

**Covering rape:
How the media determine how we understand sexualised violence**
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Abstract

The focus of this paper is a corpus study of the representation of rape in the mainstream quality press in the UK and a discussion of the broader social implications of such representation. This paper uses corpus analysis tools to study the discourse that surrounds the terms *rape* and *raped* and their collocates in a corpus of four British quality newspapers and compares the findings of the corpus analysis with corpus-external data (e.g. statistics on rape crimes, government reports, rape myths) to determine whether (and to what extent) the images foregrounded by the press in the corpus echo such contextual information. On the basis of this comparison, I argue that the representation of rape in the corpus reflects and reinforces dominant stereotypical understandings of rape rooted in patriarchal conceptualisations of gender roles and sexualities and perpetuated by established professional practices in mainstream journalism.

Keywords

Rape, critical discourse analysis, corpus analysis, news discourse, violence against women

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to use corpus analysis tools (particularly collocation and concordance analysis) to deconstruct the discourse that surrounds rape in the British quality press through the analysis of the terms *rape* and *raped* and their collocates in a corpus of four British newspapers.

Rape is the only gender-based crime in which one of the ‘weapons’ is always a sexual act; in fact, it is often referred to as *sexual violence*. According to British law, ‘a person (A) commits an offence if he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis’ and if ‘B does not consent to the penetration’.¹ In other words, according to the legal definition, forced penetration by someone’s penis is the sexual act that characterises rape. However, this sexual act happens without mutual consent and, therefore, it is considered an instrument of control and humiliation rather than a way to satisfy sexual arousal. As Kitzinger and Thomas (1995:45) have put it, ‘this “sexual” is the mean to an end not the end in itself. Power is the desired element’. Therefore, in this paper, rape will not be referred to as *sexual violence* but as *sexist violence* (as suggested

by Pharr 1991:2), *sexualised violence*, *gender-based violence* or *violence against women* (VAW), to draw a line between a consensual act (sex) and a hate crime (rape). Although such expressions can also refer more broadly to other forms of VAW, they offer the advantage of placing rape within a social context of patriarchy and misogyny (Meyers 1997:8), thus taking the attention away from the sexual act, while emphasising the context of power difference between men and women in which VAW takes place.

Rape is also one of the crimes with the lowest reporting, prosecution and conviction rates in the UK;² the reasons why a reported case does not continue to prosecution and conviction are varied and they do not necessarily indicate that the crime did not happen.³ Therefore, as the outcome of legal action is not sufficient to distinguish between a rape that happened and one that did not happen, in this paper men who were accused of rape will be referred to as *perpetrators*, while women who experienced rape will be referred to as *survivors* (Kelly 1988) (unless they were killed in the attack). While these word choices may not always reflect the legal terminology and the legal status of the men who were accused – as the corpus does not contain only articles where a conviction took place – they allow to avoid those very lexical choices that, as shown in the analysis below, seem to emphasise disbelief towards survivors.

While the legal definition of rape in the UK is gendered in terms of who can perpetrate it (i.e. a person of male sex), it is not gender-specific in relation to who can be a victim of rape. In fact, both men and women can experience rape. However, this study only considers acts of aggression directed at women by men because, whilst it cannot be denied that the rape of men can also represent an expression of power (Javaid 2016), ‘from a semiotic standpoint, women and men are different signs and therefore signify differently so that the brutalization of a woman by a man cannot *mean* the same thing as the brutalization of a man by another man’ (Meyers 1997:8). The implication of this assumption is not that men and women are intrinsically different, but that *notions of gender* in society are premised on difference and that patriarchal society’s belief in and normalisation of such differences should be considered when discussing (the representation of) gender-based violence, i.e. a form of violence in which women are abused *because they are women* (Pharr 1997; Sunderland 2004).

Finally, even though rape can be described in terms of sexual acts, it is not possible to circumscribe the *experience of rape* within the rigid boundaries of its restrictive (legal) definition. Each person who has experienced rape is likely to have their own definition. Nor can the press accurately capture the experience of rape; in fact, its *representation* is likely to be based on a limited set of images and ideas, particularly because representations are often pre-formed and conform to existing stereotypes (Sunderland 2004). However, these images are not produced in a vacuum and, it may be argued that, when used by the media, the repetition and the scale of distribution of such images have the potential to eventually shape perceptions and reinforce stereotypes on sexualised violence (Emmers-Sommer et al. 2006; Levenson and D’Amora 2007).

Rape myths, media and discourse

Media texts are not produced in a social vacuum but in a space in which different interests and power relationships are at play (Fairclough, 1995) and inevitably influence the images construed and represented in such texts. For example, Van Zoonen (1994) argues that stories are selected on the basis of their newsworthiness (and consequent ability to generate profit) and of other considerations, such as availability and sustainability of sources. Several scholars (e.g. van Dijk 1988; Richardson 2007; Bednarek and Caple 2012) have also argued that institutional sources (such as the police or the government) have preferential access to the media because of their perceived credibility and because of their ability to provide a continuous flow of news material. In this production line, in which decision making is clearly influenced by political, economic and social power relations, the ability to be heard is not democratically distributed but is very much under institutional control. As Fairclough has put it (1995:40) 'in general it is those who already have other forms of economic, political or cultural power that have the best access to the media'. In this sense, media discourse is ideological, in that it is 'meaning in the service of power' (Thompson 1990:7) that constantly reaffirms patterns of sense-making that serve the interests of dominant groups. As an institution endowed with the power of both representing and shaping reality on a large scale (Fairclough 1989:35-39), mainstream media have the potential to normalise such sense-making patterns, thus upholding and reinforcing the hegemonic dominant structure of society, including dominant patriarchal ideologies of which VAW is an expression (Lombard and McMillan 2013).

