murdered in 2008). After considering the different, but compatible perspectives to be specific, four crimes from five different victim types as well as different online sources are selected. The questions



are: what elements are fixed, and which are moving (syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes (in language), but the idea applies to looking at, for example, one crime (syntagma) from different media (paradigm))? Syntagmatic and paradigmatic axis shifts of these cases assists in the selection of four case studies which are diverse enough from one another according to the population characteristics (which also considers race, single-or-couple dynamic as well as reference to elite persons). Through this reconsideration, Noxolo Xakeka, Noluvo Swelindawo, Joey and Anisha van Niekerk and Eudy Simelane as case studies were selected. The research was done in a cross-sectional timeline as all four case studies' online reports were selected and downloaded on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2019 to establish a baseline.

A timeline is constructed for each case study. For example, in the case of Joey and Anisha van Niekerk who disappeared on 10 December 2017 (and killed somewhere between 10 and 16 December 2017), their suspected murderers' first collective appearance in court occurred on 15 January 2018. Within this time period, 34 online reports appeared in the "*News*" section of a *Google* search. Even though the proposed research clearly identifies the names of the victims, it does not pose a problematic ethical conundrum as the names as well as the details of their murder are part of the public domain already.

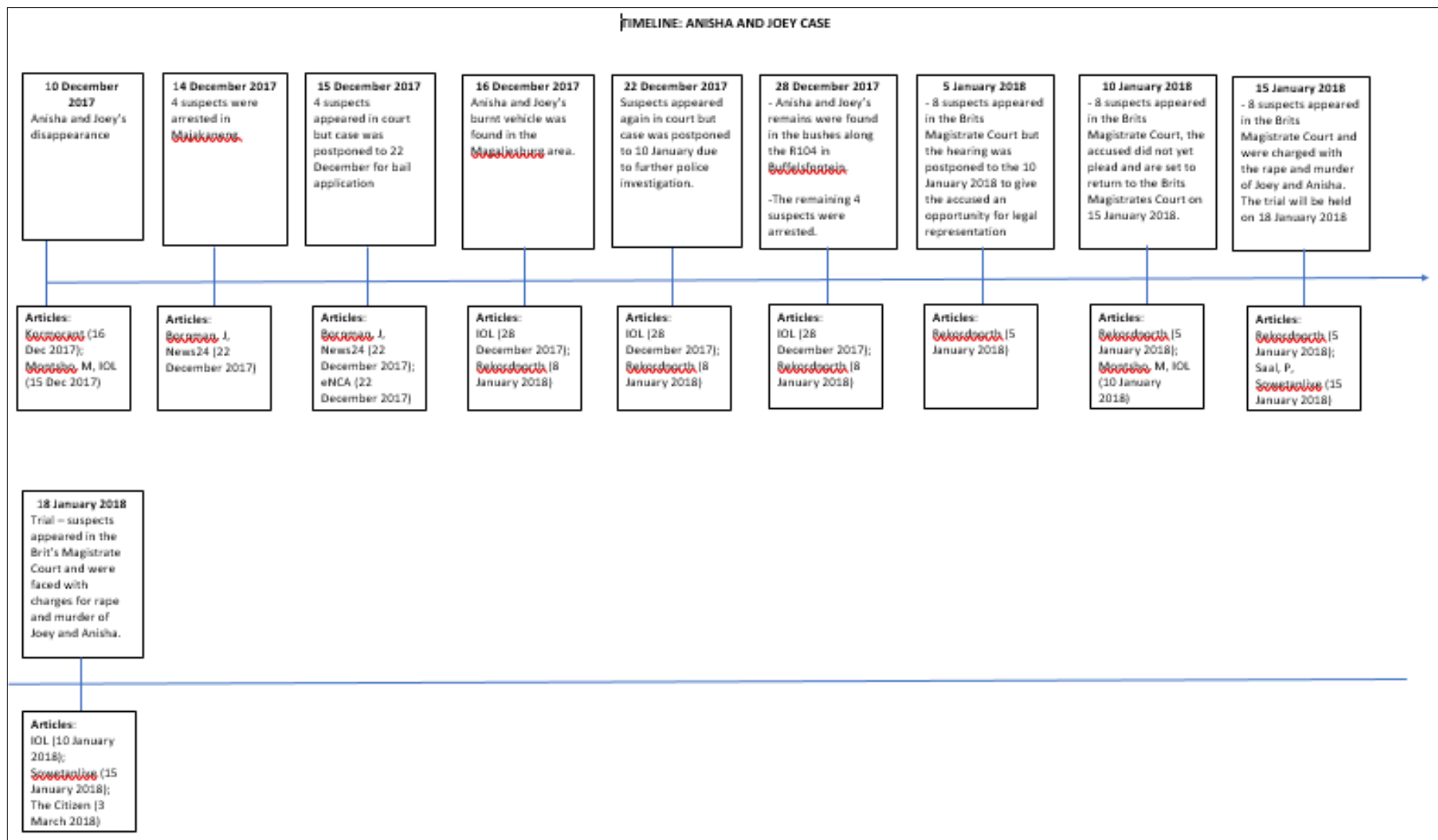


Figure 2: A timeline of events constructed on the Joey and Anisha van Niekerk 'queercide' case

#### 4.2.2 Sampling

There were two sets of sampling. Through non-probability sampling, four case studies were selected for their diversity and online reports from each case (from ‘date of killing’ until ‘date the accused appears in court’) are selected. Thereafter, the quantitative data will be collected from these online reports and compared to the same data collected from two “good” online reports to develop a Venn-diagram, which was used to create a similarity-criteria as standardisation to sample four articles from each case study (thus 16 in total). Because the researcher described particular population parameters with dedicated selection criteria in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research, non-probability sampling was used with a purposive sampling method, initially in selecting the online reports for quantitative investigation, and through quota sampling to select four online reports for each case study for the qualitative section of the research.

The four case studies selected, include Noxolo Xakeka, where the search results from *Google News* yielded a corpus of 370 online reports. Xakeka was killed on 1 January 2018 and the suspected killer, Bongile Joni, appeared in court on 2 July 2018. Introducing this timeline to the corpus resulted in **11 online reports**. Noluvo “Vovo” Swelindawo, where the search results from *Google News* yielded a corpus of 273 online reports, was killed on 4 December 2016 by suspected murderer Sigcine Mdani. Mdani’s trial started on 21 November 2017 (which is the first indication of his court appearance). By introducing this timeline to the corpus, **15 online reports** were identified and downloaded. The couple Joey and Anisha van Niekerk were killed between 10 – 16 December 2017 by suspected murderers Aaron Sithole (23), Alex Mudau (36), Moses Rakubu (33), Koos Strydom (53), Vincent Strydom (29), Maruschka Opperman (18), Mercia Witney Van Rooi (21) and Jack Mokotedi (18). A *Google News* search yield a corpus of 238 online reports. When the collective trial date for the suspected murderers, that is 25 May 2018, was considered, **34 online reports** were identified and downloaded. As the fourth and final case study selected, ex-*Banyana Banyana* soccer player Eudy Simelane, was killed by “four men” on 28 April 2008. A *Google News* search yielded a corpus of 10 800 online reports. If a time limit set by the date of killing to the date where the suspects of the crime collectively appear in court, which, for the four men suspected of killing Simelane, is 11 February 2009, is introduced, **10 online reports** are identified. In total, for the quantitative portion of the research, the accessible population is a total of **70 online reports** on ‘queercide’ of four case studies. If the research included all the online reports found on the LGBTIQ issue of ‘queercide’, the number would be exorbitant (11 681 online reports of only the four case studies alone) and would become problematic to code and analyse, but also unnecessary for the purpose of this research as the intention is to explore trends in the ideological frames used to report on ‘queercide’ and not to be inferential. Through the selection of these 70 online reports, the themes proposed in the Background chapter of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and femicide, the killing of lesbians and ‘queercide’, hate crimes and quality online reporting can be critically explored.

From the 70 online reports selected in the quantitative portion of the research, it is calculated that the common number of online reports that can be divided into the total number of each case study, is four online reports for the qualitative portion of the research. There is no number multiplication where any of the four case study online reports intersect with one another to construct a sample formula. However, a Venn-diagram can be used to identify similar, standardised aspects of the online reports of the four case studies as well as those found in the “good” online reports to create a selection criterion which can be used to select the four online reports per case study. Four online reports for each case study was selected based on the case study with the lowest number of online reports, Eudy Simelane (10), where the results from the Venn-diagram (similarities) will be applied to each unit of analysis and to select at least four of the 10 online reports which meet the criteria. Therefore, four online reports from all the case studies’ online reports which meet the Venn-diagram (similarities) criteria will be selected through simple random sampling.

### **4.3 Method and instrument**

Although the methods of data collection are different in every discipline, their purpose remains the same, which is to support the researcher in studying recorded data in an attempt to satisfy the objectives posed by the research problem.

#### **4.3.1 Data collection method**

The data collection methods were a quantitative content coding method and qualitative thematic coding method. These two methods were performed separately although they applied to the same four selected case studies. The quantitative coding sheet was designed using various a priori codes based on earlier investigations that had been reported on in the literature. Emergent codes from the online report content were also used. Content collection, and subsequent content analysis processes, were both quantitative and qualitative. However, thematic analysis could only be applied to the qualitative component of the study as proposed by Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014). Quantitative content analysis was performed using descriptive statistical analysis which did not require complex statistical error calculations and a standard deviation as these were not required to satisfy the purpose of the study.

The four most commonly used data collection methods in qualitative research, which comprised a significant portion in the research, are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case studies (Littlejohn & Foss, 2017). The research referred to case studies to uncover the data that was required for analysis as none of the other methods could have been investigated in a manner that would have produce the required data to appropriately address the research problem. It was essential that the

selective codes of the online reports on the murders of lesbians were observed to critically explore the patterns that emerged. This was significant in illuminating the central ideas of this research. These essential codes were then used as a guiding principle for the selection of the key concepts. All additional coding of data was based on these key concepts.

#### 4.3.2 Data collection instruments

The quantitative data collection instrument was a coding sheet with technical themes that had been developed to investigate the mechanics of each online reporting. Thereafter, descriptive analysis was performed to determine the mean, median, mode, and frequency in order to uncover patterns.

**Table 1: Quantitative coding sheet template**

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SCHEDULE TO ANALYSE STRUCTURE OF ONLINE REPORTS ON ‘QUEERCIDE’		
ONLINE REPORT NAME AND DATE:		
FRAME	DESCRIPTION OF FRAME	
Quantitative: Online report layout		
A. Quantitative analysis of the word count of each article: Number of words, excluding heading, comments, related articles, [...more] and sidebar notes	A1 0 – 400 words, with “[...more]” (considered “short”; see Grozelle (2014)) A2 0 – 400 words, without “[...more]” A3 401 – 800 words, with “[...more]” (considered “medium”, see Grozelle (2014)) A4 401 - 800 words, without “[...more]” A5 801 – 1000 words, with “[...more]” (considered “long”, see Grozelle (2014)) A6 8011 – 1000 words, without “[...more]” A7 1000+	
B. Share online report feature (E-mail, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, “Follow”, “Save” or “Subscribe”, etc.)	B1 Yes	B2 No

<b>C. Format</b>	<b>C1</b> Blog <b>C2</b> News Outlet website <b>C3</b> LGBTIQ Advocacy site <b>C4</b> Other	
<b>Quantitative: Elements of quality in online report</b>		
<b>D. The referencing of sources is important to establish credibility for online reports</b>	<b>D1</b> Source(s) acknowledged	<b>D2</b> No source acknowledged
<b>E. Originality of online reports where the writer conducted his/her own research, drafting, writing, and editing</b>	<b>E1</b> Seminal work	<b>E2</b> Economy of scale online report (duplicated from _____)
<b>F. Critical, industry and award recognition of online report</b>	<b>F1</b> No <b>F2</b> Undetermined	<b>F3</b> Yes
<b>G. Proof of self-regulation as recourse for readers to report suspicious articles</b>	<b>G1</b> Yes	<b>G2</b> No
<b>Quantitative: Photographs used as part of the online reports</b>		

<b>H. Photographs used as part of the online report</b>	<b>H1</b> No photographs	<b>H2</b> Photograph of victim <b>H3</b> Photograph relevant (LGBTIQ theme) not of victim <b>H4</b> Photograph irrelevant (no LGBTIQ theme)
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The three main sections of the quantitative coding sheet were: **online report layout**, **quantitative: elements of quality in online reports**; and **quantitative: photographs used as part of the online report**. Eight themes (A – H) were developed to investigate the technical aspects of all 70 online reports. Concerning the layout of online reports, Grozelle (2014) proposes that the length of a report (A) can indicate the quality thereof, where less than 400 words is insufficient to create context, introduce a thesis statement, and provide supporting information and arguments. A word count, according to Grozelle (2014), of between 401 – 800 is a medium report which, for online audiences, is best in terms of effort and information. On the other hand, 801 – 1 000 words for online reports are considered long for online audiences, however, this length might not be a deterrent for audiences such as activists, journalists and LGBTIQ groups who have vested interests in the report. However, more than 1 000 words per report for online writing is considered too lengthy (Grozelle, 2014). For each of the online reports, the content – from headline to the end of the final sentence – was copied, transposed to a word document and saved. This elicited a *Word* word count to determine the length of the article in words.

Online reports with a ‘share’ feature (B), according to Almgren and Ollson (2016), engage online audiences, and this feature is a benefit of online reports over traditional media. The question was thus posed: “Which online formats (C) publish online reports on ‘queercide’”? There was limited information on the technical structure of online reports on ‘queercide’, particularly because different platforms (formats) approach and design these reports differently. For example, ‘Blogs’ might include information that is more colloquial, more speculative and more salacious for infotaining, whereas ‘News outlet websites’ might be more clinical, informational and professional. It was envisaged that the insight that would be gained from this theme would be significant in bridging what had hitherto been uncovered about online writing on LGBTIQ issues.

The following figure is a copy of a quantitative content coding sheet that was used to analyse an online report of Noxolo Xakeka’s killing as a selected case study of ‘queercide’:

#5
Quant

CODING SCHEDULE TO ANALYSE STRUCTURE OF ONLINE REPORTS ON 'QUEERCIDE'	
ARTICLE NAME AND DATE: <i>Three women killed in the UK during 16 days of activism - Lauren Issacs 9/12/16</i>	
FRAME	DESCRIPTION OF FRAME
Quantitative: Article layout	
A. Quantitative analysis of the word count of each article Number of words, excluding heading, comments, 'Related articles', [...more] and sidebar notes	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>A1 - 400 words, with "[...more]" (considered "short", see Grosse (2014))</p> <p>A2 0 - 400 words, without "[...more]"</p> <p>A3 401 - 800 words, with "[...more]" (considered "medium", see Grosse (2014))</p> <p>A4 801 - 1200 words, without "[...more]"</p> <p>A5 801 - 1200 words, with "[...more]" (considered "long", see Grosse (2014))</p> <p>A6 9011 - 1000 words, without "[...more]"</p> <p>A7 1000+</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> A1</p> </div> </div>
B. Share article feature (Email, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, et cetera)	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>B1 Yes</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> B2 No</p> </div> </div>
C. format	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> C1 Blog</p> <p>C2 News Outlet website</p> <p>C3 LGBTQ Advocacy site</p> <p>C4 Other</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> C1</p> </div> </div>

Quantitative: Elements of quality in online report	
D. The referencing of sources is important to establish credibility for online reports	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>D1 Source(s) acknowledged</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> D2 No source acknowledged</p> </div> </div>
E. Originality of online reports where the writer performed his/ her own research, drafting, and writing and editing	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> E1 Seminal work</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>E2 Economy of scale article (duplicated from _____)</p> </div> </div>
F. Critical, industry and award recognition of online report	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> F1 No</p> <p>F2 Undetermined</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> F1 Yes</p> </div> </div>
G. Proof of self-regulation as recourse for readers to report suspicious articles	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>G1 Yes</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> G2 No</p> </div> </div>
Quantitative: Photographs used as part of the online reports	
H. Photographs used as part of the online report	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> H1 No photographs</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>H2 Photograph of victim</p> <p>H3 Photograph relevant (LGBTQ theme) not of victim</p> <p>H4 Photograph irrelevant (no LGBTQ theme)</p> </div> </div>

**Figure 3: Example of how online reports are coded using the quantitative coding sheet (Adapted from Isaacs (2016))**

To determine the elements of quality in online reports, the research investigated whether source(s) were acknowledged (D), which is a basic requirement of ‘good’ journalism (Murphy, 2007; Byerly, 2018). It is also of interest to the quality of an online report to establish whether the report is an original text, or whether the online report is a construction of other texts (E) and presented in the interest of time and resources, but at the expense of fact checking and creativity. The works of Lazerfeld and Merton (1948), in reference to the Queer Theory, predict the importance of the mass media, which include online media, to contribute original ideas to the true collaboration of society in creating salience and brainstorming resolutions to issues such as ‘queercide’. Grundlingh (2017) describes a “code driven” media in



*Identifying markers of sensationalism in online news reports on crime* and explains how critical industry and award recognition of online reports (F) helps audiences to determine whether the text is credible and reliable. This recognition is thus an indication of the quality of reports, including online reports. Finally, an online report has the potential, even in conservative LGBTIQ geo-political contexts, to oppose heterosexist viewpoints, particularly in the ‘comments’ (G) section of websites. Such comments could assist an online content producer to regulate the content it publishes (Sicetsha, 2018; Grant, 2019). Moreover, the photographs (H) that are used in online reports are capable of transmitting ideologically rich messages in overt as well as covert ways and they may thus driving perceptions and interpretation of an issue (Batziou, 2011).

After using the quantitative coding sheet to collect data from all 70 selected online reports on ‘queercide’, This research analysed the data to determine a set of standardised codes that appeared throughout four cases. For example, the research scrutinized whether the majority of the online reports in each case study included a “share” feature (B). In order to establish this baseline, a Venn-diagram was constructed by applying the same coding sheet to the online articles that were considered ‘good’ quality texts. Similar codes between the ‘good’ quality online reports and the reports on ‘queercide’ from the four selected case studies were then used in a probability sample of 16 online reports (thus, four units of analysis selected per case study through simple random sampling) from the original 70 online reports for the qualitative component of the research. By analysing the quantitative data, the research sought to establish causal relationships and the identification of trends in these online reports on ‘queercide’ as they pertained to their technical composition. Because the qualitative data were used to explore why certain ideological frames had been used, and to provide a more robust information set about texts concerning LGBTIQ issues and how they were of significance to online reporting, these online reports were used to critically explore an (as yet) undefined and under-researched phenomenon. The newness of the research made it difficult to select a large enough number of online reports on ‘queercide’ to achieve data saturation and uncover a particular trend. Therefore, there were frames that failed to show any particular pattern. This may be regarded as a limitation of this research and is thus significant for further studies that may wish to create cognisance of the issue and attempt the emergence of a phenomenon by attending to the shortcomings of this research.

If there had been too many frames that failed to highlight patterns, the research would have had to refer to one or more of the similar frames in all the quantitative online reports to widen the data scope, and/or the research might have had to include more online reports in the qualitative sample. However, sufficient patterns emerged that assisted in addressing the objectives of the study.

The selection process will be explained in more detail in the Data Collection chapter. A qualitative data collection sheet was devised for the investigation of frames in the selected online reports of ‘queercide’.

**Table 2: Qualitative coding sheet appearing before the pilot study (see section 4.5)**

<b>CODING SCHEDULE TO ANALYSE FRAMES USED TO REPRESENT ‘QUEERCIDE’ IN ONLINE REPORTING</b>	
<b>ARTICLE NAME AND DATE:</b>	
<b>FRAME</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF FRAME</b>
<b>Qualitative: Narratives used in online reports referring to efficacy</b>	
<b>I. Infotainment</b>	<b>I1</b> Infotainment on seminal online reports <b>I2</b> Infotainment on economy of scale online reports
<b>J. Informational</b>	<b>J1</b> Informational on seminal online reports <b>J2</b> Informational on economy of scale online reports <b>J3</b> Informational on advocacy
<b>K. Moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reports (general)</b>	<b>K1</b> Homosexual <b>K2</b> Lesbian <b>K3</b> Queer <b>K4</b> Pejorative <b>K5</b> Women OR Woman OR Female <b>K6</b> Victims <b>K7</b> Other
<b>L. Engendered, or non-binary/neutral pronouns of victim (specific)</b>	<b>L1</b> Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; “she”, “her”, “herself” <b>L2</b> Non-binary: Gender neutral pronouns used when referring to the victim: “they”, “their” and “them” are the most common; and “ze”, “sie”, “hir”, “co”, and “ey”
<b>M. Conditions for news evident in online reports</b>	<b>M1</b> Frequency <b>M2</b> Familiarity <b>M3</b> Negativity <b>M4</b> Unexpectedness <b>M5</b> Unambiguity <b>M6</b> Personalisation

	<b>M7</b> Meaningfulness <b>M8</b> Conflict <b>M9</b> Consonance <b>M10</b> Continuity <b>M11</b> Composition <b>M12</b> Competition <b>M13</b> Co-optation <b>M14</b> Prefabrication <b>M15</b> Predictability <b>M16</b> Time constraints <b>M17</b> Logistics <b>M18</b> Data <b>M19</b> Reference to elite nations <b>M20</b> Reference to elite persons <b>M21</b> Threshold <b>M22</b> Predictability <b>M23</b> Simplification <b>M24</b> Individualism <b>M25</b> Risk <b>M26</b> Sex <b>M27</b> Celebrity/High-status person <b>M28</b> Proximity <b>M29</b> Violence/Conflict <b>M30</b> Visual spectacle/Graphic imagery <b>M31</b> Children <b>M32</b> Conservative ideology/Political diversion	
<b>N. Headings of online reports</b>	<b>N1</b> Generic	<b>N2</b> Emotive <b>N3</b> Includes a ‘nutgraph’ (that is, telling the story in a nutshell to entice reading, like a <i>blurb</i> )

<b>O.</b> <b>‘Comments’:</b> <b>whenever this appears in each online report it is also seen by audiences and contributes to the context of the report</b>	<b>O1</b> Relevant to the online report: Positive <b>O2</b> Relevant to the online report: Negative <b>O3</b> Relevant to the online report: Neutral	<b>O4</b> Irrelevant to online report: Positive <b>O5</b> Irrelevant to online report: Negative <b>O6</b> Irrelevant to the online report: Neutral	<b>O7</b> No comments <b>O8</b> No comments feature
<b>From research conducted of each case study and understanding the accuracy of each event, online reports need to be placed under scrutiny in terms of accuracy:</b>			
<b>P. Accuracy of the online report</b>	<b>P1</b> No inaccuracy found	<b>P2</b> Inaccuracy: Dates <b>P3</b> Inaccuracy: Names <b>P4</b> Inaccuracy: Details of event (not dates or names) <b>P5</b> Inaccuracy: Terminology (kidnapping (√) versus abduction (X); accomplice versus co-perpetrator versus accessories after the fact...because the reports are selected from date of murder to the appearance of the accused in court, the reference has to be ‘accused’ (legally) and not ‘perpetrator’; rape (√) versus ‘corrective rape’ (X); killing (√) versus murder (X)	

<b>Q. Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion</b>	<b>Q1</b> Non-secularist (reference to religion)	<b>Q2</b> Secularist (no reference to religion)
<b>R. Reference to the accused</b>	<b>R1</b> Descriptor indemnifying the accused of the crime against the victim  <b>R2</b> No reference to culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim observed	<b>R3</b> Descriptors of responsible imperative of accused of the crime against the victim
<b>S. The nature of sources consulted</b>	<b>S1</b> No sources consulted	<b>S2</b> Source has objective epistemic privilege  <b>S3</b> Source has subjective epistemic privilege

Using the qualitative coding sheet, two main sections were developed. The qualitative section comprised of narratives used in online reports referring to *efficacy* and from the research conducted of each case study and understanding the accuracy of each event, online reports needed to be placed under scrutiny in terms of accuracy. Thus 11 themes (I – S) were developed to investigate the technical aspects of all 16 online reports. In their seminal work *Mass communication, popular taste, and organized social action*, Lazerfeld and Merton (1948) describe that social norms are contextualised in the information media present through news (J). However, as an extension of their description, lesbian issues may be represented in reports that can be considered as entertaining (I), such as ‘coming out’ and ‘gay lifestyle’ stories (Namusoga, 2016; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016). Also, similar to the explanations of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which explains that language does not only guide the language people use, but also has the ability to guide their thoughts around certain issues, the use of certain nouns to refer to lesbians in general in online reports (K), such as ‘lesbian’ or ‘dyke’, are also of significance to the ideological

framework reporters use (Halberstam, 1998; Jewkes, 2015; NUJ, 2017). If reference to lesbians in general is considered, the specific nouns used to describe the victim(s) of each case study were also significant as the question was not only whether it was 'lesbian' issue, but also if the person(s) involved identified as such (L). In terms of Newsworthiness (M) – its principal progenitors being Galtung and Ruge (1965) and contemporary contributors being Jewkes (2004) and Collins and James (2011) – 32 codes, that motivates why the reporters would write about 'queercide', were included. Byerly (2018) explains that researchers look at the headline (N) of a report on a topical issue in terms of its emotive or generic construction as a way to determine its ability to create interest in the report. Then, for online reports to fully engage readers – and as a way for these reports to allow regulation and evaluation – a 'comments' section (O) is investigated.