Fundamental in patriarchal ideology is a binary distinction of gender roles, according to which biological sex determines which (sexual) behaviours are appropriate for men and which ones are appropriate for women (Richardson and Robinson 2007). In patriarchy, men are socialised to be sexually aggressive to certify their manhood, while women are expected to be sexually submissive (Franiuk et al. 2008). Consequently, men are expected to be the initiators, while women are supposed to be the gatekeepers in sexual encounters (Grauerholz 1994:41; Franiuk et al. 2008). In this scenario, there is only a limited number of roles, or subject positions, that are available to men and women: women can either be *virgins* (i.e. pure and uninterested in sex) or *vamps* (i.e. provocative, available or promiscuous – Benedict, 1992: 18; Wood, 1994: 22; O'Hara, 2012), while men who force sexual attention onto women are held to be *real men* (Wood 1994:23; Lombard 2015).

Previous studies on the representation of VAW in the press (Soothill and Walby 1991; Meyers 1997; Clark 1992; Benedict 1992; Mason and Monckton-Smith 2008; O'Hara 2012) have suggested that such roles can also be found in media representations of rape, often channelled into a limited number of rape myths. For example, women who experience rape are often represented in the press as innocent and vulnerable *virgins* attacked by men who are often portrayed as evil *monsters* and/or *perverts* (Benedict 1992;

Mason and Monckton-Smith 2008; O'Hara 2012). Such myths are troubling because of the effects they can have on society (including the legal system) and on rape survivors (Benedict 1992; Franiuk et al. 2008; Levenson and D'Amora 2007; Emmers-Sommer et al. 2006). Moreover, one of the consequences of channelling male and female sexuality into pre-packaged categories is that gender-based violence can easily be accepted as something that men are *naturally* inclined to commit, as they are seen as being *naturally* sexually aggressive; women must, therefore, take measures to protect themselves. In other words, it could be argued that the reasons why VAW often remains unquestioned, as argued by Wood (1994), are rooted in the patriarchal ideology that is largely controlled by those in power and legitimises the acceptance of rigid gender roles; this ideology is epitomised by dominant discourses that 'create subject positions that encourage men to harass women sexually and women to tolerate abuse' (Wood 1994:23). Thus, dominant discursive practices that reproduce oppressive gender constructions and ideologies can give rise to conditions and subject positioning that legitimise, sustain and normalise sexist harassment. By positioning subjects and events, such practices have the capacity not only to conceptualise and define social issues, but also to define how these issues should be understood, talked about and which views and behaviours should be considered legitimate and appropriate. It is the intention of this study to explore whether such attitudes are reflected and/or challenged in the coverage of rape in a corpus of articles published in the British quality press. In this paper, the representation of sexualised violence is conceptualised as a social practice that is articulated by both the discursive representation of rape and non-discursive factors such as social relations, structures and people that produce and receive media texts (Fairclough 2003:25). Conceptualising the representation of sexist violence as a social practice involves deconstructing the way in which this experience is represented and how sense is made of it. It also means acknowledging that both meaning encoding and decoding may be fundamentally partisan and ideological, as well as linked to specific practices and settings (van Dijk 1985, 1988; Fairclough 1989, 1995).

Methodology and Corpus Building

This study proposes a systematic, corpus-based investigation of the discursive construction of rape in the press and an integration of said analysis with a discussion of the wider context in which such representations are produced and received. A framework combining the mainly qualitative approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA – Fairclough 1989, 1995) with quantitative, corpus-based techniques, is the one adopted in this paper as proposed, among others, by Baker et al. (2008). While CDA explores inequality and power relations and examines the 'social, political and intertextual contexts, which go beyond analysis of the language within texts' (Baker et al. 2008:27-

30), a Corpus Linguistics approach can limit the bias of manual analysis and it can provide an overview of linguistic patterns present in a large number of texts (Wild et al. 2013).

The corpus used for this analysis (henceforth the *RAPE* corpus) was collected through the online newspapers database Nexis⁴ and the corpus analysis was carried out with the freeware corpus analysis toolkit AntConc.⁵ The following daily versions of four national British quality papers were considered: *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. The search terms used to query the newspapers were: *rape** OR *rapist** OR *raping* and the time-span taken into consideration is January 1st – December 31st, 2008⁶. The corpus includes 484 articles, for a total of 250,841 words.

This study focuses on collocation and concordance analysis of *rape* and *raped*⁷ – the two most frequent forms of the lemma *RAPE* in the corpus. Sinclair's (1991:170) definition of collocation is adopted here, i.e. 'the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text. The usual measure of proximity is a maximum of four words intervening'⁸. Collocations were generated using the statistical measure T-score, which tends to show high frequency words that collocate with the search word. Unlike the measure of significance Mutual Information (MI), which tends to give high scores to low frequency words that are more unusual (Baker 2006:100ff), T-score foregrounds typical phraseological collocates, which can be particularly effective in revealing discursive patterns.

Collocation analysis has been shown to be an effective method to support quantitative as well as qualitative discourse analytic investigations of texts as 'a way of understanding meanings and associations between words which are otherwise difficult to ascertain from a small-scale analysis of a single text' (Baker et al. 2008:96). Admittedly, collocations allow to detect 'the associations and connotations that words have and therefore the assumptions which they embody' (Stubbs 1996:172). Collocations can also contribute to the 'semantic analysis of a word' (Sinclair 1991:115-116), for example through the study of semantic prosody, i.e. the 'consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates' (Louw 1993:157). In this study, patterns of meaning association were investigated by comparing the *RAPE* corpus with the British National Corpus⁹ as well as with an ad-hoc corpus of news articles (henceforth *General News* corpus) which included a wide variety of text topics, i.e. not only articles concerning incidents of rape. While both the *RAPE* corpus and the *General News* corpus included articles taken from the same four national broadsheets and they both included several text types (i.e. editorials, comments, hard news, opinion pieces), the *General News* corpus consisted of all articles published by the four newspapers on the first day of each month in the same year and it amounted to a substantially larger corpus containing 5.057.173 words.

Finally, collocates of *rape* and *raped* were also analysed in their expanded co-text through concordance analysis, to infer contextual elements that would not be noticeable through collocation analysis only (Baker et al. 2008). As, in some cases, the number of concordance lines was particularly large, the analysis was conducted using a selection

method advocated by Sinclair (1999). A group of 30 random¹⁰ lines were selected and patterns were noted; another group of 30 lines were selected for a second investigation and the new patterns were noted. This was done until further selections of 30 lines no longer showed new patterns.¹¹

Findings

This section contains the findings of the collocation and concordance analyses of *rape* and *raped*, as well as an analysis of the semantic prosody and meaning association of some of the most frequent collocates of *rape* and *raped*.

Rape

Table 1 shows the top 20 lexical¹² collocates¹³ to the left and to the right of *rape*.¹⁴

Table 1: List of the 20 most frequent lexical collocates of *rape*

Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
105	21	84	1.005.395	victims
89	21	68	924.577	murder
54	9	45	719.459	date
45	14	31	651.597	victim
40	32	8	627.206	attempted
46	30	16	619.631	women
38	18	20	604.499	conviction
36	18	18	595.509	allegation
45	19	26	591.2	police
39	10	29	569.871	year
33	30	3	562.478	alleged
33	4	29	559.714	assault
30	11	19	536.302	charges
28	15	13	521.875	rate
31	6	25	515.898	case
27	10	17	509.892	allegations
27	25	2	503.873	accused
29	9	20	503.043	sexual
24	3	21	486.166	crisis
22	5	17	464.117	false

Table 1 contains six semantically related words, i.e. *allegation(s)*, *conviction*, *police*, *alleged*, *charges*, *accused*, which belong to the domain of jurisprudence, as well as two terms – *attempted* and *case* – which also appear in the discussion of rape in the legal domain (e.g. *he was also charged with an **attempted** rape; rape **case** to be reopened*). Some collocates in Table 1 are part of fixed expressions such as: ***date-rape***, ***sexual assault***, *rape **crisis** centre*, ***conviction rate*** and ***false imprisonment*** and two of these expressions (i.e. *conviction rate* and *false imprisonment*) also belong to the legal domain. Particularly noteworthy is the presence of three forms of the same lemma, i.e. ALLEGE, with two nominal forms (*allegation* and *allegations*) and one verbal or adjectival form (*alleged*). In order to provide insight into why *allegation* and *allegations* are the most frequent collocates of *rape* in the RAPE corpus instead of, for example, *accusation* or *complaint*, this point is investigated further in the following.

The Oxford English Dictionary¹⁵ defines allegation as ‘an act of alleging something; an unproved claim or assertion. Also: an unfounded statement or accusation’. The investigation of the 30 strongest lexical collocates of the singular form *allegation*¹⁶ in the BNCweb shows that *allegation* co-occurs with terms such as: *denied*, *withdraw*, *dismissed*, *unsubstantiated*, *refute*, *abandoned*, *false*, *untrue*, *deny*. Moreover, in the BNCweb, *rape* is also the only violent crime that collocates with *allegation*. Other crimes appear too, but they do not necessarily involve physical abuse (e.g. *forgery*, *misconduct* and *negligence*). *Abuse* also appears in the list but, in 3 out of 5 occurrences, it explicitly refers to *sexual abuse*. This seems to suggest a connection between *allegation*, a term whose semantic prosody is pervaded by denial, and crimes that involve sexual acts.

In the *RAPE* corpus, concordance lines of *rape* and its collocate *allegation* (in the singular form – Table 2) also reveal that *rape allegation* and *allegation of rape* often co-occur with terms that suggest falsity (e.g. *denied*, *innocent of*, *stitch-up*, *totally untrue* – in italics in Table 2).

Table 2: Concordance lines of *rape* and the collocates *allegation*

1	<u>television presenter</u> , made an allegation of	rape	<u>against an unnamed presenter</u> in her biograph
2	former <u>Blue Peter presenter</u> has <i>denied</i> a new	rape	allegation made <u>against him</u> , saying it is
3	never resisted his advances and <i>denied</i> the	rape	allegation .
4	women back to their hotel rooms following a	rape	allegation on the <u>team's</u> tour of New Zealand
5	> <u>John Leslie</u> faces	rape	allegation ; HomeNews IN BRIEF *The former
6	> <u>Leslie</u> says	rape	allegation is a ' <i>stitch-up</i> ' The former Blue
7	appeal ruled yesterday. A delay in making a	rape	allegation is one of the factors most
8	Evans insistent that <i>he is innocent of the</i>	rape	allegation , his case could be used to strength
9	only eight days after being <i>bailed over</i> a	rape	allegation was jailed for life yesterday.
10	murder eight days after being <i>bailed over</i> a	rape	allegation was jailed for life at the Old
11	<i>No further action will be taken over</i> a	rape	allegation made <u>against the former Blue Peter</u>
12	Braithwaite had been <i>bailed over</i> a	rape	allegation seven days before killing Stacey
13	after he was wrongly released <i>on bail over</i> a	rape	allegation , police claimed as he was jailed
14	raithwaite had been held a week earlier over a	rape	allegation , but was freed to kill as police
15	<u>Peter presenter</u> , will not face charges over a	rape	allegation made <u>against him</u> last month. A
16	not worth pursuing." Some forces record any	rape	allegation as a crime as soon as a report is
17	of a Filipino woman in a hotel room. The	rape	allegation has echoes of the 1995 gang rape
18	Braithwaite having been <i>bailed on</i> the initial	rape	allegation . A police source said: "We felt
19	to obscure property developer THE latest	rape	allegation <u>against John Leslie</u> came as the
20	said: We are investigating an allegation of	rape	and indecent assault on a woman. The allegation
21	CPS, said: We take any allegation of	rape	extremely <i>seriously</i> and all rape cases are
22	> <u>Prime Minister</u> <i>denies</i> allegation of	rape	GRENADINES The Prime Minister of a formee
23	he described the latest allegation , of a	rape	in 1995, as <i>totally untrue</i> . He said: "I
24	<u>Leslie</u> yesterday described an allegation of	rape	made <u>against him</u> as the "mother of all ' <i>stitch</i>
25	as arrested last night over an allegation of	rape	. <u>Mr Leslie</u> , 43, attended a police station
26	that the claims may include an allegation of	rape	, no formal complaint has been received.
27	the police had <i>not taken</i> her allegation of	rape	<i>seriously</i> . Rape charges against Jagat Mawari
28	her boyfriend [...] made an allegation of	rape	. So far the girl has made no formal complain
29	teenager made an allegation of "sexual abuse/"	rape	' to police and doctors at a hospital where
30	Unit she had made a previous allegation of	rape	. Witnesses were not interviewed for months,
31	Officers are investigating an allegation of	rape	and indecent assault on a woman dating from
32	questioned by detectives over an allegation of	rape	and sexual assault in November 1995.
33	40s was questioned over an allegation of	rape	and sexual assault in November 1995, an
34	arrested after a woman made an allegation of	rape	at the <u>team's</u> Christmas party at the Great
35	<i>not taken</i> her allegation of rape <i>seriously</i> .	Rape	charges <u>against Jagat Mawari</u> , 30, were