To help determine which ideological frames were present in each report, the accuracy (P) and secularist or non-secularist (Q) influence of each was also of significance in answering the research question. Ferim (2016) states that, in media, orthodox Christianity has defended acts of homophobia. However, the question was posed: "Is this currently the case in online reports on 'queercide'?" Therefore, in the discussion surrounding the victims of the 'queercide' incidences as they were presented in the selected case studies, it was important to investigate how the accused of these crimes were treated by the reporters (R) in order to more holistically discuss the ideological approach of these online reports on the issue. Finally, with reference to the Standpoint Theory, it was important to determine the nature of the sources that had been consulted in the online reports on 'queercide' (S). It was important to determine whether reporters had consulted sources who had been directly affected by the killing of these women, or whether their preference had been to consult sources that had a more mechanistic and linear relationship to the case (and whether sources had indeed been consulted) (Paradies, 2018).

#### **4.3.3 Data analysis**

I did not make use of the normal Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) coding system that is normally used to analyse quantitative data as the research did not propose inferential statistics where data would be able to generalise or draw conclusions about the population and make statistical inferences. Rather, descriptive statistics and quantitative techniques were used to organise and summarise data in a meaningful way (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). This was done both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the quantitative component data were generated numerically (for example mean, median and mode were calculated) and presented graphically (by means of tables, pie charts and line graphs). This type of quantitative approach was used to uncover trends and patterns (Maree, 2017).

For the qualitative components of the research, an inductive thematic analysis process was undertaken. "Inductive thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing and reporting central emerging themes

through careful reading of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 129). Themes were thus uncovered through the application of the coding sheet that was developed for the research. This facilitated the examination of anything “carrying meaning, including textual material, such as online media reports [and] both written and visual material” (Sanders, 2010: 56). This method of analysis acted as a tool to identify framing and representations of ‘queericide’ that emanated from online reports (Sanders, 2010). Joffe and Yardley (2004: 55) argue that “thematic analysis is well-suited to social representation research because frames and representations may stem from shared themes created within corpora”. For the purpose of this study, a theme was what Saunders (2010: 306) refers to as “a specific pattern permeating the data in different sections and that are [sic] formed by different respondents”. The data were thus collated by means of tables (for both quantitative and qualitative data), line graphs, pie-charts and a Venn-diagram (for quantitatively data) and bar-graphs (qualitative data to identify trends).

To prepare the data, each code was highlighted with a different colour to separate each theme and assign the relevant code number to those words or phrases. As was alluded to in the data collection instrument section, the codes were defined, and thereafter the themes were explained according to their theoretical etymology or their philosophical *motif d'inclusion*. The next step, based on the qualitative coding sheet, was to test the coding scheme on a sample online report from the quantitative sample already identified. These samples that were used to test the qualitative coding sheet were eligible for inclusion into the qualitative sample.

#### **4.4 Limitations of the data collection methods**

Two major limitations of this study were that it neither accounted for audience contribution nor all online reporting formats used to construct a journalistic framework for reporting on LGBTIQ issues online. The research was formulated in such a way that these were not negligible limitations. However, future studies may involve online audiences to enhance understanding of how frames impact their perceptions and attitudes regarding a specific theme or a similar topic to fully realise the online journalistic frame-building objectives of this study. Moreover, case studies as a data collection approach do not allow for the generalisation of results to the wider population and the researcher’s own subjective feeling may influence outcomes pertaining to a specific case. The process of data collection in case studies is also difficult to replicate and may be time consuming (Reis, 2005). Hannah Schebesta (2018) also argues that both content and thematic analyses are unable to serve as a sole basis for claims about media effects, and therefore researchers who use different tools of measurement may arrive at different conclusions. In the current research, the effects of online reports on media audiences were not explored, nor did this research investigate how online media reside in functionalism, and therefore these limitations were tangential to the research. The research addresses the issue of measurement transferability in the Ethics section of this chapter. Being aware of these limitations and addressing

them as they arose (where relevant) was the best strategy to limit their effects on the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of this research project.

A content and thematic data collection and analysis approach can directly investigate online communication – that is, it may determine whether it complies with good reporting practices, creates activism, or fails to create salience, via texts. This is an unobtrusive means of analysing interactions. A limitation of this data collection method, however, is that natural language processing is still under-investigated and can be highly intensive and error prone. The research practiced intervention strategies to prevent this limitation from influencing the results by being clear on what codes were being used to collate data within specific categories or frames.

An issue that needed to be considered was that the size of the population was too voluminous to ensure an accurate mechanistic procedure for the selection, coding and tabulation of the data, and thus a very specific subset of parameters had to be developed to funnel the large number of online reports to an accessible population that would elicit significant data to address the objectives of the research. Another limitation was that the thesis was conducted cross-sectionally, where a longitudinal investigation might have been better to ensure the generalisability of the findings to a wider population. Such an investigation would also have replaced trends by more confirmable patterns in terms of how online reporters deal with LGBTIQ issues. This issue was dealt with by specifying the limitations of the study to contextualise how the findings might be applied to the research problem in order to answer those research questions. The repository nature of the Internet in storing data addressed this limitation to an extent, as the research was able to include all online reports that had been produced (written) at different time junctures at one point and the study was therefore not disadvantaged by engaging in a lengthy inquiry.

The methodology of the research provides important insights into how the research was conducted in the way that it gathers data and subsequently processed that data. These elements are discussed in the conceptual design section where the critical relativist paradigm anchors the relevant design aspects, such as mixed methodology, explorative, inductive reasoning, and cross-sectional time dimension of the research. These aspects are described along with the aspects surrounding the social artefact, namely online reports on ‘queercide’ of four case studies. An in-depth description of the pilot study to address erroneous elements of the data collection instrument (that is, the qualitative coding sheet) as well as the ethical philosophy regarding the methods used in the research conclude the chapter, which is a fundamental part of collecting the actual data. A coding sheet is used to collect relevant data because the online reports do not necessarily present a discourse more indicative of social media, therefore this is a more reliable choice of instrument to collect the necessary data to address the research questions.



## 4.5 Pilot study

To test the clarity and consistency of the qualitative coding sheet that was used as a tool to address all the issues related to the coding categories that needed to be resolved, a pilot study was performed by myself and one other coder who had been trained to apply the coding sheet to the same sample group (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). We performed these coding strategies separately and then discussed our respective findings to highlight discrepancies using a moderation form. Ultimately the qualitative coding sheet was adjusted before commencing with thematic coding by using the coding sheet for all 16 selected online reports. After a review of the frames included in the coding sheet and a re-consideration of the Theoretical Framework and Literature Review chapters, two more frames were included. These were whether or not the online reports had a ‘share’ feature as a social plugin (Almgren & Olsson, 2016; Entman, 1991). This was included to establish a juncture between Newsworthiness and the Framing and Representation Theory.

The following (Table 3) is a copy of the moderation form that was used as part of the pilot study to improve the qualitative coding sheet.

**Table 3: Copy of moderation sheet used in the pilot study**

INTER-CODER MODERATION CONTROL SHEET	
<b>MODERATION TYPE:</b>	Qualitative coding in Pilot Study
<b>DATE OF MODERATION MEETING:</b>	24 August 2019
<b>DATE OF ADDITIONAL TRAINING:</b>	31 August 2019
<b>PRINCIPAL CODER NAME:</b>	Marchant van der Schyff
<b>SECONDARY CODER NAME:</b>	Kayley Webster
<b>CONTEXTUAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER</b>	<p><b>Yellow highlighting</b> indicates the discrepancies experienced from inter-coder discussion.</p> <p>Each Coder coded four articles (one from each case study as identified by the qualitative sample selection process) separately after initial coder training. Thereafter, the principal and secondary coders came together to compare their findings and discuss discrepancies to adjust the coding sheet to be used on the 16 selected articles (four from each case study).</p>

	The four reports used in the pilot study were not included in the final qualitative study.				
<b>Standardisation Meeting</b>	7 September 2019				
<b>STUDENT DETAILS (NAME, SURNAME AND STUDENT NO.)</b>	<b>PRINCIPAL CODER'S REMARKS</b>		<b>SECONDARY CODER'S REMARKS</b>		<b>AGREED CODING</b>
<b>ARTICLE A</b>	<b>K</b>	K2 x10	<b>K</b>	K2 x10	K2 x10
	<b>L</b>	Only L1	<b>L</b>	Mostly L1 One L2	Mostly L1 One L2
	<b>M</b>	M8 + M32 + M29	<b>M</b>	M8 + M32 + M29	Now M8, M32 and M29
	<b>N</b>	N1	<b>N</b>	N1	N1
	<b>O</b>	O8	<b>O</b>	O8	08
	<b>Oa</b>	Oa3	<b>Oa</b>	Oa3	Oa3
	<b>P</b>	P1	<b>P</b>	P1	P1
	<b>Q</b>	Q2	<b>Q</b>	Q2	Q2
	<b>R</b>	R3 x2	<b>R</b>	R3 x2	R3 x3
	<b>S</b>	S2 x2 S3 x4	<b>S</b>	S2 x2 S3 x4	S2 x2 S3 x4
	<b>T</b>	At this stage none identified	<b>T</b>	At this stage none identified	At this stage none identified
<b>ARTICLE B</b>	<b>K</b>	K3 x 1 K5 x 1 K7 x 3	<b>K</b>	K3 x 1 K5 x 1 K7 x 3	K3 x 1 K5 x 1 K7 x 3 (include 'black' as other reference)
	<b>L</b>	L1 x4	<b>L</b>	L1 x4	L1 x4

	<b>M</b>	M7 M32	<b>M</b>	M7 M26 (not 'sex' not referring to victim') M32	M7 M32
	<b>N</b>	N2	<b>N</b>	N2	N2
	<b>O</b>	O7	<b>O</b>	O7	O7
	<b>Oa</b>	Oa1	<b>Oa</b>	Oa1	Oa1
	<b>P</b>	P1 ('murder' incorrect, opinion piece)	<b>P</b>	P5	P5
	<b>Q</b>	Q2	<b>Q</b>	Q2	Q2
	<b>R</b>	R4	<b>R</b>	R4	R4
	<b>S</b>	S1	<b>S</b>	S1	S1
	<b>T</b>	T1	<b>T</b>	No T codes used	T1
<b>ARTICLE C</b>	<b>K</b>	K6 x2 K5 x2	<b>K</b>	K6 x2 K5 x2	K6, but inaccurate as 'victims' here refers to Joey and Anisha, not lesbians
	<b>L</b>	L2 x1	<b>L</b>	L2 x1	L2 x1
	<b>M</b>	M29	<b>M</b>	M29	M29
	<b>N</b>	N2 N3	<b>N</b>	N2 N3	N2 N3
	<b>O</b>	O7	<b>O</b>	O7	O7
	<b>Oa</b>	Oa1	<b>Oa</b>	Oa1	Oa1

	<b>P</b>	P6 x3	<b>P</b>	P6 x3 P5	P6 x3, not P5 because 'murder' used as legal term
	<b>Q</b>	Q2	<b>Q</b>	Q2	Q2
	<b>R</b>	R3 x3	<b>R</b>	R3 x3	R3 x3
	<b>S</b>	S2	<b>S</b>	S2	S2
	<b>T</b>	T4	<b>T</b>	No T codes used	T4
<b>ARTICLE D</b>	<b>K</b>	K3 x3	<b>K</b>	K3 x3	K3 x3
	<b>L</b>	L1 x6	<b>L</b>	L1 x6	L1 x6
	<b>M</b>	M27 M32	<b>M</b>	M32	M27 and M32 because 'Banyana Banyana' soccer player is high profile
	<b>N</b>	N1	<b>N</b>	N1	N1
	<b>O</b>	O1	<b>O</b>	O1	O1
	<b>Oa</b>	Oa1	<b>Oa</b>	Oa1	Oa1
	<b>P</b>	No P coded	<b>P</b>	P1	P1
	<b>Q</b>	Q2	<b>Q</b>	Q2	Q2
	<b>R</b>	R2	<b>R</b>	R2	R2
	<b>S</b>	S1	<b>S</b>	S1	S1
	<b>T</b>	T4	<b>T</b>	T4	T4
<b>Description of discrepancies found (this section explicitly describes the variances per question)</b>	1) Too many news values and overlapping make assigning codes problematic and eventually discrepant. 2) "other" coding might cause confusion 3) "sex" as news value misidentified 4) "murder" misidentified – through discussion no fix required 5) The use of "victims" creates confusion 6) "murder" misidentified – through discussion no fix required				

	<p>7) news value of “high- profile person” not identified – through discussion no fix required</p> <p>8) no ‘P code’ identified by primary coder.</p>
<p><b>Action taken to fix</b> (This section explicitly describes how the above was addressed)</p>	<p>1) Eliminate non-identified news values in pilot study; combine Galtung &amp; Ruge (1965), Jewkes (2004), Collins &amp; James (2017) to simplify news values and create mutually exclusive codes</p> <p>2) Standardise approach: all pronouns referring to victims</p> <p>3) Clarify “sex” news value and add clarification from Jewkes (2004)</p> <p>5) Move “victim” to description of victim theme for L (from K)</p> <p>8) Coding system needs to be managed carefully by test-retesting</p> <p><b>Final notes:</b> Coding sheet for quantitative coding adjusted as a result of emergent codes from pilot study as well as inter-coder moderation.</p> <p><b>Problematic:</b> Because of the population frame – from date of killing/incident to first court appearance of suspect(s) – the word ‘murder’ as a legal term is accurate (“to test motivation for killing”); however, outside of connection to case it would be inaccurate and has to be referred to as “killing”, “incident” or “death”.</p> <p><b>Problematic:</b> (P) Assumptions, both from writer as well as quoted source because writer still chose to include quote, leaves impression with reader – report framed.</p> <p><b>Inclusions:</b> Including the Frame ‘share’ feature (assigned as <b>Oa</b>) will change to <b>P</b>, which has a knock-on effect on the letter assignment of each subsequent frame (for example: “<b>P. Accuracy of online reports</b>”, now becomes “<b>Q. Accuracy of online reports</b>”)</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPAL CODER</b> <b>PRINT NAME &amp; SIGN:</b></p>	
<p><b>SECONDARY CODER</b> <b>PRINT NAME &amp; SIGN:</b></p>	

The pilot study, which addressed changes and their implications for the study as well as significant details about the collection of data, revealed eight discrepancies from 44 codes. The strategies to resolve these discrepancies through redesigning the coding sheet was summarised above. A significant point that was revealed by doing the pilot study was that there was a high inter-coder reliability from the coding sheet at 82% or  $(100/44 \times 36/44 = 82\%)$ . It was also found that the frames “**Infotainment**” (I) and “**Informational**” (J) were superfluous because the quantitative coding sheet eliminated the association of ‘queercide’ with entertainment. Therefore, those two frames were excluded from the final qualitative coding sheet. The resulting qualitative coding sheet that was used for data collection from the 16 online reports was the following:

**Table 4: Qualitative coding sheet template after the pilot study**

CODING SCHEDULE TO ANALYSE FRAMES USED TO REPRESENT ‘QUEERCIDE’ IN ONLINE REPORTING	
ONLINE REPORT NAME AND DATE:	
FRAME	DESCRIPTION OF FRAME
Qualitative: Narratives used in online reports referring to efficacy	
<b>K. Moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reports (general)</b>	<b>K1</b> Homosexual (clinical) OR gay (colloquial) <b>K2</b> Lesbian <b>K3</b> Queer <b>K4</b> Pejorative <b>K5</b> Women OR Woman OR Female <b>K6</b> Victims <b>K7</b> Other *Not mutually exclusive codes
<b>L. Gendered, or non-binary/neutral pronouns of victim (specific)</b>	<b>L1</b> Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; “she”, “her”, “herself” <b>L2</b> Non-binary: Gender neutral pronouns used when referring to the victim; “they”, “their” and “them” being the most common; and “ze”, “sie”, “hir”, “co”, and “ey” <b>L3</b> No pronouns used to refer to victim(s)

	*Not mutually exclusive codes		
<b>M. Conditions for news evident in online reports, as described by Galtung &amp; Ruge (1965), Jewkes (2004), and Collins &amp; James (2011)</b>	<b>M1</b> Meaningfulness <b>M2</b> Conflict (Violence or Conflict referring to a person's understanding of violence, such as descriptions of murder (from Collins & James, 2011)) <b>M3</b> Reference to elite persons (Celebrity or High-status person) (Jewkes, 2004) <b>M4</b> Sex (needs to firstly refer to the victim and not the writer; then, clarified (in the works of Jewkes (2004), Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1987:102): "sexually motivated murders...receiving <b>substantial</b> and often <b>sensational</b> attention") <b>M5</b> Conservative ideology or political diversion (Jewkes, 2004)  *Not mutually exclusive codes		
<b>N. Headlines of online reports</b>	<b>N1</b> Generic	<b>N2</b> Emotive <b>N3</b> Includes a nutgraph (that is, telling the story in a nutshell to entice reading, like a <i>blurb</i> )  *Not mutually exclusive codes (N3)	
<b>O. "Comments", whenever it appears on an online report, is also seen by audiences and contributes to the context of the report (that is, "social plugin" as referred to by</b>	<b>O1</b> Relevant to online report: Positive <b>O2</b> Relevant to the online report: Negative <b>O3</b> Relevant	<b>O4</b> Irrelevant to online report: Positive <b>O5</b> Irrelevant to online report: Negative <b>O6</b> Irrelevant to the online	<b>O7</b> No comments <b>O8</b> No comments feature  *Mutually exclusive codes

Almgren & Olsson, 2016)	to the online report: Neutral	report: Neutral	
P. The “share” feature, whenever it appears on an online report, is also seen by audiences and contributes to the context of the report.	P1 No “share” feature	P2 “share” feature: Print or Save P3 “share” feature: <i>Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp</i> or Email  *Not mutually exclusive codes	
The findings based on a scrutiny of each case study and the understanding elicited of the accuracy of each event suggest that online reports need to be placed under scrutiny in terms of accuracy:			
Q. Accuracy of the online report	Q1 No inaccuracy found  *Not mutually exclusive	Q2 Inaccuracy: Dates Q3 Inaccuracy: Names Q4 Inaccuracy: Details of event (not dates or names) Q5 Inaccuracy: Terminology (kidnapping (√) versus abduction (X); accomplice versus co-perpetrator versus accessories after the fact...because the reports were selected from date of murder to the appearance of the accused in court, the reference has to be ‘accused’ (legally) and not ‘perpetrator’; rape (√) versus ‘corrective rape’ (X)); killing versus murder Q6 Assumptions (for example: “...if the suspect should be rereleased, he would kill those who witnessed...” ( <i>The Citizen</i> , 2018)	



<b>R. Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion</b>	<b>R1</b> Non-secularist (reference to religion)	<b>R2</b> Secularist (no reference to religion) *Mutually exclusive codes  *Refer to the works of Jaggar (2016) for the Standpoint Theory, where the epistemological visualisation of a moral alternative to heterosexist and racist organised religion is expressed
<b>S. Reference to the accused</b>	<b>S1</b> Descriptor indemnifying the accused of the crime against the victim  <b>S2</b> No reference to the culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim	<b>S3</b> Descriptor of culpability of accused for the crime against the victim  <b>S4</b> No reference to the accused  *Mutually exclusive
<b>T. The nature of sources consulted</b>	<b>T1</b> No source(s) consulted	<b>T2</b> Source(s) has/have objective epistemic perspective  <b>T3</b> Source(s) has/have subjective epistemic perspective
<b>U. Frames used, according to Entman (1991)</b>	<b>U1</b> Human interest <b>U2</b> Conflict <b>U3</b> Morality <b>U4</b> Attribution of responsibility <b>U5</b> Economic consequences	

	<p>*The Framing and Representation Theory was used because of the clarity, parsimony, and heuristic value it offered the analysis of frames as proposed by current theorists, and also its intersectionality with Newsworthiness.</p>
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The pilot study was conducted using the qualitative coding sheet for the qualitative aspect of the research and not the quantitative section, as the quantitative analysis of the research would provide descriptive, and not correlative, properties. However, the qualitative section of the research had a larger frame set and was based on certain emergent patterns from the quantitative component of this research, which necessitated great care. Therefore, a pilot study for the quantitative portion of the research would have been superfluous. It would not have addressed the general research problem as the quantitative coding sheet was able to accomplish the objective of technical insights into online reports on ‘queercide’ without the scrutiny provided by a pilot study.

The main purpose of the pre-test on the qualitative coding sheet was to test the integrity of the categories developed for the study and to adjust the codes or include any emergent codes where required. Also, because the study focused on the language used in online reports on ‘queercide’, the pre-test was able to describe the syntagma and paradigm that govern how words, phrases and other signs relate to one another in a practical context. From 44 coding points in the pilot study, eight discrepancies were uncovered between the primary coder and the secondary coder, and this resulted in an 82% similarity, which was considered within the acceptable range, according to Kobus Maree (2016).