Moreover, in the *RAPE* corpus, the combinations *rape allegation* and *allegations of rape* often co-occur with the verbal form *to bail over* or noun phrase *bail over* (lines 9, 10, 12, 13, 18). The context of these concordance lines shows that they refer to the case of Christopher Braithwaite, in which rape allegations had been dismissed and the perpetrator had been released on bail. Thus, the evidence from the *RAPE* corpus seems to support the suggestion that the prosody of *allegation* is pervaded by denial, as suggested by Baker (2006:158): ‘the nominalised *allegation(s)* form has a discourse prosody for denial which is not found with any of the other forms of ALLEGE’.

In the *RAPE* corpus, the pattern of association between sexualised violence and terms that suggest denial or scepticism is reinforced by the absence of *accusation* in the list of the most frequent collocates of *rape*. Admittedly, while *accusation* refers to a forceful assertion, *allegation* indicates an opinion or claim (that will need to be proved),¹⁷ thus

emphasising its subjective nature. *Rape* (unlike murder) is also absent in the list of the most frequent collocates of *accusation* and *accusations* in the BNCweb.

The concordance lines in Table 2 also show a tendency towards impersonality through the backgrounding or deletion of agency (Henley et al. 1995). Grammatically, the term *allegation* is an example of nominalisation, i.e. the ‘conversion of processes into nominals, which has the effect of backgrounding the process itself – its tense and modality are not indicated – and usually not specifying its participants, so that who is doing what to whom is left implicit’ (Fairclough 1992:95). In the *RAPE* corpus, *allegation* appears in one of the following lexical combinations: *allegation of rape* or *rape allegation*, i.e. together with another nominalised process: *rape*. As it is the case with this type of transformation (Kress and Hodge 1979:10), both processes are transformed into things that can become the object of other processes such as *facing*, *describing*, *investigating* and *including*. In other words, actions are turned into objects or timeless and impersonal events, and what is specific is turned into general through an abstract nominal which is more similar to a state than a process (Kress and Hodge 1979:26-27). The effect of this transformation is to obscure the agents of such processes; both the person who raped and the person who alleged are deleted. Similarly, the person who was raped and the one against whom allegations were made are backgrounded or disappear altogether. This structure allows the focus to shift from the causer of the process and the person affected by it to the process/thing itself, thus weakening the connection between actors and process and obscuring relations of causality (making it difficult to recover *who* did what to whom). This way, *rape* becomes an attribute of *allegation*, rather than a (criminal) action committed by a person against another. The legal requirement in the UK to protect rape survivors’ anonymity¹⁸ can partly explain the lack of attribution of rape complaints to a named individual (although the active voice – e.g. *the woman alleged that* – could still be used to make causality less ambiguous). However, this is not the case for perpetrators.¹⁹ In the *RAPE* corpus, the active voice is used when *allegation* appears in the phraseological unit *to make an allegation* in which the noun *allegation* is supported by the light verb *to make*. A light verb is ‘a verb with little or no semantic content of its own which combines with a (usually indefinite) direct object noun [...] which itself expresses a verbal meaning’ (Trask 1993:160). In this case, an event (*to allege*) is transformed into a thing and, more precisely, into the object of a verb that does not contribute to the semantic content of the expression. In other words, had *to make an allegation* been replaced by *to allege*, there would have been theoretically no alteration in terms of content. However, light verbs can contribute to the meaning of an expression in a subtler way. In this instance, it may be argued that the selection of *to make an allegation of rape* over *to allege that* creates more distance between the person who makes the allegation and the allegation itself, by making it more factual and less subjective (arguably, it would be harder to dispute the statement *she made an allegation of rape* than *she alleged that she had been raped*). In some cases, this distance is further exacerbated by a passive or progressive form (lines 2 and 7, Table

2) that further backgrounds or deletes the agent/sayer. It may be argued that the lack of direct attribution of *rape* and *allegation*, together with the vagueness of nominalised processes and the weakening of the relationship between sayer and process through light verbs create a sense of impersonality and distance in the construction of the incident, because both survivor and attacker are not represented as directly involved in the process. The analysis of the concordance lines of *rape* and the plural form *allegations* (Table 3) shows similar patterns of denial (e.g. *fabricated*, *dismissed*, *denied*, *cleared*, *false*, *not taken seriously*²⁰ – in *italics* in Table 3) and impersonality (e.g. line 15 where *allegations of rape* are something in which one is *caught up in*).