The following figure is an example of the qualitative coding sheet that was applied to an online report on 'queericide':

Qualitative	
CODING SCHEDULE TO ANALYSE FRAMES USED TO REPRESENT 'QUEERIDE' IN ONLINE REPORTING	
ARTICLE NAME AND DATE: <i>Humboldt singer petition regional release of execution of lesbian murder - Muregele, B. (2018)</i>	
FRAME	DESCRIPTION OF FRAME
Qualitative: Narratives used in online reports referring to efficacy	
I. Infotainment	<p>I1 Infotainment on seminal online reports</p> <p>I2 Infotainment on economy of scale online reports</p> <p>*Not required: eliminated during the qualitative report sampling process - not part of the selection criteria ("From Quantitative coding sheet: C2 News Outlets; D1 Sources were consulted; E1 Seminal work). Therefore, none of the reports qualified as Infotainment"</p>
J. Informational	<p>J1 Informational on seminal online reports</p> <p>J2 Informational on economy of scale online reports</p> <p>J3 Informational on advocacy</p> <p>*Not required: eliminated during the qualitative report sampling process - not part of the selection criteria ("From Quantitative coding sheet: C2 News Outlets; D1 Sources were consulted; E1 Seminal work). Therefore, none of the reports qualified as Economy of scale, nor Advocacy reports"</p>
K. Moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reports (general)	<p>K1 Homosexual (clinical) OR gay (colloquial)</p> <p>K2 Lesbian &amp; 2</p> <p>K3 Queer</p> <p>K4 Pejorative</p> <p>K5 Women OR Woman OR Female</p> <p>K6 Victim</p> <p>K7 Other - X1 - "LGBT people"</p> <p>*Not mutually exclusive codes</p>
L. Engendered, or non-binary/neutral pronouns of victim (specific)	<p>L1 Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; she, her, herself</p> <p>L2 Non-binary: Gender neutral pronouns used when referring to the victim; they, their and them is the most common; and ze, sie, he, co, and ey</p> <p>*Not mutually exclusive codes</p>
P. "Share" feature whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report	<p>P1 No "Share" feature</p> <p>P2 "Share" feature</p> <p>P3 "Share" feature</p> <p>f t @</p>
From research conducted of each case study and understanding the accuracy of each event, online reports need to be placed under scrutiny in terms of accuracy:	
Q. Accuracy of the online report	<p>Q1 No inaccuracy found</p> <p>*Not mutually exclusive</p> <p>*Looked at dates, names, details of event</p> <p>Q2 Inaccuracy: Dates</p> <p>Q3 Inaccuracy: Names</p> <p>Q4 Inaccuracy: Details of event (not dates or names)</p> <p>Q5 Inaccuracy: Terminology (misquoting (V) versus abduction (X), accomplice versus co-perpetrator versus accessories after the fact... because the reports are selected from date of murder to the appearance of the accused in court, the reference has to be 'accused' (legally) and not 'perpetrator', rape (V) versus 'corrective rape' (X); killing versus murder</p> <p>Q6 Assumptions (Example: "... if the suspect should be sentenced he would kill those who witnessed..." (The Gibson, 2016))</p>
R. Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion	<p>R1 Non-secularist (reference to religion)</p> <p>R2 Secularist (no reference to religion)</p> <p>*Mutually exclusive codes</p> <p>*Refer to the works of Jagger (2016) in Standpoint Theory, where the epistemological visualization of a moral alternative to heterosexist and racist organized religion</p>
M. Conditions for news evident in online reports, as described by Galtung & Rupe (1998)	<p>M1 Meaningfulness</p> <p>M2 Conflict (Violence or Conflict referring to a person's understanding of violence such as descriptions of murder (from Collins &amp; James, 2011))</p> <p>M3 Reference to elite persons (Celebrity or High-status person (from Jewkes, 2004))</p> <p>M4 Sex (Needs to firstly refer to the victim and not the writer; then, clarified (in the works from Jewkes (2004) by Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1987: 102))</p> <p>*sexually motivated murders... receiving substantial and often sensational attention</p> <p>M5 Conservative ideology or political diversion (from Jewkes, 2004)</p> <p>*... "homosexuals have been making 'demonstratory'..."</p> <p>*... "sexual... people... should be treated..."</p> <p>*... "LGBT... people... should be treated..."</p>
N. Headings of online reports	<p>N1 Generic</p> <p>N2 Emotive</p> <p>N3 Includes a nutgraph (i.e. telling the story in a nutshell to entice reading, like a start)</p> <p>*Not mutually exclusive codes (N3)</p>
O. "Comments" whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report ("Social plugin" from Almgren & Olsson, 2016)	<p>O1 Relevant to online report</p> <p>O2 Positive</p> <p>O3 Relevant to the online report</p> <p>O4 Negative</p> <p>O5 Relevant to the online report</p> <p>O6 Neutral</p> <p>O7 No comments</p> <p>O8 No comments feature</p> <p>*News 24.com with no 'comments' feature</p> <p>*Has a 'Read more' feature though: direct link to "rape..."</p> <p>*"Mutually exclusive codes" "rape..."</p> <p>*"left rights" "crime..."</p>
S. Reference to the accused	<p>S1 Descriptor identifying the accused of the crime against the victim</p> <p>S2 No reference to culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim observed</p> <p>S3 Descriptors of responsible imperative of accused of the crime against the victim</p> <p>S4 In references to accused</p> <p>*Mutually exclusive</p>
T. The nature of sources consulted	<p>T1 No sources consulted</p> <p>T2 Source from objective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T3 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T4 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T5 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T6 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T7 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T8 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T9 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T10 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T11 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T12 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T13 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T14 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T15 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T16 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T17 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T18 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T19 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T20 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T21 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T22 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T23 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T24 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T25 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T26 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T27 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T28 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T29 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T30 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T31 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T32 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T33 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T34 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T35 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T36 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T37 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T38 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T39 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T40 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T41 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T42 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T43 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T44 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T45 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T46 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T47 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T48 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T49 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T50 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T51 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T52 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T53 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T54 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T55 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T56 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T57 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T58 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T59 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T60 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T61 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T62 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T63 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T64 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T65 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T66 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T67 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T68 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T69 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T70 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T71 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T72 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T73 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T74 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T75 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T76 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T77 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T78 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T79 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T80 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T81 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T82 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T83 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T84 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T85 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T86 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T87 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T88 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T89 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T90 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T91 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T92 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T93 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T94 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T95 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T96 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T97 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T98 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T99 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p> <p>T100 Source from subjective (academic) privilege</p>
U. Frames used, according to Entman (1991)	<p>U1 Human interest</p> <p>U2 Conflict</p> <p>U3 Morality</p> <p>U4 Attribution of responsibility</p> <p>U5 Economic consequence</p> <p>*From Framing and Representation Theory; used because of its clarity and persimony. Narrative value of frames used by current theorists such as and intersectionality with heterosexism</p>
Comments on the article:	

Figure 4: Example of how online reports were coded using the qualitative coding sheet

Adapted from Maregele (2018)

#### 4.5.1 Details about data collection

Each of the 70 downloaded online reports on ‘queericide’ were printed and filed under their case study sections for easy identification and retrieval. Each mixed methodology coding sheet was printed and colour co-ordinated. For example, the “**K. Moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reports (general)**” frame was coded as *green*, while the “**L. Gendered, or non-binary/neutral pronouns of victim (specific)**” was coded in *pink*. Each unit of analysis was critically read for words and phrases that were relevant to each of the frames to be coded according to the defined codes. Each word or phrase was highlighted with the specific colour and assigned a relevant code. For example, in the sentence: “How many times must a man kill lesbians before he is judged a killer? asked Soldaat”, the part “How many times must a man kill lesbians before he is judged a killer?” was coded *yellow* (the colour assigned to “**M. Conditions for news evident in online reports**” and given a “**M8**” code (referring to evidence of a “**Conflict**” news value), while “lesbians” was assigned a “**K2**” code and coloured *green*, while “Soldaat” was coloured *brown* and coded as “**S3**”, the colour assigned to the “**S. The nature of witnesses/sources consulted**” frame and code referring to a source as a witness who had a subjective epistemic perspective. Each online report might have had multiple presentations of the same code or even codes that were in opposition to one another. A table for each online report for each case study was drawn up and the codes were captured in these tables to formulate a holistic representation of the data collected from the selected online reports on ‘queericide’.

#### 4.5.2 Intercoder and intercoder reliability

In the intercoder process, an independent coder and chief researcher each received a copy of the same online report and performed the coding of these reports within a pre-determined timeframe. A meeting was scheduled to compare and discuss the findings and to note similarities and discrepancies on a moderation sheet. Each discrepancy was highlighted in *yellow* on the moderation sheet and listed in the allocated section for further discussion. For each listed discrepancy, a remedial strategy was designed to address key issues. For example, it was found that too many news values and overlapping of frames made assigning codes problematic and eventually discrepant, and both coders concurred that, to eliminate non-identified news values based on the pilot study, the proposals by Galtung and Ruge (1965), Jewkes (2004), and Collins and James (2017) would be combined to simplify news values and create mutually exclusive codes. This remedy was affected by adjusting the qualitative coding sheet. Although both the coders (myself and a colleague) had been trained in how to apply the codes and use the coding sheet to collect data, neither had been instructed in what text would constitute which code, so we remained as objective as possible when we performed the coding. Tinsley and Weiss (1975) argues that it is important for independent coders to evaluate the characteristics of the texts they examine

in order to reach the same conclusion and thus to establish the validity and consistency of the data collection instrument.

#### **4.5.3 Changes and implications**

Even though the pilot study revealed that there were only a few coding discrepancies between the two coders, these occurred nonetheless. It was imperative that the coding sheet that would be used for the collection of data would be as accurate as possible to ensure the viability of the data and to research trustworthy findings and offer valid recommendations. Each difference was therefore treated with prejudice and reconsidered for clarity and ease of use to eliminate errors when performing the coding of the 16 selected online reports.

#### **4.5.4 Analysis**

After tabulating the quantitative codes assigned to the text, the data were used to construct a summary table for all four case studies from which a line graph was developed to better observe any trends, if they occurred, and to compare these with the findings of the data collected from the two ‘good’ online reports. Each of these tables and line graphs required thorough description and evaluation to be of significance in the data analysis phase of the research. Similarly, for the tabulated qualitative codes, a bar graph was developed to better observe the existence of a trend. However, for the qualitative section of the research, considerable analyses were required by deconstructing the texts in order to uncover their significance in terms of ideological approaches and power dynamics. For the quantitative data, a content analysis was used to critically describe those elements of significance pertaining to the technical writing of the online reports on ‘queercide’, while the qualitative data were analysed thematically in order to explore the implications of the ideological frames used in those reports.

#### **4.6 Research ethics**

Embedding this study in ethical practices was important as the fundamental blueprint of how the research was to be performed was paramount in giving direction to how the research would proceed in order to collect data and present findings that would not only be accurate in addressing the research problem but would also withstand academic scrutiny. Therefore, the findings ultimately have to adhere to the highest scientific standards. The more technical and specific ethical proclamations are included in a separate Trustworthiness, Validity and Reliability section where the discourse addresses those obstacles that might have influenced the research. Suffice it to say that a full ethical protocol certificate (reference no. HSS/0368/019D) was attached by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee to the approved research proposal, which addressed the fundamental methodology of

the research as so far described in this thesis. The research laboured to uphold all ethical guidelines proposed by the University and adhered rigorously to the Code of Conduct of this institution.

The research process followed the standard ethical procedures as prescribed in the research code of the University (UKZN Research Policy V: Research Ethics) (UKZN, 2007). The policy provides guidelines for the pursuit of truth and knowledge and insists on research that is honest, uses methods that are safe and responsible, and delivers information that is fair and equal to all participants (if relevant). The policy also describes the duty of the researcher to conduct him/herself with honesty and integrity by declaring conflicts of interest, not falsifying data, not committing plagiarism, not fabricating any aspects of the research findings, not misusing funds, or avoiding any other practice that might undermine the integrity of the research and may bring the University into disrepute.

The idea of beneficence in research ethics is one necessitating discussion as it relates to the research. Beneficence, according to Michael Aiello (2015), stresses that the researcher must have the welfare of the research participant as a goal of the research study. In other words, it should benefit rather than harm the individual. Each of the case studies made mention of both the victim(s) and the accused. Often, the online reports and the data they provided also included the names of family members, friends and investigating officers, which revealed personal information about them that could be used for devious intentions. However, this information was already public record and thus part of the public domain. However, no additional information other than what was presented in the online reports was used in this research.

It was envisaged that the research outcomes would benefit the LGBTIQ community, especially lesbians, journalists, and other authorities that might gain useful information from the findings.

An issue that needed to be considered was that the size of the population was too voluminous to ensure an accurate mechanistic procedure for the selection, coding and tabulation of the data, and thus a very specific subset of parameters had to be developed to funnel the large number of online reports to an accessible population that would elicit significant data to address the objectives of the research. Another limitation was that the thesis was conducted cross-sectionally, where a longitudinal investigation might have been better to ensure the generalisability of the findings to a wider population. Such an investigation would also have replaced trends by more confirmable patterns in terms of how online reporters deal with LGBTIQ issues. This issue was dealt with by specifying the limitations of the study to contextualise how the findings might be applied to the research problem in order to answer those research questions. The repository nature of the Internet in storing data addressed this limitation to an extent, as I was able to include all online reports that had been produced (written) at different time junctures at one point and the study was therefore not disadvantaged by engaging in a lengthy inquiry.

The methodology of the research provides important insights into how the research was conducted in the way that it gathers data and subsequently processed that data. These elements are discussed in the conceptual design section where the critical relativist paradigm anchors the relevant design aspects, such as mixed methodology, explorative, inductive reasoning, and cross-sectional time dimension of the research. These aspects are described along with the aspects surrounding the social artefact, namely online reports on 'queercide' of four case studies. An in-depth description of the pilot study to address erroneous elements of the data collection instrument (that is, the qualitative coding sheet) as well as the ethical philosophy regarding the methods used in the research conclude the chapter, which is a fundamental part of collecting the actual data. A coding sheet is used to collect relevant data because the online reports do not necessarily present a discourse more indicative of social media, therefore this is a more reliable choice of instrument to collect the necessary data to address the research questions.

## 5 CHAPTER FIVE: DATA COLLECTION, DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

“...being a woman is not a natural fact. The difference in status [of a woman] or [the] exploitation and oppression which women are subjected to is a pretext around which the feminine condition is built, but it is not what determines this condition. It is immemorial.”

- Simone de Beauvoir –

(ThinkingAloud7189, 2015)

The aim of the research was to explore how online reporters reported on the LGBTIQ issue of ‘queercide’ and which technical elements as well as ideological frameworks they used that had the potential to influence how audiences, particularly online audiences, could be impacted to perceive phenomena (Altheide, 1997). In this process the research also attempted to determine whether these reports provided insights into critical, reputable, quality online journalism. In the Methodology chapter, the research approach was explained, and it was stated that it would be based on secondary sources of information in the form of online reports on four case studies of ‘queercide’. The research explained how these reports had been selected and how the data, by using a separate quantitative and qualitative thematic coding sheet, had been retrieved, analysed and used to address the research objectives and achieve the aim of the study. In this chapter, the coded data will be presented in sections of scale.

First, quantitative data were captured in table format for each case study to reflect the data retrieved from 70 online reports as well as the two ‘good’ online reports, as described by Jaffer (2017) and Somdyala (2019). To standardise the data presented in these tables, percentages were calculated and tabulated for each case study. The same was done for the ‘good’ online reports as the data were also calculated as percentages that could be compared with those generated for the ‘queercide’ reports. These tables, representing the various quantitative frames, were used to develop a line graph to show trends in how online reports on ‘queercide’ differed from those that were considered ‘good’ in order to gauge in what ways these reports were similar and different. The similarities between the online reports on ‘queercide’ and the ‘good’ online reports were used as selection criteria to identify four reports from each case study for the quantitative component of the research.

For the second component of the research, qualitative data were generated. The process of creating a table and Pie-chart of these data for each case study was repeated in order to standardise the data. Again, the percentages of each theme and case study were tabulated and a bar graph was created to show the existence or absence of particular trends. These trends were deemed significant in the exploration of the ideological frames used to report on LGBTIQ issues. As each section in this chapter links with the next,



a brief summary is provided to highlight the key findings of that section and to explain its relevance for the subsequent segment.

The data collection processes are discussed separately from the data analysis processes and, for clarity, these discussions are then collated to illuminate the connectivity of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research. The tables and figures are presented sequentially to expose the gaps in knowledge of how online reporters, technically and ideologically, reported on ‘queercide’ and how these findings would be significant for online journalistic practice. This chapter bridges these gaps by presenting the data in a clear and visible manner, while discussing the findings with reference to the literature that had been explored and to arrive at succinct and reliable outcomes.

## **5.1 Quantitative data presentation: Content coding**

In this section of the chapter, the research data are summarised after being coded and tabulated and converted to percentages in order to present standard units of measurement that were used for the comparison of the reports to illuminate the similarities and differences that emerged among them. In this manner, this research was able to present data on the structural composition of the online reports on ‘queercide’.

### **5.1.1 Quantitative content coding of online reports on Noxolo Xakeka**

Noxolo Xakeka, whose murder was identified as Case 1, was a 23-year-old mother who was murdered on 1 January 2018 by Bongile Joni, who was arrested three days later and let off with a warning pending a trial date. Joni first appeared in court set for trial on 2 July 2018. Between Xakeka’s death and the beginning of the trial, 11 online reports appeared (Hlati, 2018). On 11 October 2018, Joni was found guilty of unlawful murder; however, Magistrate Franselien Mouton did not deem the crime a ‘hate crime’ (Reynolds, 2018). Articles such as the ones published after the start of the trial did not fall within the corpus selected within the population parameters of the research and were therefore excluded from the research and the data. What made Xakeka’s case unique compared to the other cases was that she had been involved in the events – a brawl between two groups – that resulted in her death. She had first cut her would-be killer with a broken bottle before he stabbed her to death. The following table presents the data collected from all 11 online reports by using the quantitative content coding sheet.

**Table 5.1: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of the killing of Noxolo Xakeka**

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10	Article 11
A	A4	A4	A1	A2	A3	A4	A2	A4	A7	A4	A2
B	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B1	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2
C	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2
D	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1
E	E1	E2	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E2
F	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1
G	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2
H	H2	H2	H3	H4	H4	H3	H4	H3	H3	H3	H3

A1: 0-400 words, with "[...more]"	1	B1: Yes	1	C2: News outlet websites	11	D1: Source(s) acknowledged	11
A2: 0-400 words, without "[...more]"	3	B2: No	10				
A3: 401-800 words, with "[...more]"	1			G2: No	11	H2: Photograph of victim	2
A4: 401-800 words, without "[...more]"	5	E1: Seminal work	9			H3: Photograph relevant (LGBTIQ theme) not of victim	6
A7: 1000+	1	E2: Economy of scale articles	2	F1: No	11	H4: Photograph irrelevant	3

The table includes each frame (from A – H) that was completed with the relevant codes in each cell. The columns indicate each online report, for example *Article 1* is titled “Lesbian, 23, stabbed to death in Strand shebeen” (Hlati, 2018), while the rows include the relevant codes assigned to the reports. For clarity, a secondary ‘summary’ set of tables is included. The length of each online report varied from the largest number (46%) that contained between 401-800 words, without “[...more]” (A4), followed by 27% that contained between 0-400 words, without “[...more]” (A2). The remaining online reports (9% each) varied between 0-400 words, with “[...more]” (A1), 401-800 words with “[...more]” (A3) and those of more than 1 000 words (A7). No online reports had 801-1 000 words with “[...more]” (A5), nor were there any online reports of 801-1 000 words without “[...more]” (A6), therefore they were excluded from the secondary summary table. Of the online reports, 91% did not have a “Share” feature (B2), while 9% (B1) did. A 100% of the online reports was published on news outlet websites (C2), including *iol.com*, *ewn.co.za*, and *pacifictribune.com*. All the online reports (100%) acknowledged either one or more sources (D1), while 82% were original reports (E1) and 18% were

used from other sources and duplicated on the website (E2). None of the online reports (100%) received critical, industry or any other award recognitions (F1), nor did any of the online reports (100%) have a feature where readers could report or comment on factual inaccuracies or any other form of self-regulation (G2). Of these reports, 55% included photographs that were relevant to an LGBTIQ theme but were not of the victim (H3), while 27% of the photographs were considered irrelevant to the topic of the report (H4), and 18% of the online reports included a photograph of the victim (H2).

### **5.1.2 Quantitative content coding of online reports on Joey and Anisha van Niekerk**

The Van Niekerk couple, identified as Case 2, owned a farm in Mooiwooi and were on their way to a funeral in Pretoria when they were kidnapped on 10 December 2017. Somewhere between then and when their charred bones were discovered on 28 December 2017, the couple was murdered. Eight suspects were arrested and appeared in court for the first time on 18 January 2018 (Delaney, 2018). In this period, 34 online reports appeared which fell within the population parameter of the research. The following table presents the data that were collected from these online reports while applying the parameters set by the quantitative content coding sheet:

**Table 5.2: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of the killing of Joey and Anisha van Niekerk**

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10	Article 11	Article 12	Article 13	Article 14	Article 15	Article 16	Article 17	Article 18	Article 19	Article 20	Article 21	Article 22	Article 23	Article 24	Article 25	Article 26	Article 27	Article 28	Article 29	Article 30	Article 31	Article 32	Article 33	Article 34	
A	A4	A4	A4	A2	A4	A4	A1	A4	A4	A7	A2	A2	A2	A2	A2	A2	A2	A2	A2	A4	A7	A2	A4	A4	A2	A2	A2	A4	A1	A1	A2	A7	A2	A4	
B	B2	B2	B1	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B1	B1	B1	B2	B2	B1	B2	B2	B2	B1	B2	B1	B1	B2	B1	B1	B1	B1	B2	B2	B1	B2	
C	C1	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C3	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C3	C2	C3	C3	
D	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D2	D1	D1	D1	D1	D2	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D1	D2	D2	D2	D2
E	E2	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E2	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E2	E1	E1	E2	E1	E2	E1	E1	E1
F	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1
G	G1	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G1	G2	G2	G2	G2	G1	G2	G1	G1	G2	G2	G1	G2
H	H2	H2	H2	H2	H3	H2	H2	H2	H2	H2	H2	H5	H2	H5	H2	H2	H5	H2	H2	H5	H3	H2	H2	H4	H2	H5	H2	H1	H2	H2	H2	H4	H2	H3	

A1: 0-400 words, with "[...more]"	3
A2: 0-400 words, without "[...more]"	16
A4: 401-800 words, without "[...more]"	12
A7: 1000+	3

B1: Yes	20
B2: No	14

C1: Blog	1
C2: News outlet websites	29
C3: LGBTQ Advocacy site	4

D1: Source(s) acknowledged	28
D2: No source(s) acknowledged	6

E1: Seminal work	29
E2: Economy of scale	5

F1: No	34
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G1: Yes	6
G2: No	28

H1: No photograph(s)	1
H2: Photograph of victim	23
H3: Photograph relevant (LGBTIQ theme) not of victim	3
H4: Photograph irrelevant	2
H5: Photograph of the accused	5

The length of each online report varied from the largest number (47%) that contained between 0-400 words without “[...more]” (A2), followed by 35% containing between 401-800 words without “[...more]” (A4). The remaining online reports (9%) varied between 0-400 words with “[...more]” (A1) and more than 1 000 words (A7). There were no online reports containing 401-800 words with “[...more]” (A3), 801-1 000 words with “[...more]” (A5), nor 801-1 000 words without “[...more]” (A6), therefore these ranges were excluded from the secondary summary table by default. The included reports, then, are identified within the A1, A2, A4 and A7 categories. Of the online reports, 59% had a “Share” feature (B1) while 41% (B2) did not. The format of the online reports varied from 85% appearing on news outlet websites (C2) such as *timeslive.co.za*, *citizen.co.za*, *news24.com*, *enca.com* and *iol.com*, while 12% appeared on an LGBTIQ advocacy website (C3), namely *pinknews.co.uk*, and 3% appeared on a weblog, namely *inmemoriamlesbian.blogspot.com*. In 82% of the online reports at least one source had been consulted (D1), while in 18% of the online reports no sources had been consulted in the construction of the piece (D2). It was found that 85% of the online reports were original (E1) while 15% were online reports used from other sources and duplicated on the website (E2). None of the online reports (100%) received critical, industry or any other award recognition (F1). For 82% of the online reports there were no self-regulatory features (G2). However, for 18% of the online reports there was a ‘comments’ feature where readers could report on the accuracy of the report (G1). Of these online reports, 67% included photographs of the victim or victims (H2), while 15% of the photographs were of the accused (H5), 9% were relevant to an LGBTIQ theme but not of the victim or victims (H3), 6% included irrelevant photographs (H4), and 3% had no photographs included in the report (H1).

### **5.1.3 Quantitative content coding of online reports on Noluvo Swelindawo**

Noluvo Swelindawo, 22, was kidnapped from her home in Khayelitsha which she shared with her partner. Swelindawo was signposted as Case 3. She was assaulted and shot dead and her body dumped near the N2 highway on 4 December 2016. Her killer first appeared in court on 21 November 2017 (Daniels, 2018). During this period, 15 online reports regarding the killing were published.

**Table 5.3: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of the killing of Noluvo Swelindawo**

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10	Article 11	Article 12	Article 13	Article 14	Article 15
<b>A</b>	A2	A4	A1	A7	A1	A7	A2	A1	A1	A3	A3	A7	A7	A4	A4
<b>B</b>	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B1	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B1
<b>C</b>	C2	C2	C2	C2	C1	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2
<b>D</b>	D1	D1	D1	D2	D2	D1	D1	D1	D1	D2	D1	D2	D1	D2	D2
<b>E</b>	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1
<b>F</b>	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1
<b>G</b>	G2	G2	G2	G1	G2	G1	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G1	G2
<b>H</b>	H2	H2	H4	H1	H1	H3	H2	H1	H4	H4	H4	H4	H3	H1	H1

A1: 0-400 words, with "[...more]"	4	B1: Yes	2	C1: Blog	1	D1: Source(s) acknowledged	9	H1: No photograph(s)	5
A2: 0-400 words, without "[...more]"	2	B2: No	13	C2: News outlet websites	14	D2: No source(s) acknowledged	6	H2: Photograph of victim	3
A3: 401-800 words, with "[...more]"	2							H3: Photograph relevant (LGBTIQ theme) not of victim	2
A4: 401-800 words, without "[...more]"	3	F1: No	15	G1: Yes	3	E1: Seminal work	15	H4: Photograph irrelevant	5
A7: 1000+	4			G2: No	12				

The length of each online report varied with 27% containing between 0-400 words with “[...more]” (A1), 27% containing more than 1 000 words (A7), and 20% containing between 401-800 words without “[...more]” (A4). Finally, 13% of these online reports contained between 0-400 words without “[...more]” (A2), and 13% contained between 401-800 words with “[...more]” (A3). None of these online reports contained 801-1 000 words with “[...more]” (A5), nor were there any reports in the range of 801-1 000 words without “[...more]” (A6), therefore this range was excluded from the secondary ‘summary’ table. It was found that 87% of these online reports did not have a “Share” feature (B2) while 13% (B1) did. The appearance of the reports online varied as 93% appeared on news outlet websites (C2) while 7% appeared on weblogs (C1). In 60% of the online reports at least one source had been consulted (D1), while in 18% of the online reports no sources had been consulted in the construction of the piece (D2), while all the reports (100%) were considered to be original (E1). None of the online reports (100%) received critical, industry or any other award recognition (F1). For 80% of these online reports there were no self-regulatory features (G2). However, for 20% of the online reports there was a “Comments” feature that readers could use to report on the accuracy of the report (G1). It was found that 34% included no photographs (H1), while 33% of the photographs did not include

photographs that were relevant to the subject not content of the report (H4), 20% of the photographs in the reports were of the victim (H2), and 13% of the photographs were relevant to an LGBTIQ theme (H3). None of the online reports included photographs of the accused (H5) and this frame was therefore excluded from the secondary summary Table.

#### **5.1.4 Quantitative content coding of online reports on the killing of Eudy Simelane**

On 28 April 2008, *Banyana Banyana* soccer player, Eudy Simelane, was ‘correctively’ gang-raped and stabbed over 25 times by four men. Her body was found in a ditch outside KwaTema, Gauteng. The trial of the four men suspected of the rape and killing began on 11 February 2009 in Delmas, Mpumalanga (Linder, 2019). During this period a corpus of 10 reports on this case appeared online. Simelane’s case study is signposted as Case 4.

**Table 5.4: Quantitative data collected on 11 online reports of the killing of Eudy Simelane**

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10
A	A4	A7	A7	A2	A2	A7	A2	A4	A2	A7
B	B1	B2	B1	B1	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2
C	C3	C2	C2	C2	C1	C2	C3	C3	C2	C1
D	D1	D1	D1	D2	D2	D1	D2	D2	D1	D1
E	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1	E1
F	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1	F1
G	G1	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G2	G1
H	H4	H1	H2	H1	H1	H1	H1	H1	H1	H2

A1: 0-400 words, with "[...more]"	0
A2: 0-400 words, without "[...more]"	4
A3: 401-800 words, with "[...more]"	0
A4: 401-800 words, without "[...more]"	2
A7: 1000+	4

B1: Yes	3
B2: No	7

F1: No	10
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E1: Seminal work	10
E2: Economy of scale reports	0

C1: Blog	2
C2: News outlet website	5
C3: LGBTIQ Advocacy site	3

G1: Yes	2
G2: No	8

D1: Source(s) acknowledged	6
D2: No source acknowledged	4

H1: No photographs	7
H2: Photograph of victim	2
H4: Photograph irrelevant	1

The length of the online reports ranged quite a bit as 40% contained 0-400 words without “[...more]” (A2), and 40% contained more than 1 000 words (A7). Only 20% of the online reports contained 401-800 words without “[...more]” (A4). There were no online reports on this case that contained as many as 801-1 000 words with “[...more]” (A5), nor were there any online reports of 801-1 000 words without “[...more]” (A6), therefore these ranges were excluded from the secondary ‘summary’ table. Of these reports, 70% did not have a “Share” feature (B2), while 30% (B1) did. The exposure of these online reports varied as 50% appeared on news outlet websites (C2), while 20% appeared on weblogs (C1) and 30% were published by LGBTIQ advocacy websites. In 60% of the online reports at least one source had been consulted (D1), while in 40% no sources had been consulted in the construction of the piece (D2). All the reports (100%) were considered to be original (E1) from what could be observed. None of the online reports (100%) had received critical, industry or any other award recognition (F1). For 80% of the online reports there were no self-regulatory features (G2). However, for 20% of these



reports there was a “Comments” feature that readers could use to report on the accuracy of the report (G1). Of these online reports, 70% included no photographs (H1), while 10% of the photographs were considered to be irrelevant (H4), and 20% of the photographs in the reports were of the victim (H2). None of the online reports included photographs of the LGBTIQ theme (H3) nor of the accused (H5) and these was therefore excluded from the secondary summary table.

### **5.1.5 Quantitative content coding of the ‘good’ online reports used for comparison**

Two online reports, entitled *Honour the dead – understand their last moments faced with horror* and *#GuptaLeaks collateral damage: KPMG SA makes a bold attempt at clawing itself out of an ethical hole*, written by Thamm (2018), were selected purposively as they complied with certain criteria as discussed by journalists and news institutions. Somdyala (2019: 4) explains that the benefit of journalistic awards as a barometer for quality online writing is important as “entrants are subjected to detailed screening before the judging process”, while *Media24* (2019) insists that all quality online reports have to include a feedback mechanism for audiences to provide information. Also, the consultation of critical sources, according to Peters (2019), is of paramount importance when constructing an online report of value. The reason why only two reports in this category were used, was that identifying ‘good’ online reports (termed ‘good’ based on a wide range of themes) was not the purpose of this research; rather, the research wanted to establish, in one component of the study, a syntagmatic and paradigmatic basic comparison to provide insight into the technical construction of online reports on ‘queericide’, which a basic quantitative description of two ‘good’ online reports would provide.

**Table 5.5: Quantitative data collected on the two ‘good’ online reports**

	Article 1	Article 2
<b>A</b>	A7	A7
<b>B</b>	B1	B1
<b>C</b>	C2	C2
<b>D</b>	D1	D1
<b>E</b>	E1	E1
<b>F</b>	F3	F3
<b>G</b>	G1	G1
<b>H</b>	H1	H2

C2: News outlet websites	2
--------------------------	---

D1: Source(s) acknowledged	2
----------------------------	---

A1: 0-400 words, with "[...more]"	
A2: 0-400 words, without "[...more]"	
A3: 401-800 words, with "[...more]"	
A4: 401-800 words, without "[...more]"	
A7: 1000+	2

B1: Yes	2
B2: No	0

F3: Yes	2
---------	---

G1: Yes	2
---------	---

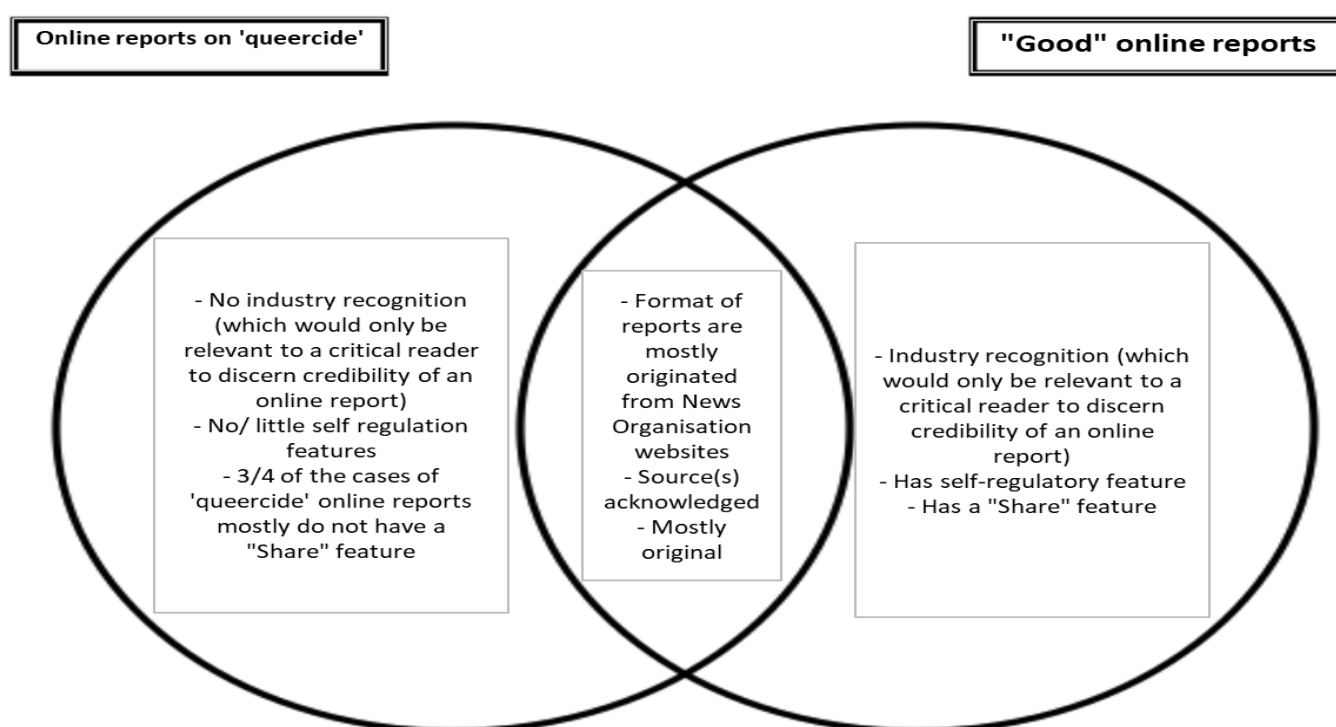
E1: Seminal work	2
E2: Economy of scale articles	0

H1: No photographs	1
H2: Photograph of victim	1

Both (100%) of the two ‘good’ online reports were more than 1 000 words in length (A7), and 100% also included a “Share” feature (B1). Also, both these reports (100%) appeared on reputable news outlet websites (C2) and included credible sources (D1). Both were original without using any sections from other sources that could have been deemed re-appropriation (E1). Both these reports (100%) had been acknowledged by the Global Shining Light organisation (F3), had self-regulatory features where readers could comment on the accuracy of the reports (G1), but one (50%) of the reports had no photographs (H1). The other report had a photograph of the victim (H2). These two online reports were selected and analysed merely for the purpose of comparison with the 70 online reports on ‘queercide’.

### 5.1.6 Comparing the online reports on the four case studies of ‘queercide’ (quantitative component) with ‘good’ online reports

For the purpose of selecting online reports for the qualitative research section, quota sampling was used to select four online reports. The purpose of this research was to identify and compare the technical elements in the ‘good’ reports and the units of analysis on ‘queercide’ to select four online reports per case study for a total of 16 online reports that would be used for final analysis. The first step in the selection process was to establish the ideological similarities in the reports in order to create a collection criterion. After comparing all the data that had been collected quantitatively, the following Venn-diagram was created:



*Figure 5.1: Venn-diagram presenting similarities between the ideological structure of ‘good’ and case studies of ‘queercide’ online reports to establish a collection criterion*

Both the ‘good’ online reports (100%) included a “Share” feature in their technical construction that readers could use to share the article on various social media (for example, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *WhatsApp* and email). They also had “Save” and “Print” options (B1). In terms of the “Share” option, Case 1 (91%), Case 2 (41%), Case 3 (87%) and Case 4 (70%) had no such option (B2). The ‘good’ online reports were selected mainly because they had been recognised in the online journalism category of a journalistic award competition (F3). Conversely, none of the online reports on ‘queercide’ had been critically recognised (F1). Although an award recognition is surely not the sole barometer for measuring whether an online report is ‘good’ or not, a selection metric, as proposed by Somdyala (2019), was required to determine how and why some online reports, and not others, had been selected for recognition.

The Venn-diagram indicates that three major ideological themes emerged that were similar for the ‘good’ and the online reports on ‘queercide’. Both the ‘good’ online reports also had a self-regulatory feature (G1) where readers had the option to respond to the article by using the ‘Comments’, ‘Reporting’, or ‘Rate the article’ features, while none of Case 1 (100%), 82% of Case 2, 80% of Case 3, and 80% of Case 4 online reports did not have self-regulatory features (G2). Of significance for the selection criteria were the similarities of the two different types of online reports. Both of ‘good’ articles (100%) as well as the online reports – 100% on Case 1, 85% on Case 2, 93% on Case 3, and 50% on Case 4 – were published on news outlets (C2). Also, in both the ‘good’ online reports (100%) sources had been consulted, while sources had also been consulted in most of the online reports on the case studies of ‘queercide’ – 100% on Case 1, 82% on Case 2, and 60% on Case 3 and Case 4 – (D1). Finally, all the ‘good’ online reports (100%) and most of the online reports on the case studies of ‘queercide’ – 82% on Case 1, 85% on Case 2, and 100% on Case 3 and Case 4 – were **seminal works** (E1) and not exact replications from other sources to save cost and time. These three selection criteria – that is, C2, D1, and E1 – were used to identify four units of analysis from each case study. The selection criteria for the different themes were not exact, otherwise all the ‘queercide’ case studies and the ‘good’ online reports would have reflected a 100% scoring on equal codes. However, for the purpose of sampling for the qualitative component of the research, an exact score was not required because the online reports in the qualitative research comprised a sample within the population parameters set for this research.

## 5.2 Qualitative data presentation: Thematic coding

Themes that were embedded in the online reports of the four case studies of ‘queercide’ provided data to enable interpretations and conclusions that addressed the research questions. The selected online reports, even though appearing in table and Pie-chart formats, are discussed qualitatively with extracts from each report to ensure the confirmability of the data.

### **5.2.1 Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on Noxolo Xakeka**

Xakeka's (Case 1) case was similar to many other incidences of 'queercide' insofar as the context of the murder was concerned: she was a young, lesbian woman living in a township, participated in social activities at a local tavern or shebeen, and was killed as a result of a skirmish. In this sense, Xakeka's case was representative of similar incidences (Mambaonline, 2018). However, what made this case unique from other cases in terms of this research was the debatable labelling of 'queercide', as the perpetrator did not wilfully murder the victim because of her sexual orientation (Reynolds, 2018).

*Table 5.6: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports of Noxolo Xakeka's killing*



		Online report 1	Online report 2	Online report 3	Online report 4	TOTAL
K: Moniker used to refer to <i>lesbians</i> in online reports (general)	K2: "Lesbian"	X	X	X	X	100%
	K6: "Victim(s)"	X	X			50%
	K7: Other	X	X			50%
L: Gendered, or non-binary/ neutral pronouns of victim(s); or no use of pronouns (specific)	L1: Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; "she", "her", "herself"	X	X	X		75%
	L3: No pronouns used to refer to victim(s)				X	25%
M: Conditions for news evident in online reports as described by Galtung & Ruge (1965) and Jewkes (2004)	M1: Meaningfulness				X	25%
	M2: Conflict	X	X	X		75%
	M4: Sex	X	X	X		75%
	M5: Conservative ideology or political diversion	X	X			50%
N: Headlines of online reports	N1: Generic	X		X		50%
	N2: Emotive		X		X	50%
O: "Comments" whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report (see "social plugin" from Almgren & Olsson, 2016)	O8: No "Comments" feature	X	X	X	X	100%
P: "Share" feature whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report	P1: No "Share" feature	X	X		X	75%
	P3: "Share" feature  			X		25%
Q: Accuracy of the online report	Q1: No inaccuracy found	X	X		X	75%
	Q2: Inaccuracy found: Dates			X		25%
R: Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion	R2: Secularist/ Neutral (no reference to religion)	X	X	X	X	100%
S: Reference to the accused	S1: Descriptor(s) indemnifying the accused of the crime against the victim			X		25%
	S3: Descriptor(s) of culpability of accused for the crime against the victim(s)	X	X	X		75%
	S4: No reference(s) to accused				X	25%
T: The nature of sources consulted	T1: No source(s) consulted				X	25%
	T2: Source(s) has objective epistemic perspective	X	X	X		75%
U: Frames used, according to Entman (1991)	U2: Conflict	X	X	X		75%
	U3: Morality				X	25%
	U4: Attribution of responsibility			X		25%

Table 5.6 presents each frame (from K – U) with the relevant codes in each cell. The columns indicate each of the selected online reports, for example *Online report 1* is entitled “Hundreds sign petition against release of accused of lesbian’s murder” (Maregele, 2018), while the rows indicate the relevant codes assigned to the reports, culminating in a percentage summary for each. Where codes on the coding sheet were not relevant, they were excluded for parsimony. In all the online reports (100%) “lesbian” (K2) was used to refer to the victim, while *Online report 1* and *Online report 2* (50%) also referred to Xakeka as “the victim” (K6) and other (K7) monikers (50%), such as “LGBTI people” (Maregele, 2018). The codes in this frame (K) are **not mutually exclusive** as the reporter could refer to the subject as both “lesbian” and “victim”, for example. In a theme where the codes were **mutually exclusive**, 75% of the online reports used gendered pronouns (L1) to refer to the subject, for example “she” and “her” (Maregele, 2018), while 25% of the online reports did not use any pronouns (L3) – they were thus neutral or non-gendered – as they personalised the reports by referring to “Noxolo Xakeka” by name (Maluleke, 2018).

There are multiple different news values that might be identifiable in a report, which is why the codes within the frame *Conditions for news evident in online reports as described by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Jewkes (2004)* (M) frame are **not mutually exclusive**. In the online reports, 25% included meaningfulness (M1) as a news value, for example: “Men are engaged in a war not merely of humiliation and exploitation of women, but in a war of extermination of women” (Maluleke, 2018) and “I urge South African society...”, while 75% of the online reports included conflict values (M2), for example “...an argument between the two escalated into a physical altercation...he stabbed her twice...” and “these crimes...” (Maregele, 2018). A further 75% of the online reports included sex (M4) as news value, for example “harassed her by making ‘derogatory comments’ about her sexual orientation...” (Maregele, 2018), and 50% of the reports included conservative ideology or political diversion (M5), for example “...even people who steal cars are kept inside [jail] longer than him...we should treat LGBTI people the same as anyone else...” and “...not the first time a hate crime has occurred...” (Maregele, 2018). Also, “...he stabbed her twice. She died in hospital hours later” (Maregele, 2018) showed the brevity of the sentences.

The **mutually exclusive** codes in the *Headlines of online reports* (N) frame investigated whether the headlines were factual and stoic (N1) or emotionally charged (N2). A division of 50% was observed (N1) for “Release of lesbian ‘killer’ stirs activists’ anger” (Maregele, 2018) and 50% (N2) for “Hundreds sign petition against release of accused of lesbian’s murder” (Maregele, 2018), which did not include any emotive language in the four selected online reports. None of the online reports (100%) included a “Comments” feature (O8), 75% did not include a “Share” feature (P1), while 25% of the selected online reports did (P2). Both of these frames included codes that were **mutually exclusive**. In 75% of the selected online articles no inaccuracies (Q1) were identified where the developed timeline

(see Figure 2) was used, while there was an inaccuracy (Q2) found in one (25%) of the reports – the publication date stated “26 June 2018” (Maregele, 2018), but large sections were used by *timeslive.co.za* in a 12 April 2018 report as well as a *News24.com* online report on 13 April 2018, which questioned the accuracy of the reporting on the events. The codes for the frame (Q) were **mutually exclusive**.

A significant frame in describing LGBTIQ issues was secularity (R) and it was found that the codes were **mutually exclusive**. The selected online reports (100%) were non-secular as none referred to religion, prayer or morality based on organised doctrine (Adamczyk *et al.*, 2015). When citing the accused as the killer of the subject (S), 25% of the reports referred to the accused as somehow absolved of guilt (S1), for example “Witnesses say Xakeka hit Joni with a plank and he stabbed her” (Maluleke, 2018). This line suggests that the subject’s actions initiated the response of the accused. In 75% of the reports, the accused was described as having culpability (S3), for example “This was a hate crime” and “...by making ‘derogatory comments’ about her sexual orientation”, while 25% of the reports made no reference to the accused (S4). These codes for the frame in terms of reference to the accused (S) were **not mutually exclusive**.