Table 3: Concordance lines of *rape* and its collocate *allegations*

1	> <u>Evans</u> ,	rape	allegations	Perhaps some good will come of
2	> 'Accused' face	rape	allegations	from police Seventy-two hours
3	that Kent Police took all sexual assault and	rape	allegations	seriously and said that its
4	to RFU <u>The four players</u> at the centre of	rape	allegations	on England's tour to New Zealand
5	two squad members who were at the centre of	rape	allegations	on last month's tour to New Zealand
6	<u>four England rugby players</u> at the centre of	rape	allegations	formally refused yesterday to sp
7	> Footballer <i>cleared</i> of	rape	allegations	(Photograph) - MANCHESTER
8	their clear-up statistics The number of	rape	allegations	recorded as crimes by police has
9	them the <u>four players</u> at the centre of the	rape	allegations	that so undermined the final wee
10	argued about Braithwaite's arrest over the	rape	allegations	. "This defendant . . . carried
11	have been trying to raise the proportion of	rape	allegations	that end in conviction, which
12	trial and appeal courts is regrettably of	rape	allegations	which prove to be quite <i>false</i> . E
13	The Crown Prosecution Service <i>takes</i>	rape	allegations	<i>very seriously</i> and in the light
14	led herself because police had <i>not taken</i> the	rape	allegations	seriously, an accusation that Ha
15	who found themselves caught up in	rape	allegations	during the tour to New Zealand
16	crown court that some women <i>fabricated</i>	rape	allegations	for their own purposes. The app
17	career ended in 2002 amid <i>allegations</i> of	rape		and sexual assault, expressed bitterness
18	that the <u>four players</u> <i>denied</i> <i>allegations</i> of	rape		and sexual assault and had the support of
19	<i>denied</i> the <i>allegations</i> of rape, attempted	rape		and assault by penetration but admitted the
20	London, initially <i>denied</i> the <i>allegations</i> of	rape		, attempted rape and assault by penetration b
21	by the judge who <i>dismissed</i> <i>allegations</i> of	rape		brought by a 21-year-old Aberystwyth student
22	the damage done when <i>allegations</i> of	rape		were <i>not taken seriously enough</i> . Braithwaite
23	is life imprisonment. The <i>allegations</i> of	rape		, which carry a maximum sentence of 15 years
24	conviction rate resulting from <i>allegations</i> of	rape		which are recorded by police forces 47,000
25	women to continue to report <i>allegations</i> of	rape		, while conceding that the authorities are st

Further inspection of the concordance lines shows that, when the perpetrator is not obscured (underlined in Table 2 and 3), he is often a celebrity or a politician (referred to by their name, title or profession). Some of these cases are immediately identifiable from the co-text of the node word in Tables 3 and 4: a Prime Minister, a football player (Jonny Evans), four members of a UK rugby team and a TV presenter (John Leslie). In some cases, though, they are not mentioned in the co-text; expanding the co-text (sample shown below, excerpts 1 and 2) revealed the same pattern in other lines too:

1. **[John] Leslie** says rape allegation is a 'stitch-up'. [...] Scotland Yard confirmed a man in his 40s was questioned by detectives over an **allegation of rape** and sexual assault in November 1995. He has been bailed to a date in August. (line 32, Table 2)
2. A far more stringent code of conduct will be imposed on **England rugby union players** after a judge announced yesterday that he had fined **two squad members** who were at the centre of **rape allegations** on last month's tour to New Zealand. (line 5, Table 3)

The association found between *allegation(s) of rape* and cases that involve public figures is not as prominent in the concordance lines of *alleged*, which, unlike *allegation(s)*, does not have a prosody of denial, as suggested by Baker (2006) and as confirmed by the analysis of the concordance lines of *alleged* (Table 4) in the *RAPE* corpus (where the only verb that explicitly expresses denial is *denied*, line 28).²¹ The wider context of the concordance lines of the adjectival²² form of ALLEGE revealed that this was only used in relation to rapes committed by public figures 6 times out of 33.²³

Table 4: Concordance lines of *rape* and its collocate *alleged*

1	and bailed in connection with an alleged	rape	at <u>Manchester United's Christmas</u> party,
2	centre-back arrested following an alleged	rape	at the <u>Old Trafford players'</u> Christmas party
3	<u>Evans</u> will not face charges over an alleged	rape	at the team's Christmas party, Greater Manchester
4	assaulted. A delay in reporting an alleged	rape	is often seized on by the defence as evidence
5	trial judges can tell jurors that an alleged	rape	victim could have delayed making a complaint
6	results from scientific tests. An alleged	rape	was committed by a criminal who would have
7	Japan. It followed other incidents of alleged	rape	, trespassing and drink driving. In an attempt
8	<u>Evans</u> will not be prosecuted over alleged	rape	The Manchester United defender Jonny Evans
9	has been compounded by a second alleged	rape	, of a Philippines-born woman by a US service
10	discouraged her from reporting the alleged	rape	and pressured her into signing a false state
11	Bush, was later charged over the alleged	rape	, and another series of rapes in 2005 involving
12	, it was disclosed yesterday. The alleged	rape	is one of six sexual offences allegedly.
13	other sexual activity, including the alleged	rape	of a four-year-old boy. Social services and
14	all week to speak to them about the alleged	rape	of a teenage woman in a waterfront hotel room
15	owing the arrest of a marine for the alleged	rape	of a 14-year-old girl on the island of Okinawa
16	another is being questioned about the alleged	rape	of a Filipino woman in a hotel room. The
17	owing the arrest of a marine for the alleged	rape	of a 14-year-old girl on the island of Okinawa
18	"deep regret" yesterday at the alleged	rape	of a 14-year-old Japanese girl by an America
19	at <u>four players</u> were involved in the alleged	rape	of an 18-year-old girl in a hotel room. The
20	minister, Yasuo Fukuda, called the alleged	rape	"unforgivable" and Shigeru Ishiba, the defence
21	of 100,000 rupees (Â£ 1,300) to the alleged	rape	victim for her bravery in coming forward to
22	New Zealand paper reported that the alleged	rape	victim sought hospital treatment after her
23	English ban on prosecutors talking to alleged	rape	victims, unknown elsewhere, is expected to
24	> America's priority Two alleged	rape	cases involving a US marine and a soldier in
25	hristopher Baithwaite, accused of murder and	rape	. He is alleged to have cut the throat of a
26	won't convict in some cases of alleged date	rape	- because it might simply be impossible
27	s to suggest that some cases of alleged date	rape	should not end up in court. Dame Helen
28	the night of the alleged attack but denied	rape	. The case against him was dropped after
29	subjected to extreme violence, including	rape	, while others have alleged they were used to
30	a house near Bristol and two counts of	rape	following the alleged attacks on the teenage
31	Cab driver on trial for alleged passenger	rape	A taxi driver known for his "party cab",
32	another trial for their alleged role in the	rape	and murder of three other women, including
33	The CPS said the alleged victim of the	rape	had not made a full statement at the point