The nature of the sources consulted (T) to construct the reports was significant in establishing the ideological frames used in understanding *perspective*. In 25% of the reports no sources had been consulted (T1), while 75% of the reports included sources with an **objective** epistemic perspective (T2), for example “Ward councillor Bulelwa Madikane...”, “Magistrate Karen Scheepers...”, “Triangle Project’s Sharon Ludwig...”, and “Monja Posthumous-Meyjes, a lawyer at the Stellenbosch University...” (Maregele, 2018). The codes used in this frame (T) were **not mutually exclusive**. Finally, with reference to the Framing and Representation Theory as postulated by Entman (1991), it was concluded that 75% of the frames (U) as identified in the selected online reports included *conflict* (U2). For example, Maregele’s (2018) article “Lesbian murderer trial to start in Strand” reported on how some South Africans were angry about the court’s decision to grant bail to Joni. Because the codes of this theme were **not mutually exclusive**, the report by Maregele (2018) was also considered as one calling for civic reaction (U4), for example “...the Triangle Project and Free Gender handed a petition...”. In these reports, 25% were identified as using *morality* frames, for example Maluleke’s (2018) report was about how South Africans had an obligation to take the killing of women more seriously, while 25% of the reports used *attribution of responsibility* (U4) frames.



For clarity and standardisation among the different codes – especially those codes that were not mutually exclusive – a secondary ‘summary’ set of Pie-charts was constructed. These Pie-charts were used to construct a summary of all four the case studies for interpretation.



### **5.2.2 Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on Joey and Anisha van Niekerk**

Joey and Anisha van Niekerk's case was dissimilar from the other selected cases insofar as they were a married couple, White, middle class and not living in a rural area or township. The couple owned a farm which was considered the reason for the plot to kill them. They were also held for days while being tortured before they ultimately expired and their bodies were disposed of (Mambaonline, 2018).

**Table 5.7: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports of the killing of Joey and Anisha van Niekerk**

		Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	TOTAL
<b>K: Moniker used to refer to <i>lesbians</i> in online reports (general)</b>	<b>K2: "Lesbian"</b>	X				25%
	<b>K5: "Women" OR "Woman" OR Female"</b>		X	X	X	75%
	<b>K6: "Victims"</b>		X	X		50%
	<b>K7: Other</b>	X	X		X	75%
<b>L: Gendered, or non-binary/ neutral pronouns of victim(s); or no use of pronouns (specific)</b>	<b>L1: Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; "she", "her", "herself"</b>	X				25%
	<b>L2: Non-binary: Gender neutral pronouns used when referring to the victim; "they", "their" and "them" is the most common; and "ze", "sie", "hir", "co", and "ey"</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>M: Conditions for news evident in online reports, as described by Galtung &amp; Ruge (1965) and Jewkes (2004)</b>	<b>M2: Conflict</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
	<b>M4: Sex</b>	X	X			50%
<b>N: Headings of online reports</b>	<b>N1: Generic</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>O: "Comments" whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report (see "social plugin" from Almgren &amp; Olsson, 2016)</b>	<b>O7: No Comments</b>				X	25%
	<b>O8: No "Comments" feature</b>	X	X	X		75%
<b>P: "Share" feature whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report</b>	<b>P1: No "Share" feature</b>	X	X			50%
	<b>P3: "Share" feature</b>  			X	X	50%
<b>Q: Accuracy of the online report</b>	<b>Q1: No inaccuracy found</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>R: Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion</b>	<b>R1: Non-secularist (reference to religion)</b>			X		25%
	<b>R2: Secularist/ Neutral (no reference to religion)</b>	X	X		X	75%
<b>S: Reference to the accused</b>	<b>S2: No reference to culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim</b>	X				25%
	<b>S3: Descriptors of culpability of the crime against the victim</b>		X	X	X	75%
<b>T: The nature of sources consulted</b>	<b>T2: Source(s) has objective epistemic perspective</b>	X	X		X	75%
	<b>T3: Source(s) has subjective epistemic perspective</b>			X		25%
<b>U: Frames used, according to Entman (1991)</b>	<b>U2: Conflict</b>	X	X		X	75%
	<b>U4: Attribution of responsibility</b>			X		25%

In 25% of the selected online reports, “lesbian” (K2) was used to refer to the victims, while 75% of the reports referred to the subjects as “women” or “females” (K5). Also, while 50% of the reports used “victims” (K6), 50% used other (K7) monikers such as “couple” (Saal, 2018). In *report one*, “Seven suspects in custody over murdered Mooinooi couple” (Saal, 2018), the subjects were referred to as “sister”, “wife”, “her” and “she” (L1), while 100% of the reports used non-binary, neutral pronouns (L2) to refer to the subjects, including “they”, “their”, and “them” (Kruger, 2017; Kormorant, 2017; Saal, 2018; *The Citizen*, 2018). All the reports (100%) demonstrated that physical conflict (M2) was evident as a condition for news, for example “The seven men are accused of torturing and murdering the two women...” (Saal, 2018), “The two victims were taken to the containers and tied up”, “...the ‘mastermind’ and his wife poured acid and petrol over the bodies in order to burn them...” (*The Citizen*, 2018), and “...were charged with two counts of murder, robbery, kidnapping and the unlawful possession of a firearm...” (Kruger, 2017). It was found that 50% of the reports included sex (M4) as a condition for news, for example “They were tortured and raped before they were killed...” (Saal, 2018), “...the women was [sic] taken inside the house and raped...”, and “...the 18-year-old accused in the case raped the women again...” (*The Citizen*, 2018).

It was found that 100% of the *Headlines of online reports* (N) frame was generic (N1), for example “Seven suspects in custody over murdered Mooinooi couple” (Saal, 2018), “Mooinooi women were hanged, bodies thrown in dustbins – policeman” (*The Citizen*, 2018), “UPDATE: North West women’s family call for support” (Kruger, 2017), and “Arrests made after Mooinooi women disappearance” (Kormorant, 2017). None of the foregoing included any emotive language. For 25% of the reports, there were no comments (O7) even though there was a “Comments” feature, while for 75% of the reports there was no “Comments” feature (O8). For 50% of the reports there was no “Share” feature (P1) either, while for the other 50% there was a “Share” feature for *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp* and email (P3). No inaccuracies (Q1) were observed in any of the reports (100%). There were references to religion (R1) in 25% of the reports, for example “We appreciate every message, prayer and share” (Kruger, 2017), while in the remaining reports (75%) there was no reference to religion (R2). For 25% of the reports there was no reference to the responsibility of the accused for the crime against the victims (S2), while in 75% of the reports there were such descriptions (S3) such as “...no evidence that the ‘mastermind’ raped the women, he was present during the crimes and gave the orders...”, “...was taken inside the house, raped by one, while the 21-year-old wife of the ‘mastermind’ watched...” (*The Citizen*, 2018), and “Koos Strydon (53), Jack Mokotedi (18) and Aaron Sithole (23) were charged...”.


Sources with **objective** epistemic perspective had been consulted in 75% of the reports (T2), for example a “policeman” (Colonel Isaac Thlape) was referred to in the heading (*The Citizen*, 2018), while 25% of the reports included sources with a **subjective** epistemic perspective (T3), for example “Anisha’s brother, Wynand van Niekerk, recently made an appeal...” (Kruger, 2017). Finally, 75% of

the reports included a *conflict* (U2) frame, for example “...two charges of murder, kidnapping, robbery, the illegal possession of a firearm and defeating the ends of justice” (Kormorant, 2017), while 25% of the reports used the attribution of responsibility frame (U4), for example Kruger’s (2017) report “UPDATE: North West women’s family call for support”.

### **5.2.3 Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on the case of Noluvo Swelindawo**

On 3 December 2016, Noluvo Swelindawo was taken from her home in Khayelitsha while her partner hid behind their bed and was witness to the homophobic motivation of the killers (*The Citizen*, 2016; *The Daily Maverick*, 2016). Like many victims of homophobia, Swelindawo knew her killers (*News24*, 2016). Her badly beaten body was thrown over a bridge and found on 4 December 2016 with a gunshot wound (*The Daily Maverick*, 2016). Siggine Mdani was arrested and the trial date was postponed to 21 December 2016 (IOL, 2017). As Case 3, the four selected online reports pertaining to Swelindawo’s murder provided a perspective on reporting where there was a clear targeting of the victim because of her sexual orientation.

**Table 5.8: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports on the killing of Noluvo Swelindawo**

		Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	TOTAL
<b>K: Moniker used to refer to <i>lesbians</i> in online reports (general)</b>	<b>K2: "Lesbian"</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
	<b>K7: Other</b>			X		25%
<b>L: Gendered, or non-binary/ neutral pronouns of victim(s); or no use of pronouns (specific)</b>	<b>L1: Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; "she", "her", "herself"</b>	X	X	X		75%
	<b>L3: No pronouns used to refer to victim(s)</b>				X	25%
<b>M: Conditions for news evident in online reports as described by Galtung &amp; Ruge (1965) and Jewkes (2004)</b>	<b>M1: Meaningfulness</b>		X		X	50%
	<b>M2: Conflict</b>	X	X			50%
	<b>M4: Sex</b>		X	X		50%
	<b>M5: Conservative ideology or political diversion</b>			X		25%
<b>N: Headings of online reports</b>	<b>N2: Emotive</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>O: "Comments" whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report (see "social plugin" from Almgren &amp; Olsson, 2016)</b>	<b>O7: No Comments</b>		X			25%
	<b>O8: No "Comments" feature</b>	X		X	X	75%
<b>P: "Share" feature whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report</b>	<b>P1: No "Share" feature</b>	X			X	50%
	<b>P3: "Share" feature </b>		X	X		50%
<b>Q: Accuracy of the online report</b>	<b>Q1: No inaccuracy found</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>R: Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion</b>	<b>R1: Non-secularist (reference to religion)</b>	X				25%
	<b>R2: Secularist/ Neutral (no reference to religion)</b>		X	X	X	75%
<b>S: Reference to the accused</b>	<b>S1: Descriptor(s) indemnifying the accused of the crime against the victim</b>	X				25%
	<b>S2: No reference to culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim</b>		X		X	50%
	<b>S4: No reference(s) to accused</b>			X		25%
<b>T: The nature of sources consulted</b>	<b>T1: No source(s) consulted</b>				X	25%
	<b>T2: Source(s) has objective epistemic perspective</b>	X	X	X		75%
	<b>T3: Source(s) has subjective epistemic perspective</b>	X	X			50%
<b>U: Frames used, according to Entman (1991)</b>	<b>U1: Human interest</b>		X			25%
	<b>U3: Morality</b>	X		X	X	75%

In all the selected online reports (100%) on this case, “lesbian” (K2) was used to refer to the victim, while *online report 3* also referred to Swelindawo as “LGBTI” (K7) (*Cape Talk*, 2016). In 75% of the reports binary gender pronouns were used (L1) to refer to the subject, for example “she” and “her” (Mzantsi, 2018), while 25% of the reports did not refer to the subject by using any pronouns (L3), as her name “Noluvo Swelindawo” (*News24*, 2016) or “Noluvo” (Verwoerd, 2016) was used. Meaningfulness (M1) was used as a condition for news in 50% of the reports, for example “We know that the majority of killings, rape and assault on women in this country are by men known to their victims” (Verwoerd, 2016) and “...discrimination against LGBTI people, including killings and assaults, continued...”. Such attacks were believed to be “grossly under-reported to police, reads a report...” (*News24*, 2016), while 50% of the reports included reference to conflict (M2), for example “shot dead” (Mzantsi, 2016). Also, 50% included sex (M4), for example “...said to the press that Noluvo was not killed because of her sexual orientation. When asked how she knew, she answered...” and “...hate crimes...” (Verwoerd, 2016). It was found that 25% of the reports included references to conservative ideology or political diversion (M5), for example “...government and lobby groups failed to transform society to walk with the rights...” (*Cape Talk*, 2016).

All four the selected online reports (100%) had headlines in which emotive language was used (N2): “Partner tells of lesbian’s brutal murder” (Mzantsi, 2016), “To love who we want is the most basic right” (Verwoerd, 2016), “Suspected lesbian hate crime indicative of SA’s social crisis, says activist” (*Cape Talk*, 2016), and “An awful year for human rights – Amnesty International” (*News24*, 2016). In 25% of the articles no comments were made (O7), 75% did not have a “Comments” feature (O8), 50% had no “Share” feature (P1), and 50% included a “Share” feature referring to *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp* and email (P3). No inaccuracies were found in any of these reports (100%) (Q1) that related to the LGBTIQ issue of lesbian murder. Moreover, 25% was non-secularist (R1), for example “...prayed for God not to take her...” and “If this is what God wants, then it is fine” (Mzantsi, 2016), while 75% of the reports had no reference to religion (R2). One of the reports (25%) indemnified the accused of culpability (S1) by stating, “You get labelled [for] a lot of things and that we do not respect men’s dignity” (Mzantsi, 2016), while 50% of the reports made no reference to the responsibility of the accused for the crime against the victim (S2). It was found that 25% of the articles made no reference to the accused at all (S4).

In 25% of the reports no sources had been consulted (T1), while 75% of the reports included sources with an **objective** epistemic perspective (T2), for example “Police spokesperson, F.C. van Wyk...” (Mzantsi, 2016), “Deputy Minister of Police Maggie Sotyu said to...” (Verwoerd, 2016), and “Triangle Project, LGBTI civil group...” (*Cape Talk*, 2016). However, 50% referred to sources that had a **subjective** epistemic vantage point, for example “Nqabisa Mkatali, partner of Noluvo Swelindawo...” (Mzantsi, 2016) and “...Swelindawo was abducted from her home close to where Yonela grew up...”

(referring to a subject [pseudonym used to protect anonymity] who had been subjected to homophobia in Khayelitsha), as stated in a *News24* report (Verwoerd, 2016). Lastly, 25% of the reports occupied a human-interest frame (U1) which can be observed in the second report by Verwoerd (2016), who wrote about a young lesbian and her perspective of homophobia in a township with reference to violence perpetrated against Swelindawo, while the other 75% of the reports used the morality frame (U3).

#### **5.2.4 Qualitative thematic coding of online reports on the killing of Eudy Simelane**

Identified as Case 4, Eudy Simelane was the highest profile of the case studies, as she was an ex-*Banyana Banyana* soccer player and feminist activist. She was also one of the first cases in which the term ‘corrective rape’ was used in reports on the killing of lesbians (Martin, Kelly, Turquet & Ross, 2009). Simelane was assaulted, raped and murdered by five men in the Tornado section of Kwa-Themba on 28 April 2008. The first court appearance of her five assailants occurred on 30 April 2008. However, after the State had failed to produce evidence, the case was postponed to 1 September 2008. Stirred by the manner of her death, residents and social movements in Kwa-Themba held a public march to raise awareness of her case, particularly because of this delay. The trial of the five men suspected of Simelane’s murder commenced on 11 February 2009 in Delmas, Mpumalanga (*News24*, 2016).

*Table 5.9: Qualitative data collected on four selected online reports on the killing of Eudy Simelane*

		Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	TOTAL
<b>K: Moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reports (general)</b>	<b>K1: "Homosexual" (clinical) or "gay" (colloquial)</b>		X	X		50%
	<b>K2: "Lesbian"</b>	X	X			50%
	<b>K7: Other</b>				X	25%
<b>L: Gendered, or non-binary/ neutral pronouns of victim(s); or no use of pronouns (specific)</b>	<b>L1: Binary: Gendered pronouns used when referring to the victim; "she", "her", "herself"</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>M: Conditions for news evident in online reports, as described by Galtung &amp; Ruge (1965) and Jewkes (2004)</b>	<b>M2: Conflict</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
	<b>M3: Reference to elite persons (celebrity or high-status person (from Jewkes, 2004))</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
	<b>M4: Sex</b>			X		25%
	<b>M5: Conservative ideology or political diversion</b>	X	X			50%
<b>N: Headlines of online reports</b>	<b>N2: Emotive</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
	<b>N3: Includes a nutgraph (that is, telling the story in a nutshell to entice reading, like a <i>blurb</i>)</b>	X				25%
<b>O: "Comments" whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report (see "social plugin" from Almgren &amp; Olsson, 2016)</b>	<b>O8: No "Comments" feature</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>P: "Share" feature whenever they appear on each online report is also seen by audiences and contribute to the context of the report</b>	<b>P1: No "Share" feature</b>	X		X	X	75%
	<b>P3: "Share" feature feature</b>		X			25%
<b>Q: Accuracy of the online report</b>	<b>Q1: No inaccuracy found</b>	X	X	X	X	100%
<b>R: Ideological approach clearly identifiable in the online report; online writing contextualised by religion</b>	<b>R1: Non-secularist (reference to religion)</b>		X			25%
	<b>R2: Secularist/ Neutral (no reference to religion)</b>	X		X	X	75%
<b>S: Reference to the accused</b>	<b>S1: Descriptor(s) indemnifying the accused of the crime against the victim</b>	X				25%
	<b>S2: No reference to culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim observed</b>				X	25%
	<b>S3: Descriptor(s) of culpability of accused for the crime against the victim(s)</b>	X				25%
	<b>S4: No reference to accused</b>		X	X		50%
<b>T: The nature of sources consulted</b>	<b>T1: No sources consulted</b>			X		25%
	<b>T2: Source(s) has objective epistemic perspective</b>	X			X	50%
	<b>T3: Source(s) has subjective epistemic perspective</b>	X	X			50%
<b>U: Frames used, according to Entman (1991)</b>	<b>U2: Conflict</b>				X	25%
	<b>U3: Morality</b>	X	X	X		75%

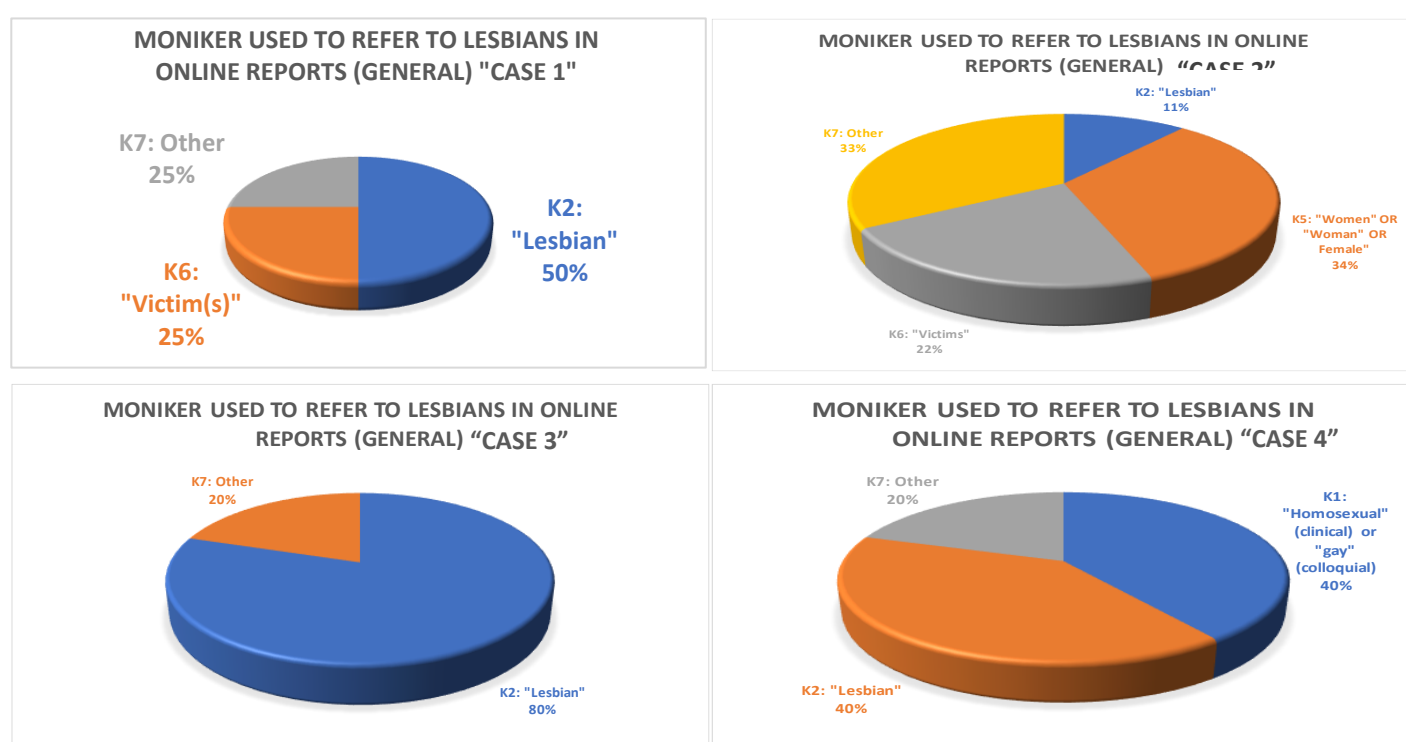


In 50% of the selected online reports the term “gay” was used (De Waal, 2008; Van den Berg, 2008) (K1), while 50% used “lesbian” (Kelly, 2008; De Waal, 2008) as a moniker (K2), and 25% used “former *Banyana Banyana* soccer player...” as another K7 label to refer to the subject. All the reports (100%) used female gendered binary pronouns (L1), for example “...her brutal murder...” (Kelly, 2009). The reports also referred to physical conflict (M2) (100%), for example “...gang-raping and brutally slaying former *Banyana Banyana* soccer player Eudy Simelane in an apparent hate crime...” (Fuphe, 2008), “...she was stabbed, 25 holes in her...” (Kelly, 2008), and “...stabbed to death...” (Van den Berg, 2008). There was also reference to elite persons (M3), for example “...former *Banyana Banyana* midfielder...” (Van den Berg, 2008). Conditions for news were observed in all the reports (100%), while 25% included references to sex (M4), for example “...gang-raped...” (Van den Berg, 2008), while 50% of the reports included a conservative ideology or political diversion (M5) condition for news, for example “The rights of gay and lesbian people are protected under South Africa’s Constitution, yet Jon Qwelane can also blather in the *Sunday Sun* about how wicked and perverted it is to be gay or lesbian...” (De Waal, 2008).

Emotive language (N2) was used in all the reports (100%), for example “Raped and killed for being a lesbian: South Africa ignores ‘corrective’ attacks” (Kelly, 2009), “Against hate, in favour of humour” (De Waal, 2008), “Time to saddle up” (Van den Berg, 2008), and “Shape up, court is told” (Fuphe, 2008). The first report by Kelly (2009) was the only report (25%) of all the case studies to include a nutgraph (N3). None of the reports included a “Comments” feature (O8). Also, 75% did not have a “Share” feature (P1) while 25% included a “Share” feature for *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp* and email (P3). None of the online reports (100%) included any inaccuracies (Q1) that could be observed. In 25% of the reports there were non-secularist references (R1), for example “...if you see Jesus and Robert Whitehead as icons...” (De Waal, 2008), while 75% of the reports did not refer to religion (R2). One of the reports (25%) included a reference to the innocence of the accused of a hate crime (S1) by stating “...the judge said that Simelane’s sexual orientation had ‘no significance’ in her killing” (Kelly, 2009). It was found that 25% of the reports made no reference to the culpability of the accused (S2), but one report (25%) referred to the culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim (S3), for example “Why did they do this horrible thing?” (Kelly, 2009). In 50% of the reports no reference was made to the accused at all (S4). For the construction of 25% of the reports, no sources had been consulted (T1), while 50% of the reports included sources with an **objective** epistemic perspective (T2), for example “...Triangle, South Africa’s leading gay rights organisation...” (Kelly, 2009) and “...Magistrate Lesufi...” (Fuphe, 2008). Moreover, 50% of the reporters had consulted sources with a **subjective** epistemic interest (T3), for example “Her mother, Mally Simelane...” (Kelly, 2009). Lastly, in 25% of the reports, external conflict (U2) was used as a frame, for example “The adjournment was caused by a delay in the arrival of Thato Mphiti, 22, who is being tried separately...”, which described the failings of the judiciary to prosecute the accused, while 75% of the reports used the morality (U3) frame,

according to Entman (1991). For example, Kelly's (2009) report was concerned with South African civil society's responsibility to not ignore crimes against its LGBTIQ citizens, De Waal's (2008) report called for better understanding of gay and lesbian issues, and Van den Berg's (2008) report commented on how awful people can be.

In terms of the comparability of the themes that emerged from the case studies, some codes were mutually exclusive (that is, the codes for themes N, O, Q and R), but most were not (that is, the codes for themes K, L, M, P, S, T and U). This means that, in some of the selected online reports, multiple codes were evident in one theme. The data were translated into a Pie-chart for each code and theme and compared against the other case studies. The following illustration presents an example of this process:



**Figure 5.2: Qualitative data articulated into a Pie-chart for comparability**

By translating the data from unique percentages, such as the **results for the moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reporting (general)**, theme (K) in Case 1 presented 100% (K2), 50% (K6) and 50% (K7), resulting in a 200% scoring, whereas Case 2 presented 25% (K2), 75% (K5), 50% (K6) and 75% (K7), resulting in a 225% scoring, thereby creating an imbalance for comparison.

The data were therefore further tabulated (see below) for a robust description of the ideological frames that had been used in the selected online articles on 'queericide':

**Table 5.10: Results from the Pie-charts for each case study and theme tabulated for comparative descriptions**

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
"Homosexual" (clinical) OR "gay" (colloquial)	0	0	0	40
"Lesbian"	50	11	80	40
"Woman" OR "Women" OR "Female"	0	34	0	0
"Victim"	25	22	0	0
Other	25	33	20	20

The tabulation of the different case studies and themes after standardisation, such as the **results for the moniker used to refer to lesbians in online reporting (general)** theme (K), for Case 1 now presented 50% (K2), 25% (K6) and 25% (K7), resulting in a 100% scoring, whereas Case 2 now presented 11% (K2), 34% (K5), 22% (K6) and 33% (K7), also resulting in a 100% scoring. This therefore created an imbalance for comparison which eradicated the possibility of describing a pattern. The translation process could also have affected accuracy, as in a qualitative investigation the mere presentation of emerging trends is of significance in order to address the broader research problem (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

### 5.3 Data interpretation: Quantitative content and qualitative thematic analyses

The data presentation section provided a summary of the findings elicited by means of the coding sheets that had been used to investigate online reports on the four final case studies selected to investigate 'queercide' reporting, as was explained in the Methodology chapter. Data collected from the quantitative section of the research were compared with the data collected from two 'good' online reports (Somdyala, 2019; *Media24*, 2019; Peters, 2019). In interpreting of the data as presented in this section, this research will continue to use this comparison to identify the trends that were found in the online reports on 'queercide', with reference to the theoretical assumptions and literature findings. In the qualitative component of the research, a Venn-diagram was constructed to identify a sampling

framework for the selection of the four online reports relating to each case study for comparison. Similar to the discussion on the content collection, the thematic presentation of the data will be described according to theoretical assumptions and literature findings.

First, in this interpretation section, this research engage in quantitative content analysis as this process will contribute to descriptions of the structural components of the online reports for the four case studies of 'queercide'. As a descriptive statistical approach was used in this research, the data are discussed to show how they generated findings pertaining to the quality of the *structure* of the reports that were used as a basis for selecting reports for the qualitative section of this research. Secondly, qualitative thematic analysis will be used to support the critical discussion in the research of the frames the online reporters used in their reports on 'queercide'. This analysis will also elucidate the implications the selected 16 online reports revealed about the quality of online writing concerning LGBTIQ issues. Each separate frame will be discussed under the bigger accommodations of quantitative content and qualitative themes.

### 5.3.1 Quantitative content interpretation

With reference to the *length* of the online reports of the four case studies of 'queercide', **no clear trend** could be detected as the reports were of various lengths in terms of word count. The majority of the reports on Case 1 and Case 2 contained between 0-400 words, without a "[...more]" indication (27% and 47% respectively). Those of 401-800 words in length, without a "[...more]" indication, were 46% and 35% respectively. Case 3 and Case 4 had reports of 1 000 words (27% and 40% respectively), which was also the case for the two 'good' online reports. According to Grozelle (2014), the length of an online report needs ideally to be between 400-800 words to be considered 'good', as this length will provide online readers with enough details and will prevent reading fatigue. Grundlingh (2017) also cites the importance of an appropriate length for online reports as an important determining element of the quality of the report, but also refers to the importance of suitable headings, monikers and photographs.

It was not only important to identify whether the online reports on the four case studies included a "*Share*" feature, but also to construct a foundation for the theme of what *type* of sharing these reports allowed. **No clear trend** was evident for the use of the "Share" function as the results differed significantly. For Case 1 it was only 9%, for Case 2 it was 58%, for Case 3 it was 13%, and for Case 4 was 30%. The significance of this feature is that it contributes to what Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) describe as 'user driven journalism' and as 'real reporting'. These terms refer to how online reports should involve the reader in the content and in the type of collaboration that new communication technologies provide. Including a "Share" feature, according to Almgren and Ollson (2016), provides

readers with an opportunity to engage with the information in a way that is not possible in traditional media. By including such social plugins, online reports can be held accountable and improve their credibility, and online media thus have the opportunity to conceptualise reality and its social problems spontaneously (Carratalá, 2017).

With reference to *the format* (that is, where the online reports were published and by whom), the data revealed a **clear trend** as most of the online reports on ‘queercide’ and the two ‘good’ online reports originated from established news outlet sites. For instance, 100% of the reports on Case 1, 85% on Case 2, 93% on Case 3, and 50% on Case 4 were found on these websites. A similar finding was revealed by Martin *et al.* (2013), who iterate the importance of format in online reporting for establishing the credibility of the news they share. Ngobese (2019) states that quality reporting is hampered by unskilled news reporters who publish their work on non-reputable websites such as weblogs and special interest advocacy sites. Furthermore, Jordaan (2017) confirms that South Africa’s top five news websites are established news agency portals and, by implication, proposes that reports on these sites are more trustworthy than others.

There was also a **clear trend** in *acknowledging sources*. This is important as establishing sources is the foundation for subsequent frames, such as the types of sources that were consulted. This is important in terms of assumptions made by the Standpoint Theory. There were *sources consulted* in 100% of Case 1 reports, in 82% of Case 2 reports, and in 60% of both Case 3 and Case 4 reports. Byerly (2018) explains that sources have to be checked for credibility by the reader as this shows a high level of media literacy, while Paterson (2011) claims that online media often create the illusion of multiple perspectives, but that they usually originate from just a few sources. Tsou *et al.* (2015) and Allen (2017), who explored the Standpoint Theory in their works, explain that sources with a subjective vantage point have a more complete ‘double consciousness’ and have a better understanding of ‘situated truth’.

When establishing the *originality* of each of the reports, the data showed a **definite trend** as the majority of the online reports could be considered seminal works. For instance, 82% of Case 1, 85% of Case 2, and 100% of Case 3 and Case 4 were original reports, although some had been assigned the same beat reporter and subsequent reports were paraphrased iterations of their work (which will be discussed in the Findings section). Byerly (2018) describes how original and properly constructed reports prevent the “hamsterization” of journalists and the spread of fake news and argues that such reports create audiences that are more than mere ‘echo chambers’. Also, the works of Lazerfeld and Merton (1948) established a foundation insofar as ‘good’ reporting is concerned, as they argue that the media cannot merely inform audiences by repeating information, because this will not lead to a push for public action.

In the investigation to determine whether the online reports were *recognised by the investigative journalistic media industry*, a **clear trend** emerged, especially in comparison with the two ‘good’ online reports. Both the latter reports had been acknowledged through *industry awards*, but none of the reports on the four case studies on ‘queercide’ had received any critical acknowledgement, even though most of these reports originated from reputable news websites. For Somdyala (2019), receiving an *industry award*, such as the Taco Kuiper Award for Investigative Journalism, is one way for audiences to judge online content. This supports what Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) refer to as ‘**code driven**’ **media** that are able to withstand critical scrutiny.

There was also a **clear trend** in terms of *self-regulatory* components attached to the online reports. While both the ‘good’ online reports provided a method for audiences to identify issues that they might have with the content of the reports, the majority of the reports on ‘queercide’ did not have any such features: none appeared (0%) in Case 1, 18% appeared in Case 2, and 20% appeared in both Case 3 and Case 4. As part of ‘**code driven**’ **media** in ideal reporting (Jewkes, 2004; Grundlingh, 2017), this emergent code tied in with the research done by Grant (2019), who describes how new media technology and online content have the potential to discuss gender in an open manner if structures of self-regulation are in place.

Finally, the data collected concerning *photographs* **no visible trend** as the images used in each case study were not used for the same purpose. In Case 1, 55% of the photographs were relevant to an LGBTIQ theme, whereas only 9% of the reports on Case 2, 13% of the reports on Case 3, and none (0%) of the reports on Case 4 included photographs that related to this theme. Of the photographs of the victims that were included in the reports, 18% were detected in Case 1, 67% were detected in Case 2, and 20% were detected in Case 3 and Case 4 each. Only Case 2 reports (18%) had photographs of the accused, while 27% of the photographs for Case 1, 6% of those for Case 2, 34% of those for Case 3, and 10% of those for Case 4 were irrelevant. Batziou (2011), who conceptualised that images should be ideologically rich, explains that photographs should contribute to the critical realist use of the Framing and Representation Theory to establish *what* messages are presented through *how* and *which* images are included in reports.

### 5.3.2 Qualitative thematic interpretation

According to Grundlingh (2017), not only the length, photographs and headlines, but also *monikers* used in reports are important as they may serve as markers for sensationalism. This theme ties in with Rampton (2015) and Jaggar’s (2016) research as they also used the Standpoint Theory to explain that subjects may be positioned as being at one of three levels in media, namely the *normative* (to ‘fit into’ the dominant understanding and ideology of the reader demographic), the *methodological* (to

strategically exert some form of power to elevate or subjugate the subject), or the *epistemic* (to ‘tell their stories’ (Jaggar, 2016). Of interest in the nature of the analysis employed in this study was the epistemic level, while the other levels formed part of the larger descriptions surrounding the research.

The data collected using the coding sheet showed that the majority of the selected online reports on ‘queercide’ referred to the subject of the report as “lesbian” and/or “LGBTI”. Case 1 reports included 50% and 25% of these terms respectively, Case 2 reports included 11% and 33% respectively, Case 3 reports included 80% and 20% respectively, and Case 4 reports included 40% and 20% respectively. These findings were deemed significant as the moniker used to describe the subjects in the reports on ‘queercide’ identified the cases as an LGBTIQ issue, regardless of the motivation of the accused or the circumstances surrounding the subjects’ deaths. Only Case 4 reports (40%) included the terms “homosexual” or “gay”, while only Case 2 reports (34%) used “women” or “woman” to refer to the subject. Even though each of the subjects had been murdered, only Case 1 reports (25%) and Case 2 reports (22%) referred to the subjects as “the victim”.

All the selected online reports – Case 1: 75%, Case 2: 20%, Case 3: 75%, and Case 4: 100% – used **binary, gendered pronouns** such as “her” and “she” to refer to the subjects, while only Case 2 reports (80%) used non-binary pronouns such as “they”, “their” and “them”. Only Case 1 reports (25%) and Case 3 reports (25%) did **not use any pronouns** to refer to the subjects. In Case 2, where non-binary pronouns were used, the case study included “a couple”, therefore it would make sense that these pronouns were used. These data were significant in terms of the Queer Theory, as Jewkes (2015) explains that micro aggressions that reflect ‘othering’ are present in pronouns such as “they” and “them” when referring to the subject. As a counter argument, “she” and “her” could also position the subject in the mind of the reader from a socio-cultural perspective, which leads to a broader question: “*How can online reports of LGBTIQ issues write from an ‘I-we’ and not from an ‘I-it’ perspective?*” This may be more of a rhetorical question in this research to germinate ideas for future studies.

A significant contribution to addressing the research problem in terms of Newsworthiness was that the values that the online reporters demonstrated by selecting the issue that they wrote about was evaluated. Galtung and Ruge (1965) assume that, when a news item is selected, this choice exhibits one, or a few, values, including *meaningfulness*. Brighton and Foy (2007) expanded on this view by including *conflict* and *reference to elite persons* which rendered the theory, that was developed in the 1960s, more relevant to Twenty-first Century research. By exploring the works of Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Tuchman (1978), Jewkes (2004) contributed to this list by adding *sex* and *conservative ideology or political diversion* as news values.

The data showed that *conflict* and *sex* were the news values mostly used by the reporters to present the murder-of-lesbians issue as newsworthy. Case 1 reports showed *conflict* as a news value at 34%, while the rates for conflict were 67% for Case 2, 29% for Case 3, and 37% for Case 4. *Sex* as a news value occurred in Case 1 and Case 2 at 33% each, in Case 3 at 20%, and in Case 4 at 9%. *Meaningfulness* as a news value was observed in Case 1 at 11% and in Case 3 at 28%, while *relevance to elite persons* was observed only in Case 4 at 36%. *Conservative ideology or political diversion* was observed in Case 1 (22%), Case 3 (14%), and Case 4 (18%).

In terms of the headlines used for the selected online reports, no clear strategy for how they were constructed emerged. *Generic* headlines, where no emotive language was used but rather facts or a basic statement, were present in 50% of the reports on Case 1, in 100% of the reports on Case 2, in none of the reports (0%) on Case 3, and in 20% of the reports on Case 4.

In *emotive* headlines, where words were used to create feelings of support or opposition, 50% of Case 1 reports were coded, none (0%) of the Case 2 reports was coded, 100% of Case 3 reports were coded, and 80% of Case 4 were coded. Sicitsha (2018) claims that headlines are used in **sensationalist reporting**, but the data from the selected online reports on ‘queercide’ **did not support** this claim. Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) describe headlines as having ideological messages and that they can create salience for an issue or disengage the reader. The data showed that the reports varied in this regard, as only the reports on Case 4 had headlines that **engaged the reader emotively**.

As a component of ‘user driven’ media in real reporting, Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) argue that the **“Comments”** facility attached to online reports becomes a way for readers to judge the content they are reading and to engage with it. *GayStarNews.com* (2019), for example, has a function button that allows readers to report suspicious or inaccurate information. Such a function helps websites to regulate themselves (refer to Grundlingh, 2017 and Grant, 2019 in the quantitative interpretation section), while many other online formats, such as the download of Applications on Windows’ Playstore, have a star-rating scale or even a ‘this article has been cited by other articles’ as a hypertext mark-up language (html) link to the original, which is becoming popular with online published academic articles (Johnson & Otto, 2019). The data in this study clearly showed the **omission of the “Comments” feature** and it was clear that readers did not (or could not) offer any comments. Even though other codes had been identified for this frame, they were omitted as none of them were observed in any of the selected online reports. There was a “Comments” feature for one report on Case 2 (25%) and one on Case 3 (25%), but no comments had been left on them. None of the reports on Case 1 (100%) or Case 2 (100%) included a “Comments” feature. In tandem with the “Comments” feature, the “Share” feature also provides an opportunity for readers to engage with the reports – thus to save, print,



download and spread the information as part of ‘user driven’ media in real reporting (Jewkes, 2004; Grundlingh, 2017).

The investigation into the ability of readers to socially plug into online reports on ‘queericide’ elicited significant results. Similar to the “Comments” feature, most of the selected online reports **did not include a “Share” feature**, which limited reader engagement. It was found that 75% of both Case 1 and Case 4 reports and 50% of both Case 2 and Case 3 reports did not include a “Share” feature. Where the “Share” feature was included, it provided readers with the opportunity to share via *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp* and email at rates of 25% for Case 1 and Case 4, and 50% for Case 2 and Case 3 reports.

Byerly (2018) stresses the importance of *fact-checking* in online reporting and the use of technology and websites by using a facility such as *Snopes*. As part of the investigation to determine ‘code driven’ media in ideal reporting as proposed by Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017), the research found **no inaccuracies** (100%) in the reports on any of the four cases, while a date inaccuracy was identified in only 25% of Case 1 reports. This was not surprising as all the selected online reports originated on reputable, established news websites.

Accuracy, however, is not a replacement for creative, engaging and civil activist writing and the research found that many of the reports were written by the same journalist who used iterations of the same information. South African society, regardless of a liberal Constitution and legal emphasis on human rights, still seems to be influenced by homophobic attitudes that create an environment where violence against LGBTIQ people flourishes (ENCA, 2017). This was observed in the reports where Case 1 was 100% secularist or neutral in terms of religious ideology, whereas Case 2, Case 3 and Case 4 rated 75% in this regard. The same investigation might have yielded a different result in conservative religious countries such as Rwanda, Zimbabwe and even America as human rights laws are more restrictive in these countries than in South Africa (Sicetsha, 2018). The reports on Case 1, Case 2 and Case 3 included 25% non-secularist messages. Jaggar (2016), in his exposition of the Standpoint Theory, assumes that lesbians are able to present an alternative to the heterosexist aspects of Western Cristian and other organised religious institutions. Online reports that provide a religio-neutral perspective allow for this activism to be encouraged as it omits a negative or homophobic value judgement.

Lengthy discussions on the victim as the subject as well as the features of online reports have been presented and interpreted, but of equal value for the research in understanding the ideological perspective of online reports on ‘queericide’ was the manner in which the accused were framed in these reports. Sicetsha (2018) claims that sensationalism, which is also the way in which headlines are

constructed, is a tactic that journalists employ to generate attention for their stories. However, according to the literature, little is known about how online reporters *frame perpetrators of hate crimes*. When this emergent code was explored, the data revealed that the **accused were framed depending on the victim and the circumstances, and that this framing was not based on their culpability of the crime against their victims**. For instance, in the reports on Case 1 and Case 2, 75% of the reporters commented on the culpability of the accused as the information claimed their actions to be “wrong”, “unethical and immoral” and “criminal”. However, none of the reports (0%) on Case 3 and only 20% on Case 4 framed the accused in this light. It should be borne in mind that the parameters of the units of analysis were created for the period directly after the actual murders up until the accused appeared in court after they had been arrested for the killing. This time lapse may thus have impacted the writers’ understanding of the culpability of the accused or the manner in which this ‘suspicion’ should be reported as they had not yet appeared in court, and this may be why, in 25% of the reports on Case 1 and Case 2, and in 20% of the reports on Case 4, the accused were in some way absolved. No such descriptors of the accused were observed in reports on Case 2, however. Second to indemnifying the accused by the media is *no reference to the culpability of the accused of the crime against the victim* – here, 25% of the reports on Case 2, 50% on Case 3, and 20% on Case 4 were observed to have no reference to the culpability of the accused as they were presented in a neutral, neither-right-nor-wrong way, while none of the reports (0%) on Case 1 could be identified by this code. The selected online reports on Case 2 made no reference to the accused at all (0%), while 25% of the reports on both Case 1 and Case 3 and 40% of the reports on Case 4 also excluded any references to the accused. Altheide (1997), in reference to the Framing and Representation Theory, describes how elements in reports, such as those referred to as the accused of the killing of a lesbian, are packaged for readers to lead to an interpretation of those elements. Chong and Druckman (2007) further explain the importance of those representations and how audiences build their own frames and rely on those frames to behave in society. In an article entitled *A breakdown of the South African journalists’ code of conduct*, Emma Beavon (2019) asks the question: “Can journalists be too fair?” Here, Beavon (2019) refers to the South African journalistic code of conduct which requires that accused be framed in neutral terms, which allows for victim-associated and even personal bias not to influence the framing of the accused prior to sentencing. In this ‘presumed innocent until proven guilty’ approach, the victim and/or the family of the victim become(s) responsible for evidencing violence and reclaiming public and institutional sympathies that are necessary for the salience of their case.

The Standpoint Theory was instrumental in contextualising the data to determine *how sources were used to construct the reports*. This information was necessary to bridge the academic lacuna that existed in terms of the ideological frames used by report writers. This frame was selected as part of the ‘code driven’ media in ideal reporting (Jewkes, 2004; Grundlingh, 2017), and the data clearly showed that the majority of the selected online reports on ‘queercide’ referred to sources from an **objective epistemic**

**perspective.** This was concluded as 75% of both Case 1 and Case 2 reports referred to sources who had insights into the case but no personal investment in it, and 50% of Case 3 and 40% of Case 4 reports followed the same construction. The question was posed whether this meant that these trained journalists understood that, to write a credible story, sources had to be used, but that such stories should not incorporate the views of friends, family, other lesbians or partners to establish credibility. In 25% of the reports on Case 2, 33% on Case 3, and 40% on Case 4, sources with a vested emotional interest had been consulted, while none (0%) such people had been consulted in reports on Case 1. No sources had been consulted at all in 25% of the reports on Case 1, 17% on Case 3, and 20% on Case 4. All the selected online reports on Case 2 included at least one source. According to Butler's (1993) assumption as expounded in terms of the Standpoint Theory and the Queer Theory, lesbians as a 'disruptive group' to normative performativity have a unique and significant position to conceptualise LGBTIQ issues (including 'queercide') in a way that can emancipate and empower them. **However, lesbians currently lack that power** (Sicetsha, 2018) **and are silenced through omission.**

As mentioned in the quantitative content interpretation section, Tsou *et al.* (2015) and Allen (2017) explain the benefit of sources with a subjective epistemic perspective. Also, Entman's (1991) proposition of the use of *frames* in the Framing and Representation Theory, which junctures with Newsworthiness, assumes that media audiences use frames found in news media content to process information rather than investigate it. The media build these frames through two levels of salience and selection (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). These frames in the reports on 'queercide' used *human interest* (one report (25%) on Case 1), *conflict* (Case 1: 60%; Case 2: 75%; Case 4: 25%), *morality* (Case 1: 20%; Case 3 and Case 4: 75%), and *attribution of responsibility* (Case 1: 20% and Case 2: 25%). The data thus indicated that **conflict** and **morality** were the most frequently used frames in the selected online reports, which supported the data on news values where 'conflict value' and 'sex value' were used most predominantly.

## 5.4 Findings and discussion

The overarching research problem, based on the readings that had been done for the study, was that there was no information on technical and ideological frames used in online reports on South African cases of 'queercide' to understand LGBTIQ issues. This research postulates that if such information could be garnered, it would contribute to ongoing and rigorous debate surrounding the quality of online reporting. Although a mixed method research approach was followed by separating the data collection processes into quantitative and qualitative components, the data were descriptive in both instances. Therefore, no statistical confirmations of the findings were produced to determine whether the results matched an anticipated or expected hypothesis. Rather, a discussion was elicited to determine whether

the research problem had been addressed by appropriate analyses and evaluation of the data from both components of the study.