As in the case of *allegation(s)*, *alleged* also tends to co-occur with nominalised forms of processes such as *rape* and *attack(s)*; however, it may be argued that, as an adjective, *alleged* qualifies the crime rather than the relationship between one's word (the survivor's) and another's (the perpetrator's). Arguably, while *alleged* casts doubt on the truthfulness of the event, the noun phrase *allegation(s) of rape/rape allegation(s)* discredits the claim (*rape* is the modifier rather than the head in the noun phrase), which can then be refuted.

Two other frequent collocates of *rape* in the *RAPE* corpus (Table 1) are *victims* and *victim*. As shown in Table 5, both tend to co-occur in the expression *rape victim(s)* and *victim(s) of rape*.

Table 5: 30 randomly selected concordance lines of *rape* and its collocates *victim* and *victims*

1	level of award to a victim of	rape	due to alcohol consumption. "This stance
2	information about the psychological effects of	rape	on the victim . But, given the scale
3	rigour. It is hardly surprising that many	rape	victims have so lost confidence in the
4	and a third of Britons believe a	rape	victim is largely responsible for an attack
5	a justified furore over the revelation that	rape	victims have had their compensation cut by
6	work together from the outset to build	rape	cases, and support victims . But none of
7	this week revealed poor treatment some	rape	victims receive from the justice system, incl
8	ll in 2005 for Amnesty highlighted the prejudices	rape	victims still face if they do not
9	of Aids-related illnesses every week - that	rape	victims who can afford them are given
10	judges can tell jurors that an alleged	rape	victim could have delayed making a complaint
11	> Justice for	rape	victims is a postcode lottery victims
12	matters as fundamental as rape. It treated 14	rape	victims in one year abominably. It is
13	unacceptable that the standard of service	rape	victims receive is dependent on where they
14	York for the way it works with	rape	victims from the outset to build cases. "
15	can only lead many more victims of	rape	to hesitate before reporting an attack. Why
16	consumption may cost them compensation	rape	victims seeking compensation are having their
17	>	rape	victim escaped by writing message on her
18	caused anger by referring to a teenage	rape	victim's photographs on the social networking
19	>	rape	victims failed by lack of funds, say
20	an unforgiving light on the prejudices that	rape	victims suffer. But that struggle has taken
21	to the injury". In the past year 14	rape	victims - 1% of rape-related applications - w
22	credibility of the victim first; why is	rape	a priority in some forces but not
23	would a government minister ever attack a	rape	victim today? When she dares to suggest
24	>	rape	victim tells of night she was attacked
25	level of award to a victim of	rape	due to alcohol consumption. It is never
26	that one in four people believed that	rape	victims were partially responsible for their
27	Davis Jill Saward, one of the first	rape	victims in Britain to talk publicly about
28	and should not apply to victims of	rape	."
29	the low conviction rate by encouraging more	rape	victims to come forward and increasing the
30	and convulsions for days. Unlike many foreign	rape	victims in India, the freelance journalist st

Here the violent action is nominalised too and, in the case of *rape victim(s)*, it is presented as an attribute of the person affected by it, not an action of violence perpetrated against her. Similarly, *victim(s) of rape* obscures agency since the crime – not the person who committed it – is presented as the victimiser. It may be argued that the use of *rape* to pre- or post-modify *victim(s)* backgrounds or deletes the perpetrator, while the victimhood of the person who was harmed is foregrounded. Additionally, it could be speculated that the nominal form presents victimhood as a status (or identity) that is fixed in time rather than as the temporary result of an action. The frequency of such expressions may signal the reproduction of the language used by the judicial system to refer to women who experienced rape; in fact, this language is likely to be reproduced in the mainstream press due to its tendency to rely on a limited number of sources (van Dijk 1991; Richardson 2007).

While the list of collocates of *rape* (Table 1) contains three terms that refer to survivors (*victim*, *victims* and *women*), it also reveals the absence of nouns that categorise perpetrators (e.g. *rapist*, *attacker*, *aggressor*, *man*). This absence may indicate an attempt of the press to avoid terms that imply guilt if no conviction has taken place and/or a