First, the discussion on the quantitative data analysis that follows will reflect on the quality of the *structural components* of selected online reports on four South African case studies of ‘queercide’ to elucidate the technical composition of those reports compared to ‘good’ online reports. Secondly, the discussion will focus on the *frames* used by the online writers of the reports on these cases of ‘queercide’ to describe the ideological frames that were used in these reports. The quantitative and qualitative findings will thus be unpacked and their significance for quality online news writing and journalism will be illuminated.

#### **5.4.1 Discussion of findings: Technical composition of online reports on ‘queercide’**

The data revealed that there was no specific preference in terms of the length of the online reports on ‘queercide’ although, according to Grozelle (2014), the ideal length of such reports should be between 400 to 800 words. This is deemed long enough to provide the reader with ample information, but still short enough to maintain their interest. Reports that are shorter, without an option or a link to more reading, may contain too few information points for critical examination of the information (Grozelle, 2014). However, even the two ‘good’ control reports deviated from the proposal by Grozelle (2014) and Grundlingh (2017) as they both exceeded 1 000 words, yet they were worthy of acknowledgement. This suggests that lengthier reports than proposed by Grozelle (2014) may be recommended in a journalistic code for online reports.

There was also no specific preference in terms of the inclusion of a “Share” feature in the online reports on ‘queercide’. Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) explain how important this type of feature for online reports is, because it acknowledges the importance of the reader in driving the story further. They also allow the reader to engage with report writers in a way that traditional media are unable to do. If not for Case 2, there would have been a clear deviation from the writings of Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) in terms of the “Share” feature. Case 2 (59% included a “Share” feature) included reports on the Joey and Anisha van Niekerk case. This case – apart from Case 4 which was the Eudy Simelane, ex-*Banyana Banyana* player case that occurred in 2008 – also generated the highest number of online reports during the timeframe parameter. This deviation might have occurred because the women were White, middle-class, a married couple, and their case might have focused the attention of content producers or the media more vividly on LGBTIQ issues. This assumption would be in line with Paradis’s (2015) argument that economically depressed areas, such as townships, have more prejudicial attitudes towards lesbians and the media that serve those constituents would thus be more conservative and less eager to report on lesbian murders. To establish the reason for this deviation,

future studies that investigate issues of race, class, marital status and media ownership should be conducted.

The findings showed a clear trend in terms of the format of the origin of the reports. The majority of the 'queercide' and the control reports appeared on established news outlet sites. This trend was in line with elucidations by Martin *et al.* (2013) and Ngobese (2019), who explain the importance of format in online reporting for establishing the credibility of news reports. The finding also supports the research by Milani (2015), who found that even LGBTIQ stakeholders failed to create activism and support for the issues they encountered in a *habitus* or *rapture* (or *momento mori*) dichotomy. However, the finding deviated from that of Grundlingh (2017) who posits that online reporting sensationalises murders because the majority of these reports appear outside of the journalistic framework. A reason for this deviation might be that Grundlingh's (2017) research focused on four perpetrators in its corpus and used the Appraisal Theory as a framework to investigate the phenomenon under study. However, despite this deviation, the current research corroborated Grundlingh's (2017) work in its philosophical agreement that perfect objectivity cannot realistically be achieved in reporting as those who write the news have their own unique perspective of the world.

A trend that emerged clearly was that sources were acknowledged in the majority of the online reports on 'queercide'. The findings about the *types* of sources, which were significant in addressing the research problem as a whole, will be discussed in the qualitative findings section. Therefore, the finding corroborates Paterson's (2011) claim that online media create the illusion that they include many perspectives by referring to multiple sources. The impression is thus left that the reader could use these sources to judge the credibility of a report which, in many instances, is a fallacy. Byerly (2018) also explains that all sources included in an online report need to be scrutinised to ascertain their credibility. In this context, Tsou *et al.* (2015) and Allen (2017) propose that even if online reports include multiple sources, and that a significant portion of these sources have to include those with a vested interest in and emotional connection to the issue, these sources have a more comprehensive idea and understanding of reality than those with an administrative contribution. The latter argument was supported by the findings as it was clear that the victims of 'queercide' had not been given a voice through those who might have supported them such as family members or other lesbians. Had they been interviewed and quoted, this omission could have been avoided.

The findings revealed a definite trend of originality in the online reports as the majority were considered seminal works. However, even though these reports were found to be original and possibly influential, many had been written by the same reporter. For example, the report "Hundreds sign petition against release of man accused of lesbian's murder" (Maragele, 2018) was repeated by the reporter as "Release of lesbian 'killer' stirs activists' anger" (Maragele, 2018). In both reports Maragele used virtually the

same information that had been appropriated from a *timeslive.co.co.za* report (which was not acknowledged) which, in turn, had been taken from another report published by *News24.com* (which was acknowledged by *timeslive.co.za*). However, the information in all the cited reports had originally been published by *GroundUp*, which was not acknowledged in any of the online reports.

Another finding was that none of the online reports on ‘queercide’ had been acknowledged by media or journalistic awards for their contribution to the field. Somdyala (2019) argues that recognition by the industry is a good way of measuring the technical quality of an online report. Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017), although not specifying *industry awards*, recommend ‘code driven’ media that volunteer for critical scrutiny, which is a key criterion for selection and judgement to attain industry recognition. One explanation for the deviation from Somdyala’s (2019) proposal is that ‘queercide’ has hitherto not been an issue that has been trending in South Africa and it is seen as a fringe phenomenon that is assigned to reporters. It is therefore not driven, as a collective voice, by NGOs or civic society (Beaty, 2013; Schuhmann, 2015; Collison, 2017; *Mambaonline*, 2018; Sicetsha, 2018; Singh, 2019).

The majority of the online reports on ‘queercide’ did not have a self-regulatory component such as a reporting button, comments feature or rating scale. This finding means that the online reports deviated from Grundlingh’s (2017) proposal that all online reports should be checked against some record or internal monitoring and standardisation system, otherwise the report will appear as ‘false objective’. Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) and Grant (2019) also agree that, as ‘code driven’ media, online technologies should allow producers of news to improve their ability to discuss gender in an open and responsible manner if structures that allow for regulation are put in place. A reason why this finding may have deviated from what Jewkes (2004), Grundlingh (2017) and Grant (2019) propose is that ‘backpacker journalists’ – those who have to report on news take and include their own multi-media and self-publish – might not have the skill and training to incorporate these elements in their online reports. The ‘good’ control reports included these elements, but the journalist was a seasoned reporter and blogger who partnered as a freelancer with a large news conglomerate.

No trend about how photographs were used in these online reports on ‘queercide’ was detected. Some reports used irrelevant stock photographs such as in Dolley’s (2016) article about the murder of a Khayelitsha woman. This report used a stock photograph of the SAPS insignia that offered no direct contribution to the understanding of the article. Others used enlarged photographs of the victims from their *Facebook* accounts, while others used photographs of the accused or some that were relevant to another LGBTIQ theme. This is discrepant from the findings of Batziou’s (2011) research which describes how photographs are ideologically rich and significant to critical paradigmatic investigations and how and why images should be used in online reports. This deviation from Batziou’s (2011)

findings may be because of a lack of understanding of how images can be used to support a focussed message where all the underlying messages are in support of one another.

To conclude this section, it needs to be reiterated that the finding of the quantitative description of the research elicited a novel finding that might have important applicability not only for future studies, but for the urgency that a ‘code’ that guides online report writing should be established. This is because, even though the online reports on ‘queercide’ could be considered ‘original’, this was a misleading perception as the study had devised a quantitative tool that elucidated a deficiency when originality was examined. This aspect should be explored in considerable depth to highlight guidelines that will lead to ‘good’ reporting in this regard.

Also, the use of photographs and images revealed no strategy for how photographs could form part of the report structure.

Some limitations in this regard, then, pertain to how similar studies with different subjects – the corpus included reports on perpetrators as opposed to victims (Grundlingh, 2017) – could yield different findings which would make ecological validity between the studies problematic. Future studies may investigate how the originality of online reports can better be identified. Training of writer into the technical elements of online capabilities and how photographs can be best be used to convey ideological and purposive messages is a requirement.

#### **5.4.2 Discussion of findings: Ideological frames used in online reports on ‘queercide’**

Two research questions of significance had been formulated to investigate the qualitative aspect of the research problem. The first question related to what frames writers of online reports of four South African case studies of ‘queercide’ used. The second question needed answers to determine what significance the four South African case studies on ‘queercide’, as a LGBTIQ issue, had for quality news writing. To address the second (latter) question, both quantitative, but particularly qualitative, findings were unpacked. The main finding that emerged from the qualitative investigation was that specific ideological frames were used by the online reporters to report on LGBTIQ issues. Each of the findings of the qualitative frames will be discussed to uncover similarities and differences to previous studies and this research, and to illuminate the emergence of novel findings.

Significantly, the majority of the reports referred to the subject of the reports as “lesbian” and/or “LGBT” under the *other* code. This means that each of the murder cases, regardless of what the end judgement was, was considered as a ‘queercide’ case from the medias’ perspective. The frame that was emerged strongly was that of “other” or “othering”. This was in agreement with Boyle (2019), who

argue that online reports focus either on the victim, to some extent. The findings of this research differed from those of Boyle (2019) in as far as only Case 1 and Case 2 referred to the subjects as “the victim” or the to the accused as “the perpetrator” (which will be discussed later) or related to gender-based violence. Boyle (2019) elucidates that when a female victim is referred to as “a prostitute” or “a lesbian”, there is evidence of micro aggression which, according to Jewkes (2015), is a form of “othering” the subject. Rampton (2015) and Jaggar (2016), underpinned by the Standpoint Theory, identify the use of “lesbian” and “LGBTI” as *methodological* in order to strategically exert some form of power to elevate or subjugate the subject.

Another finding was that the majority of the selected online reports used binary, gendered pronouns such as “her” and “she” to refer to the subjects. The only reports where this was not a clear frame occurred in Case 2, which was the Joey and Anisha van Niekerk murder. This discrepancy occurred because the women were a couple and this term is usually referred to in plural descriptors such as “them”, “they” and “their”. This finding was confirmed by Untwin’s (2010) research which explains that gendered pronouns have the tendency to position the subject in the mind of the reader from a socio-cultural perspective. Collectively, these findings intersected with those of Jewkes’ (2015), who explains how micro aggressions in “othering” are used in pronouns when referring to the subject, such as the use of “they” and “them” in the case of Joey and Anisha van Niekerk.

In relation to Galtung and Ruge (1965), Tuchman (1978), Jewkes (2004), and Brighton and Foy’s (2007) research on news values, it was found that the majority of the selected online reports on ‘queercide’ used ‘conflict’ and ‘sex’ most frequently of all frames when reporting on ‘queercide’. No similar finding could be traced in the literature; however, Tuchman (1978) provides some insight through Newsworthiness as a theoretical kaleidoscope to make sense of the findings by stating that [online] media uses a subjective reflection on reality through the use of deterministic frames, and that it becomes clear which news values are most important to online writers of cases of ‘queercide’ where there is a decentralised economic model.

In terms of how headlines were used by the online reporters, the findings were inconclusive as no clear preference emerged for the construction of either emotive or generic headlines. Similar to the use of photographs, headlines are seen to have deep ideological meaning (Grundlingh, 2017). Moreover, according to Jewkes (2004) headlines can create salience for an issue or disengage the reader. In the current study, only Case 4, which was the Eudy Simelane case, included headlines that could be considered emotive. The reason for this clearer emotional ideological construction of the headlines was possibly because she was a public figure, or that she was one of the first cases where the attack on her before her murder was referred to as ‘corrective’ rape. Also, that the trial of the accused seemed to be unnecessarily drawn out, and this evoking secondary aggression among activists and community



members. Sictsha (2018) claims that headlines are used [almost always] in sensationalist reporting, which the data of this study did not support. However, this contradiction may have occurred because Sictsha (2018) investigated specific LGBTIQ advocacy sites whereas this study focused on online reports from news websites.

It was found that the majority of the selected online reports on ‘queercide’ did not include a “Comments” feature as a “user driven” media tool that usually occurs in real reporting (Jewkes, 2004; Grundlingh, 2017). This frame then revealed reader exclusion as they were denied the ability to provide comments and read those of other users. Using such a plugin becomes a way that readers can use to judge the content they are reading and to engage with it. The findings also revealed the absence of a “Share” feature attached to most of reports, which also limited reader engagement. This was thus another frame that revealed limited online reader inclusion as audiences were not given the option to save, print, *tweet*, post, email or forward the content of the report they were reading. Although the majority of online reports in the selection largely omitted the “Share” feature, they did occur in each case – Case 1: 25%, Case 2: 50%, Case 3: 50%, and Case 4: 25%. This deviated from the findings of the “Comments” feature frame. Grant’s (2019) research confirms the importance of content creator-consumer engagement as it has the potential, even in geo-political contexts where LGBTIQ rights are stifled, to create awareness and social change in a ‘bottom-up’ practice. Women in South Africa are often confronted with a patriarchal online public sphere, and this can be mitigated somewhat through “Comments” and “Share” sections.

The findings did not reveal any inaccuracies in the selected online reports on ‘queercide’, except in one report (25%) on Case 1 where a date discrepancy was identified. It is important to note that accuracy as a frame did not replace *confident and inspired writing* as some of the reports had been written by the same assigned reporter who used similar information and structure in all of the writing. Byerly (2018) stresses the importance of fact-checking in reporting and the use of technology and websites to establish the quality of an online report and therefore the ideological composition of the piece. Milani (2015) echoes this view by stating that the appearance and significance of fake news in support of heteronormative power should not be underestimated. Theo’s (2017) research supports the work of Milani (2015) as he claims that reporting should be more empathetic as diegesis, which is taking on the structure and format of storytelling, and more than sympathetic as mimetic, which is factual but fails to connect with the lived experience of the subject.

Religious elements were observed to a limited degree but in the majority (three) of the cases under study – thus 25% in Case 2, Case 3 and Case 4. These reports were secularist, therefore the ideological frame used was non-religious. A similar finding was reported by Jaggar’s (2016), who claims that the lesbian community has the unique ability to present an alternative to the heterosexist aspects of organised

religion and other institutions of faith that discriminate against LGBTIQ people, and that online reports that are either neutral or omit religious discourse from LGBTIQ issues allow for this activism to be performed. The research also found that there was no observable trend in how the accused of the crime against the subjects were framed, and therefore no ideological frame could be proposed.

Some of the selected online reports on ‘queercide’ showed significant reference to the culpability of the accused. For example, 75% of the reports on Case 2 and Case 3 showed clear admonishment of the accused, while other reports made no reference to the accused at all. For instance, 50% of the reports on Case 4 made no reference to the accused at all. The reason for this lack of references to the accused in the reports and the inability of the research to identify an ideological frame for how the accused were viewed could have resided in the selection process, where accused reference was not one of the selection criteria for the qualitative section of the research. Also, perhaps 16 reports were too few to establish a clear trend. What could be established, however, was that the accusers were framed depending on the subject and the circumstances of the murder and not according to their possible culpability in the attacks on the subjects. The findings thus deviated from those of Sicetsha (2018), who state that online media use sensationalism when reporting on the accused of violence against LGBTIQ people either to garner support or create division. The reason for this discrepancy might be due to the differences in the format of the units of analysis and the fact that Sicetsha (2018) used a larger sample group. Of significance though, is that the findings are supported by Paradis (2015), who argues that a relationship between writer temperament and value exists, and that these relationships influences the presentation of ‘perpetrators’.

In terms of contextualising the data from the perspective of the Standpoint Theory, it was found that most of the selected online reports – 75% of the reports on Case 1 and Case 2, 50% of the reports on Case 3, and 25% of the reports on Case 4 – included sources with an *objective* epistemic perspective. Therefore, according to Kienstra *et al.* (2015), it changes the epistemic credibility of the reports to doxology – that is, the reports were axiomatic and thus not factual about the lived experience of the subject. Therefore, the ideological frame that was used in the selected online reports of ‘queercide’ reflected an objective epistemic perspective of sources, or doxology.

In terms of the quest for ‘code driven’ media using ideal reporting frames, the findings supported the argument by Jewkes (2004) and Grundlingh (2017) that minority sources are often excluded from reports where an issue might be divisive. According to Butler’s (1993) assumptions based on the Standpoint and the Queer theories, lesbians, as a ‘disruptive group’ to normative performativity, have a unique and significant position to conceptualise LGBTIQ issues in a way that can emancipate and empower them. Here, Sicetsha’s (2018) research also supports the findings, as the findings of both studies corroborate the view that lesbians currently lack the power to emancipate themselves as a result

of institutional silencing through exclusion. The findings also resonate with those of Tsou *et al.* (2015) and Allen (2017), as all these works highlight the benefit of sources with a subjective epistemic perspective, while Chakraborti's (2018) work also emphasises how current online reporting does not reflect the lived realities of hate crime victims. Francisco (2018) intersects with the Freirean argument that education, or elements of education, stimulate non-prejudicial reading, and that true sources of information on the lives and issues experienced by the LGBTIQ community should reside in LGBTIQ sources.

Finally, the findings did not show a clear dominant frame as proposed by Entman (1991) in the Framing and Representation Theory. The closest to dominant frames were *conflict* – 60% in the reports on Case 1, 75% in Case 2, and 25% in Case 4 – and *morality* – 20% of the reports in Case 1 and 75% in both Case 3 and Case 4. The reason why there was no clear frame might have been because the selection criteria did not focus on this element and/or the relatively small sample. What is significant, however, is that the findings correlate with those of news values frame by Galtung and Ruge (1965), as the finding of 'conflict' was similar, and Jewkes (2004), where findings of 'sex' and 'morality' shared similar traits.

The second research question was: "What significance do the four South African case studies on 'queericide', as a LGBTIQ issue, have for quality news writing?" With reference to Newsworthiness, the Standpoint Theory and the Queer Theory, this question explored what impact the findings based on the quantitative section and the first question in the qualitative section had in terms of quality news writing. This question was embedded in statements made in the Heuristic value section of this thesis, because to properly address this question was to answer probative questions regarding how the findings related to the disciplines of Journalism, Media, Communication, Gender, and Education.

In summary of the qualitative component of the research, the findings about how the subjects were referred to in the selected online reports on 'queericide' revealed an "*othering*" frame, while the gendered pronouns exposed the use of a *gender-specific* and therefore a *micro aggression* frame. These findings are corroborated by Untwin (2010), Jewkes (2015), Rampton (2015), Jaggard (2016) and Boyle (2019). The majority of the selected online reports also revealed that the news values frame comprised predominantly *conflict* and *sex*. Even though this finding was not supported by those of earlier studies, it was reinforced by Entman's (1991) Framing and Representation frames of 'conflict' and 'morality'. Therefore, even though this frame could not establish a conclusive perspective on its own, it became indicative of the juncture that exists between the Framing Theory and Newsworthiness.

The findings also failed to establish significant ideological frames in terms of how headlines were used in the selected reports, and also how the accused were referred to; however, findings for both these frames contributed significantly to the discussions surrounding logical questions for further studies. An

analysis of the data showed that the lack of the “Comments” and “Share” features revealed that the selected online reports used both *reader exclusion* and *limited reader inclusion* frames. Even though almost no inaccuracies were found in the selected online reports – which resulted in the identification of an *accuracy of facts* frame – the findings contributed to a larger discussion that will be presented in the Recommendations chapter. Finally, the findings also revealed an *objective epistemic perspective* or *doxology* frame with reference to the type of sources that were consulted in the construction of the reports, and *non-religious* frames were found to be used in most of the reports.

Limitations of the qualitative component of the research pertain to the selection of the ‘accuracy’ frame. The research should rather have developed a frame to investigate the style in which the online reports were written – that is, whether it was creative, called for action, and generated interest. Another limitation was the failure of some of the frames to establish whether an ideological frame was used by the writers of the reports. In future studies researcher may have to engage with online readers instead of utilising desktop research to establish a practical online policy to improve reader participation. Also, future studies may consider the contextual nature of reports referring to subjects as “them”, “they”, “she” and “her” as true or axiomatic micro aggressions. Finally, more research is required on the democratic potential of the Internet insofar as online content and feminist discourse are concerned, as these should not be naively accepted.

## 6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

“This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only the power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficient to free both.”

- Paulo Freire -

(Freire, 1970: 44)

Research is only valuable if the findings achieve the original purpose of the study and, therefore, a critical evaluation to determine the success of this research was required. This evaluation needed to be based on sound reasoning supported by evidence from the data analysis in conjunction with a consideration of the literature review. Moreover, future actions supported by insights into the fields of Communication, Media, Journalism and even Education will be required.

In light of the aim and objectives of this study, the findings needed to be confirmed within the broader Social Sciences field in a way that would truly contribute to resolving the issues that plague the lesbian community as a minority and marginalised group in the South African society. In this context, Freire (1970) argues that it is only when “othering” binaries become obsolete that the collective becomes the minority and the marginalised. For example, when a journalist uses basic references to neuro-linguistic programming in a sentence such as “...we should treat LGBTI people the same as anyone else” (Maregele, 2018), it creates an “othering” of “us” versus “them”. Martin Buber describes an “us-we” relationship (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014) that supports the philosophical underpinning of Freire (1970) who calls for power to be curtailed and limited. For example, those who were oppressed during a revolution should mind becoming the oppressors from whom they sought emancipation. However, where Freire describes an oscillating relationship that is circular and continuous, the current research proposes an interruption that will create a ‘space’ for journalists where they will obtain more insight into their ability to write in a transformative way on how society should adopt responsibility for the welfare of those who are deemed as “other”.

Then, in this chapter, the ethical considerations that were adhered to are discussed. Moreover, the manner in which the study attained trustworthiness, validity, and reliability is expounded and recommendations for future studies are offered. Additional limitations of the study are presented, and the heuristic value of the study is discussed. The thesis is concluded with relevant cogitations on this research.

## **6.1 Ethical considerations**

Research integrity through the consideration of ethics has become more important than ever before in accepting the findings of research, determining the reputation of the researcher, and establishing the scrupulousness of universities (O'Malley, 2019). Adhering to ethical requirements is the cornerstone of research and, when the necessary quality of a work can be established, it acknowledges at the same time that the work will impact future research. It is undeniable that the legitimacy of a researcher is largely dependent on his/her ability to conduct research from a solid ethical foundation. When this research endeavour was conceptualised, two ethical ideals were taken into consideration, namely ethics pertaining to the actual research process and methodology, and the researcher's conduct. A desktop study was performed that did not involve any respondents, therefore the issues of informed consent, dealing with sensitive information that might harm respondents, and providing incentives or avoiding deception were irrelevant (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). However, the research included the names of victims of 'queercide', reference to their family and friends in some cases, and even the names of those accused of the crimes. No consent was required to use these names as they were a matter of public record and had been published in online reports and were therefore not considered confidential (Information Regulator South Africa, 2013). However, the research was sensitive to the nature of the incidences and the harm that exploitation of some information might cause. Therefore, all the information that was collected was extensively and sensitively recorded for scientific scrutiny and evaluation only. In this manner the researcher along with the research committed to the ethical code of conduct and avoided bias and the misrepresentation of findings by adhering to the rules outlined in Research Policy V: Research Ethics of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2007) as well as the guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (Simons & Usher, 2007). No information was falsified, results distorted, bias allowed to influence the interpretation of the results, inappropriate research methods used, or information misused. The research also strictly followed the processes as proposed in the research proposal, which was awarded ethical clearance on 29 March 2019.

## **6.2 Validity and reliability**

The quantitative section of this research, in which data were collected and analysed concerning the technical composition of the online reports that this research interrogated on 'queercide', was ultimately dealt with as a descriptive approach to determine the structure of the online reports. This had to be done because not enough online reports and supporting literature existed to collect the required number of online reports for the performance of inferential statistical analyses. Therefore, this research measured what it was supposed to measure, and the findings thus relate directly to the quantitative objective and the ability of this research to achieve it (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, concerning content

and sampling validity, the research focused on and presented trends and not statistical patterns. By employing the use of a coding sheet to extract data from the online reports, the issue of internal validity was addressed as this instrument was more appropriate to uncover the required data than, for example, a questionnaire would have been able to achieve. However, if this research were to be replicated using quantitative questions and asking readers similar questions about the same online reports, the researcher is confident that the responses will yield similar results as those obtained by means of the coding sheet (Wellman & Kruger, 2001). To this end, the final quantitative coding sheet was adjusted and readjusted throughout the introductory, literature review and theoretical framework investigations to produce an instrument that would be aligned with the research issue. It became clear quite early in the research process that no more than 100 online reports would qualify for inclusion according to the research focus and criteria, and therefore the choice was made not to focus on a pilot study for the quantitative aspect of the research, but rather the qualitative one. The quantitative component was instrumental in establishing the framework for the qualitative component of this research.

### 6.3 Trustworthiness

For the qualitative component of the research, a pilot study was conducted to ensure understanding of the issue of 'queercide'. Not enough information on the issue of 'queercide' existed prior to this research to identify online reports for the establishment of patterns that could be generalised in a quantifiable way. For this reason, concerted emphasis was placed on the qualitative component of this research in order to properly address the research problem. To this end, the trustworthiness of this research was extremely important. The research had to establish trustworthiness through consideration of *transferability*, which means that the research had to ensure that the results of this research would also have applicability to other studies. The research also had to ensure the *dependability* of the study by meticulously detailing the processes of data collection, data analysis and the theoretical framework in Chapter Five. *Credibility* was achieved by treating the content of each online report with the same coding sheet and by means of the same data collection processes that had been verified in the pilot test (refer to Figure 4). The pilot study was instrumental in the adjustment of the coding sheet after some gaps had been exposed. The accuracy of the data collection instrument was thus ensured, and each article was treated similarly. The pilot study originally yielded an 82% similarity between the first coder (researcher) and a moderator, and *confirmability* was achieved whereby the data and the findings were linked through a comprehensive discussion. It would be disingenuous to state that the researcher was immune to any value judgements in selecting the codes, as all researchers are unique and 'flawed' in critical relativist endeavours (Maree, 2017). However, it is acknowledged this ethical limitation from the beginning and performed a pilot study with a reputable, trustworthy secondary coder. The research will also retain all the coded units of analysis securely for the specified period for replicability purposes.

These processes to safeguard the data will undoubtedly enhance the credibility and transferability of the data.

#### **6.4 Limitations**

Although the limitations of the theories that underpinned the study were discussed in the relevant section, it is also important to discuss the limitations of the study to situate the findings in the proper context and to ascribe a level of credibility to the conclusions. By frankly presenting the limitations, the validity of the scientific work and the magnitude of random and systematic errors have been exposed and may be understood.

In this research some deficiency in identifying the *originality* of the online reports in the sample was experienced, and this limited the ability of the findings to comprehensively and definitively address the research objective pertaining to this technical aspect of the online reports on ‘queercide’. This limitation did not, however, affect the contribution of other frames concerning the structure of the sample reports. This was also the situation in uncovering a pattern in terms of the use of *photographs* in the sample reports.

Another limitation of this research was that, in its initiation phase, ‘algorithms’ and how they might function to identify and trend certain online posts over others for browsers based on previous searches, were not considered and this may have had an impact on the replicability of the research. Therefore, the research refrained from considering how these online reports on ‘queercide’ might have targeted online users interested in LGBTIQ issues. The research therefore purely considered the frames that were used and why certain reports on the LGBTIQ issue of ‘queercide’ were written based on news values, from which angles they were written, and the influence of queer politics in the construction of these reports. The limitation was not addressed in subsequent phases and the data that were collected and discussed were specifically defined as pertinent to the selected sample. However, future studies may want to consider the influence of algorithms in the identification of online report results.

This research was also unable to establish clear patterns relating to the writers’ preferences for the *length* of online reports, the possible utility of the “Share” feature attached to such reports, and which *self-regulatory features* (such as the “Comments” feature) would be most relevant for judging the value of and engaging with online reports on ‘queercide’ and other LGBTIQ issues. These limitations were discussed at length in the chapter on data collection. Future research is therefore required to investigate these elements in conjunction with the participation of readers as units of analysis to properly contribute to a framework that needs to be established for online journalistic practices to ensure quality reporting



in a more post-positivist approach and in line with contemporary audience-centred research (Maree, 2016).

In Third-Wave Feminism, which is the philosophical tradition this research followed, *race* is a significant part of the contextualisation of female oppression. However, this was not investigated in any great detail as the researcher specifically selected diverse case studies to discuss a syntagmatic and paradigmatic shift in terms of the technical and ideological frames used in the online case studies of ‘queercide’. The reason for this omission was that the myopic focus had to remain on how online media reports were similar and different to one another on the merit of their content and not the victimology they espoused. From a cursive vantage point, it must be acknowledged that the White subjects received more online media attention than the Black subjects. Therefore, future studies might consider race to consider how online reports on ‘queercide’ or other LGBTIQ issues are written and framed.

Because the research included some recently published sources such as Sicetsha (2018) and Boyle (2019), not enough time may have lapsed for robust criticism of their findings, and this might have led to a diluted critical evaluation of these sources that may in turn influence the reliability of this research. Therefore, even though current research was important in establishing the validity and topicality of this research, their ‘untried and tested’ position in scholarly debates may have impacted this research with some limitations where they were cited. However, this potential limitation was countered by the concurrent use of seminal, well-established sources such as Entman (1991) to balance the permeable quality of the most recent sources. Because of the validated nature of the articles, they may also provide more insight to- and contribute practically to more robust and rigorous debates on the socio-media frenzy about GBV.

## **6.5 Heuristic value of this research**

In the field of Communication, Journalism and Media in which this study was embedded, the findings highlight some technical, structural and ideological frames that may enhance understanding of the framing and representation of LGBTIQ issues. The purpose of this research was to uncover the manner in which online reporters (who write news for gay news websites, weblogs, formal news websites, informal news websites and advocacy online groups) presented news articles on the murder of lesbians. The focus of this research was to illuminate the structure of these reports and their ideological underpinning. The investigation was conducted against the backdrop of selected theoretical frameworks and related literature. The purpose of the study was also to compare the structural elements that were used in these online reports to those of reports that were considered models of ‘good’ report writing. In this manner the research was able to uncover the similarities to and deviations from ‘good’ report writing in the selected reports. These comparisons were demonstrated using a syntagmatic and

paradigmatic process that is required in quantitative studies, as was discussed in the Findings section of this research report. Finally, the purpose of the research was also to develop a reporting framework for quality online reporting by critically exploring the ideological frames used in the online reports on ‘queercide’ in the ontological manner that is indicative of critical realist studies.

The findings revealed that, even though the online writers of generally reputable and established news agencies such as the Tiso Blackstar Group (*timeslive.co.za*) and Naspers (*news24.com*) published articles that were original on a basic level and that none were total copies from other sources, the writers did appropriate sections and information from other sources without acknowledging the origin of those sections or information so that readers would be able to judge the reports based on their origin. For example, in the online reports on Noxolo Xakeka’s murder, Maregele (2018) wrote two online reports in which information was used interchangeably even though the angle of the stories was different. Although Maregele (2018) credited that the information in one of the reports originated from a *GroundUp* report used by permission under the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (so long as Maregele credited the originator and included a link back to the original article), this was not done in the second report by Maregele (2018). Moreover, the licencing conditions for use were also not used for subsequent reports by *News24.com* either. Therefore, either *timeslive.co.za* or *News24.com* was negligent in how information was used in their online reports, or they did not (and obviously still do not) understand how online Creative Commons licencing for the use of information works.

The findings also investigated the prevalence of secularist versus non-secularist codes in the reports by considering conservative religious ideologies and the use of gendered binary pronouns in reference to the subjects in the online reports. This particular part of the investigation was inspired by Waggoner’s (2018) article on how lesbians are still represented in television series. It was found that the online reports remained neutral or did not include religious angles when reporting on victims of ‘queercide’ but they did, instead, replace those angles with nouns such as “sister”, “wife” and “partner” in some reports which presented the reader with a value evaluation option (Saal, 2018). However, regardless of the parallelism of religio-neutral frames and tenets inspired by the South African Constitution that protects the rights of LGBTIQ members, the research contributed insight into the persistence of frames in media where the subjects are referred to in an “*othering*” way, with gendered pronouns in a *gender-specific*, or *micro aggression* frame. Authors such as Untwin (2010) Jewkes (2015), Rampton (2015), Jaggar (2016) and Boyle (2019) corroborate the use of biased frames in reports on the murder of lesbians.

The contributions of the study are extended concerning the use (or lack of use) of “Comments” and “Share” features, which revealed that the selected online reports encouraged the frames of *reader exclusion* and *limited reader inclusion*. Because there were multiple accused in the murder of Joey and

Anisha van Niekerk, the online reports tended not to refer to the culpability of these men and women and this may be the reason why the research failed to develop a frame around how the accused were represented. What did emerge in this regard is that it might be of significance to investigate the use of the word ‘mastermind’ as it refers to the main perpetrator in a crime concerning minority or marginalised groups as it may have positive value aspects for hostile readers (Zelizer 2004).

In instances where reference was made to religion, it was not done in condemnation of the LGBTIQ community (Kruger, 2017). This finding supports a claim made by Gqola (2015) that there is a “cult of femininity” that positions those who are gender non-conforming, such as lesbians, as culpable for their suffering when they overstep certain normative boundaries. She laments the idea that South Africa has a greater problem with the existence of lesbians being raped and tortured and murdered, than with the perpetrator of these violent acts.

It was found that most of the online reports on ‘queercide’ did not avail the readers of a *sharing* option, which may have been due to a lack of understanding by the online writers of how to utilise and enable these features. However, it is noteworthy that some of those online reports attached advertisements that invited readers to “follow” the online publication on *Facebook* and *Twitter* (*The Citizen*, 2018), indicating that these news agencies did have these features and did know how to utilise them.

It seemed that when a lesbian couple was involved in an incident of violence against them as lesbians, the report was less likely to identify the sexual orientation of the victims, preferring labels such as “women” or “couple”. This ‘sensitivity’ might have been due to the race (they were White) of the victims, or their economic standing, or a lack of identity monikers available for lesbian victims who are a couple.

The assumptions of the Standpoint Theory were confirmed in this research as the need to include sources with a *subjective* epistemic vantage point was highlighted. For example, the headline “Mooinooi women hanged – policeman” (*The Citizen*, 2018) based the information of the report on an *objective* source’s perspective. However, two arguments need to be made here. The first is that the Standpoint Theory, along with the philosophy of Freire, is accurate in insisting on active subject involvement in the conceptualisation of events. This would be in line with the research findings of Tsou *et al.* (2015), Allen (2017), Sisetsha (2018), Francisco (2018) and Chakraborti (2018), who all elucidate that subjective voices are still being marginalised through exclusion and under-representation. The research findings reached the same conclusion by identifying that sources with administrative privileges were favoured over family members, partners, other lesbians or previous victims of hate crimes. However, there is a secondary argument that critiques these explanations, and that is that the “policeman” in the online report, who is generally considered removed from the true empathic ability

of subjective sources, would lend more legitimacy to online reports as would judges, magistrates, NGO spokespersons and community leaders, especially when considering that the findings of this research indicated that ‘crime’ and ‘sex’ or ‘morality’ were the news values and frames used to report on the incidences of ‘queercide’ and not values such as ‘attribution of responsibility’, ‘human interest’, or ‘meaningfulness’.

The research also demonstrated growth and change in how online reports are constructed and conceptualised regarding the murder of lesbians. Compared to the other cases of ‘queercide’ that occurred after 2010, Eudy Simelane’s murder, which occurred in 2008, had the highest number of online reports (although not the highest number within the population parameters – this distinction belongs to the Joey and Anisha van Niekerk murders), but the fewest “Comments” and “Share” features which, in online news writing (even if not online news writing about ‘queercide’ as the findings of this research can attest), is becoming a staple (Trilling & Schoenbach, 2015; Boumans, Trilling & Vliegthart, 2018).

Another noteworthy finding of the research that will contribute to scholarly debate on the issue under study is the trend to present lengthier online reports of value. The ‘good’ reports were lengthier than the ‘queercide’ reports, yet they had both been recommended for awards regardless of the argument that shorter reports of a certain page length are ‘ideal’ for online audiences (Grozelle, 2014). Structurally, the ‘good’ reports had a “Share” and self-regulatory features that received industry recognition, while the online reports on ‘queercide’ lacked these features. Preferences of the length of online reports and the utility of the “Share” and other self-regulatory features seem to be most relevant for engagement with online reports on ‘queercide’ and other LGBTIQ issues. However, the need for such features to be informed by online readers in audience-centred research with a post-positivist approach exists, which was a limitation of this research.

Established news sites seemed more inclined to publish online reports on ‘queercide’ than less recognised ones and this finding contributes to the understanding of who drives the conversation around ‘queercide’ and creates a conscientisation of how this issue should be approached. This can be deduced through an examination of the acknowledged sources. All online reports used sources, but their preference was to acknowledge those with an *objective* epistemic perspective (to establish validity) which created *believed* realities for lesbians and not *known*, lived empathy (Kienstra, Imants, Karskens & Van der Heijden, 2015).

To extend the local implication of this research, it is argued that gay men and women are being harassed and abused on a much wider scale than in South Africa only. For example, in Morocco photos taken from gay chat apps were circulated online. Most of the victims did not report these incidences and chose

to suffer in silence (Rannard, 2020). In South Korea, during the Coronavirus pandemic, the media frenzy reached a new level when it was discovered that an infected man had deliberately visited a gay sauna in Gangnam. Underground gay activity continues as society fails to acknowledge the right to life of LGBTIQ individuals, and this creates a shortcoming that also affects data gathering, resource allocation and support from civil society. The nature of news items prompted a slew of homophobic content in newspapers and online, framing the LGBTIQ community as immoral and deserving of punishment and violence (*The Guardian*, 2020). A gay television star from one of Britain's leading reality shows called on the government to do more to protect people online after receiving daily death threats and homophobic abuse (Greenhalgh, 2020). These incidences are only a few of the many problems experienced by the LGBTIQ community internationally, and the insights provided by this research on online frameworks for journalistic report writing may ultimately influence the information audiences receive about LGBTIQ issues on a large scale.

## **6.6 Recommendations for future studies**

The research looked in a very specific way at how online media frame LGBTIQ issues by investigating both technical and ideological frames used in online reports on 'queercide'. Part of this investigation was to construct a journalistic framework for online reporting. By referring to the findings and heuristic values sections of the research report, this was accomplished in part. However, the delimitations in terms of the population parameter and selection stages, as well as the relatively limited scope of the units of analysis (that is, only online reports on 'queercide' were investigated) prevented the emergence of a fully realised and inclusivist framework.

Therefore, to address these limitations and to contribute to the establishment of an ideal, practical framework for online reporting on LGBTIQ issues, future studies have to include online readers in a post-positivistic way. Such studies have to include online reader behaviour, their preferences, and their inclinations in terms of subject matter and access. In this way, the ethos in media reporting may acknowledge that it should not be too codified and rigid, but rather open and receptive by relinquishing control and listening to the feedback from their readers to truly inculcate Freire's (1970) ideas of active collaboration. A criticism of this, though, is that complete 'listening' takes away the media's power to amplify unheard voices; thus, a delimitation should be developed to prevent an uneven balance of power. These recommendations are for further study and not to resolve a problem.

The media landscape, especially with new forms of journalism and media practice arising from the evolution of communication technology, needs to be pliable and not interventionist. Another recommendation for future studies is thus that investigations surrounding the development and use of applications (or 'Apps') should be conducted. Such 'Apps' are those found in Android *Play Stores*

where user reviews are included and a score out of five stars is facilitated to present readers with the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the report. This facility has become prevalent in online articles, but no feedback is provided to audiences regarding the general rating scales. Research is therefore required to consider the differing complexities of these Apps in regard to their use for online journalism and reports on sensitive issues. A recommendation for such studies would be to investigate a ‘top positive review’ of a reader base that found the article useful, informative and that provided a high scoring, but to also take cognisance of the lowest scoring such as ‘top critical review’, where a reader base might have pointed out omissions, mistakes or faulty arguments. This recommendation was influenced by the findings for the “Comments” frames in both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research.

Through the inspirations of Freire (1970), Butler (1993) and Tutu (1999), the only way that societies can truly be transformative, which is a utopian ideal, is to be honest about the fact that everyone has a level of racial, sexual orientation and gender bias that may cause moral panics and a tendency to polarise society into in-group clusters whenever there is visibility of the “other”. It needs to be acknowledged that privileges, such as White privilege exist, but that there are limitations to those privileges and power that requires articulation to properly debate its influence and means of restricting its impact. These truths should be reflected in the inclusivity of all parties, but this proposal raises the question: “How can journalists, and the masculine dogma, adapt to a new wave of feminism which has the potential to revolutionise how men and women interact with one another in the *#MeToo* era?” Therefore: “How important are studies surrounding **empathy** going to be in reshaping gender relationships to address anxieties that accompany these revolutions?” These questions open a broad field of study for future researchers.

Directly relating to the findings of this research, future studies should investigate how the *originality* of reports on LGBTIQ issues has to be achieved and determined to improve the equity of news agencies, the credibility of the content they produce online, and the efficacy of readers to judge the information they consume. In this research, reports were found to be ‘original’ but, upon further investigation, it was found that even though the reports appeared to be writers’ original intellectual property, they had been, in some instances, cannibalised from other online reports and were tautological from the portfolio of the writer’s previous works. Online producers of content, and particularly report writers, need to be trained in technical elements and capabilities of websites so that they are able to maximise available features that can be used on this platform. This is especially urgent for established news organisations that are trying to increase their footprint in the online digital news market (Ornico, 2018). In order to evolve best practice in journalistic training programmes and implementation, more research is required to identify areas of most need as well as a framework the construction of such a programme.

As part of the training of online report writers, the contextualisation of the images used in reports, particularly on ‘queercide’, needs better understanding. Currently, many pictures are sourced from social media, stock photographs or other reports and are used in a way that is often discrepant or irrelevant to the reports where they are used. Better understanding of the role that original and relevant images play in audience conscientisation of the issue is required.

Future studies should also investigate the contextual use of “them” and “they” as well as “she” and “her” to establish whether these are intended as hostile and “othering” or merely as an available identifying moniker in writing. In this investigation of the online reports the research relied only on the definitions of Rampton (2015) in reference to gender pronouns to determine if “othering” effects or patterns could be identified. However, the limitation of Rampton’s (2015) research is that it does not consider the broader context in which such pronouns may be used, and it is therefore important that these contexts and monikers be more closely investigated.

Further studies are also required on online content and feminist discourse as the Internet, as a platform for representing LGBTIQ issues, is constantly evolving and creating new opportunities or potential quagmires. By extension, further research that employs the findings of the current research as a foundation is required to investigate online reader engagement in order to establish a protocol to improve active audience engagement. The nature of the selection framework in the quantitative component of this research led to the exclusion of other online genres reporting on ‘queercide’ such as NGO websites and activist weblogs. For an in-depth insight into all online reports on the topic, these platforms also need to be investigated.

## **6.7 Cogitations on this research**

This research, that explored how perspectives of the “other” were dealt with by new media platforms, could be expressed in an allegory:

A popular music artist has brought out a new album and a popular new single which are ascending the music charts. As the song is very personal and true to the artist, she has an artistic and creative vision for the music video to frame her song and to ensure that it embeds itself in the hearts and minds of her fans and visually expresses her emotion intended in her music so that it would garner recognition for its contribution to the field of music. The record company sources a talented young music director to film the concept and execute the brief. After making key notes and some structural changes appropriate to a visual medium, he utilises his own preferred actors, actresses, lighting, venue and amended script. The repeat business from the record company and his association with a popular music artist are both important to improve his profile. He thus tries to remain true to the integrity of the brief and the vision

of the artist. However, even with the best intentions, his own artistic motivations as well as the restrictions of his experience, skill, budget and time influence his execution to such an extent that the end product deviates a great deal from the conceptualisation by the artist. She is disappointed but has her own deadline pressures to release the video as soon as possible. Understanding this limitation of her power, she willingly releases the video and even promotes it actively to ensure narrative stability and the success of the song and album in its totality.

To explain the relevance of the allegory inspired by this research: South Africa has a liberal Constitution, internal and external regulatory bodies, codes to ensure active and professional journalistic conduct and various advocacy groups espousing human rights. These ideals are put forward and require the technical ability of reporters of news to execute their reports appropriately. The philosophical lesson to be tested is whether the writing of online reports is vision laden or execution laden, and to give audiences the understanding and tools to determine for themselves to what extent these reports deviate from one another. To add to the allegory: Since their criticism of the limitations of positivist and interpretivist studies to uncover power relationships in research, critical studies have presented ideas surrounding educating those who are oppressed and bringing to light power dynamics so that these may be broken and the oppressed may be freed (Freire, 1970; Foucault, 1976). However, power relationships can never completely disappear, and the powerful will never be completely pardoned – in fact, in understanding power relationships the rightful power position should be restored (Standpoint Theory: academic lacuna). In the story, the musician should have esteem and power as a musician while the director should have hierarchal occupation as a filmmaker. Therefore, those who are accorded power may be allowed not to yield their position to the betterment of society (Socrates). Women should have pole position in generating rules and laws that allow punishment and restitution for the violence perpetrated against them and, more specifically, the LGBTIQ community should chair discussions on the issues that affect them. In a nutshell, in cases where the victim is both a woman and lesbian, the power should be equally distributed to create the best resolve for her persistent plight as an “other” in society.

As an institution of conscience within society, it is the duty of an independent and effective media to remind communities (civil and political) of their responsibilities, which are enshrined in Chapter Two, Section 16 of the Constitution of South Africa (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2015) which states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media; freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity; and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research. The right to subsection (1) does not extend to propaganda for war;



incitement of imminent violence; or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.”

According to the frames that were identified in this research, readers of online reports that are not framed by an appropriate context will perceive the issue of ‘queercide’ firstly as generic and not worth their sympathy; however, should more empathetic sources be used to provide information about the “other”, readers’ participation and empathy for the victims of ‘queercide’ may be elicited in an active way. Although there is currently no standard regulatory system in place that could commit online reporting to the same responsibilities as more traditional media (such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television), it is presented that this research at least illuminates how trending aspects in new, online media reports on LGBTIQ issues should present the news. This illumination has been an attempt to contribute to the broader conversation surrounding online journalism which should, in the final analysis, be embedded in the bedrock of human rights.

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