preference for other ways to refer him/them, such as his/their first and/or second name(s); however, the frequent obscuration of the perpetrator found in the concordances analysed so far (and in the following sections) suggests that this is not often the case. Moreover, unlike *alleged victims of rape*, which is a commonly used in the corpus (Table 4 and 5), expressions such as *alleged rape perpetrator/perpetrator of rape*, which could also be considered cautious alternatives, are not used in the *RAPE* corpus. Conversely, one of the ways that the press uses to talk about perpetrators is *accused of rape* (*accused* is one of the top 20 collocates of *rape* and it occurs almost exclusively in the passive or participle clause *accused of rape*). It could be argued that, by referring to a perpetrator as someone who is *accused of rape*, the emphasis is placed onto an action that was carried out against him (i.e. accusation of rape) rather than onto his status as suspect; admittedly, unlike the noun *perpetrator* or *rapist* (and *rape victim*), the participle forms do not assign a given or fixed status, but they indicate a flexible condition. A search for the term *perpetrator* (not as a collocate of *rape*) in the *RAPE* corpus showed that, unlike *victim(s)*, it almost always refers to an abstract entity or concept rather than a specific person/people (e.g. *The Home Office has also drawn up a Domestic Violence National Action Plan to bring more perpetrators to justice*). While both *victim(s)* and *perpetrator(s)* are terms that can be applied to any crime, in the *RAPE* corpus, *victim* is the only one that is disambiguated, with *rape* and *victim* strongly associated in a fixed expression that arguably refers to an existing, established concept or identity; *perpetrator*, on the other hand, is left unspecified. Finally, it must be noted that the frequent use of *victim(s)* and *woman* may also be a consequence of the fact that the press is not allowed to disclose their identity. However, the choice to refer to them as *victims* rather than *survivors*, for example, would seem to confirm the hypothesis that the press represented in the *RAPE* corpus adheres to the institutional language used to describe rape and not to the one advocated by activists against gender-based violence (Kelly 1988).

The remaining collocates of *rape* in Table 1 are two terms that belong to the semantic group of crimes, i.e. *murder* and *assault*. The former occurs in most cases (53/89) in *rape and murder*, while the latter occurs mostly (30/32) in *rape and sexual assault* or *rape and indecent assault*. On the basis of this initial observation, it appears that rape crimes are often associated with other, particularly violent, crimes. This hypothesis was further explored through the analysis of the most frequent collocates of the second-most frequent form of the lemma *RAPE* in the corpus, i.e. *raped* (Table 6).

Raped

Table 6 shows the top 20 lexical collocates to the left and to the right of *raped*.²⁴

Table 6: List of the 20 most frequent lexical collocates of *raped*

Freq	Freq (L)	Freq (R)	Stat	Collocate
51	4	47	7.11227	murdered
44	30	14	6.5242	woman
34	19	15	5.67642	old
31	16	15	5.47718	girl
31	14	17	5.3392	year
31	21	10	5.30148	women
23	17	6	4.64575	man
21	16	5	4.55868	repeatedly
17	0	17	4.11092	strangled
14	14	0	3.69896	gang
14	2	12	3.6769	killed
14	2	12	3.67306	times
13	6	7	3.58912	schoolgirl
13	11	2	3.55577	teenager
12	8	4	3.36876	girls
13	4	9	3.33573	years
12	3	9	3.32006	men
11	5	6	3.29173	beaten
10	10	0	3.14355	abducted
10	6	4	3.11857	student

The most frequent lexical collocate of *raped* is *murdered*; additionally, *strangled*, *killed*, *beaten* and *abducted* are other top collocates of *raped* that belong to the semantic field of violent crimes. A concordance analysis of *raped* was carried out to investigate this pattern more closely. Table 7 contains a list of 30 randomly selected concordance lines and it shows that *rape* is often accompanied by other crimes (in lists of two, mostly in the structure: **some_crime* and rape* or *rape and *some_crime**), particularly those that can cause bodily harm or death. In fact, Table 7 (**in bold and underlined**) shows that *raped* also co-occurs with *attacked*, *stabbed*, *assaulted*, *battered*, *drugged*, *shot*).

Table 7: 30 randomly selected concordance lines of *raped*

1	> 'Taxi' woman	raped	A 26-year-old woman was raped by the driver
2	open prisons after the case of an inmate who	raped	a 16-year-old girl while he was on the run.
3	village. As she travelled to Rutshuru she was	raped	again, this time by Rwandan Hutu extremists
4	to try to trace the relatives of a man who	raped	and murdered a schoolgirl in 1946. The
5	expressed anger that the "evil stranger" who	raped	and murdered their "darling little girl" like
6	9, but her call was disconnected and she was	raped	and murdered, a court heard yesterday.
7	scores of opposition supporters have been	raped	and murdered, and hopes of democratic
8	DNA tests, it was clear that she had been	raped	and murdered. On Monday March 17 Hannah
9	as a cover-up and that her daughter had been	raped	and murdered. The naked body of 15-year-old
10	examination, which revealed that she had been	raped	and murdered. A barman and an alleged local
11	the father of Caroline Saison, 18, who was	raped	and strangled in 2000, said of Fourniret:
12	> Teenager '	raped	as she lay dead or dying' * Chef denies
13	at several bars. Miss McCormick was later	raped	by a man she could only describe as being
14	how she was knocked unconscious and	raped	by a man who climbed in through the open
15	86, when she was 21, Saward was attacked and	raped	by two men in her home - her father's
16	her new home and waited for her. Then he	raped	her again, saying that "it was to teach me a
17	37, a pub chef, stabbed her seven times and	raped	her as she was dead or dying. But he said he
18	alleging that Mr Gonsalves assaulted and	raped	her at his home on January 3. Lawyers in St
19	using a knife. In May that year, he battered and	raped	a 22-year-old mother whom he ambushed as
20	home in Southampton on 14 March 2003. He	raped	her several times in his Ford Transit van be
21	his way in, pushed her on to the bed and	raped	her with such brutality that she passed out
22	they have murdered my husband. They have	raped	me so many times. I do not know who is aliv
23	> Freed teenager	raped	mother-to-be A TEENAGER beat and raped a
24	threw herself off a bridge after she was	raped	on a night out with friends, an inquest was
25	by suggesting that women who are date-	raped	should not expect to take those who have
26	miles away, a 14-year-old girl was allegedly	raped	twice. Harkin appeared before magistrates
27	the offences were committed." Hanson, 65,	raped	two of his victims when they were aged 11 an
28	about allegations that he drugged and	raped	women passengers. His arrest was described
29	way off the path. The schoolgirl had been	raped	, battered about the head and shot twice at
30	services in place for women who have been	raped	. Well, no. The women's movement of the 70s

In order to understand whether the association between two or more crimes was a specific pattern of rape discourse or whether it was a common way of talking about crime in the four broadsheets, a list of the crimes²⁵ associated with rape in the *RAPE* corpus was extracted through collocation analysis (Table 8); these same crimes were then retrieved in the *General News* corpus to explore whether they also tended to co-occur with other crimes²⁶ (Table 9).

Table 8: List of crimes following or preceding *rape and or and rape* in the *RAPE* corpus

murder, abuse, assault, incest, kidnap, torture, abduction, deportation, strangulation, killing, slavery, imprisonment, manslaughter, looting, robbery, arson, corruption, beating, drugging, stabbing, sodomising

Table 9: List of crimes collocating with *rape* and crimes collocating with them (in the *General News corpus*)

CRIMES	COLLOCATES
Abduction	killing, murder
Abuse	kidnap, harassment, mistreatment, murder, neglect, rape, stalking, torture, trafficking
Arson	-
Assault	affray, murder
Beating	abduction, killing, murder, pounding, rape, strangulation
Corruption	bribery, fraud, rape, terrorism
Deportation	-
Drugging	smuggling, trafficking
Imprisonment	assault, killing, rape, theft, torture
Incest	coercion, rape
Kidnap	decapitation, extortion, murder, robbery, shooting, stealing
Killing	beating, rape, shooting, stabbing, torture
Looting	burning, rape
Manslaughter	sex-offence
Murder	abduction, abuse, ambush, assault, beating, espionage, hijack, kidnap, rape, robbery, torture
Robbery	burglary, kidnap, murder
Slavery	tyranny
Sodomising	-
Stabbing	-
Strangulation	beating, rape, torture
Torture	beating, imprisonment, killing, maiming, murder, mutilation, rape, strangulation

Table 9 shows that associating two or more crimes is common in the *General News corpus*. Even non-violent crimes like *robbery*, *looting* and *corruption* are associated with violent crimes like *murder*, *kidnap* and *rape*. This emphasis on violence is in line with

the assumption that negativity plays a prominent role as news value (van Dijk 1988:99; Bednarek and Caple 2012; Potts et al. 2015). It may be argued that, in the case of rape too, particularly gruesome incidents would be considered more newsworthy and, therefore, receive extensive coverage.

Together with the propensity of *raped* to co-occur with violent crimes, Table 6 also shows that *raped* often co-occurs with *repeatedly* and *times* in the *RAPE* corpus. Closer observation reveals that these refer to multiple rapes (*times*, for example, is used to express how many *times* a man raped a woman). Moreover, *raped* often appears in the expression *gang-raped*. Both serial and gang rapes could be considered particularly ferocious forms of rape that emphasise physical violence. Similar patterns (emphasis on severe physical harm, death and multiple assaults) can be observed in several concordance lines in Table 7 (in **bold**). This was further investigated through a concordance analysis of another group of 30 randomly selected collocates (Table 10).

Table 10: 30 randomly selected concordance lines of *raped*

1	GQ magazine, she said she <u>had been date-</u>	<u>raped</u>	a "couple of times". How would the harsh
2	Roman Catholic nun who says that <u>she was</u>	<u>raped</u>	and paraded half-naked through the streets b
3	last week, a schoolgirl <u>was beaten, gang-</u>	<u>raped</u>	and then had drain-cleaning fluid poured on
4	British woman has described how she <u>was</u>	<u>raped</u>	at gunpoint after her husband was kicked
5	old mother-of-two <u>had been gagged</u> and	<u>raped</u>	at knifepoint at her home in Plumstead, a
6	She <u>was taunted, hit, threatened</u> and orally	<u>raped</u>	by an ever-growing crowd of teenagers
7	Jill Saward was 21 when she <u>was</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by burglars who broke into her family home</i>
8	they shot them too. Then the woman <u>was</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by five men</i> . One of her attackers nearly des
9	was held prisoner in the same cell. She <u>was</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by her father every three days</i> on average an
10	told the police she <u>had been repeatedly</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by her stepfather</i> was told she must bring he
11	filled with women who <u>had been gang-</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by the militias</i> and shot in the vagina . The
12	identification The daughters who <u>were</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by their father</i> , and their seven surviving
13	policewoman, Gail Cox, that she <u>had been</u>	<u>raped</u>	<i>by two brothers</i> , Randy and Shawn Christian.
14	journalism student from London <u>was gang</u>	<u>raped</u>	in Calais. The woman was reporting on
15	Friday last week - in which the woman <u>was</u>	<u>raped</u>	in front of her husband by two Romanian men
16	the unsolved case of a 30-year-old woman	<u>raped</u>	in her home by a masked man who tied her up
17	, 63, admitted in 2003 that she <u>was date-</u>	<u>raped</u>	more than once when she was younger but did
18	of "black dog" and "slave". I <u>was gang-</u>	<u>raped</u>	repeatedly . Eventually, I was told that the
19	that they have been raped. There <u>was a girl</u>	<u>raped</u>	seven times but she won't tell," said Chipow
20	so without feeling." Asked if she <u>was date-</u>	<u>raped</u>	she replied: "I was, yes. A couple of times.
21	sat on basins because since they' <u>d been</u>	<u>raped</u>	they hadn't stopped bleeding . I also saw
22	party's own militia, who <u>are systematically</u>	<u>raped</u>	to cow them into submission and forced to
23	investigated after a schoolgirl <u>was allegedly</u>	<u>raped</u>	twice by a mental health patient hours after
24	. "Most of them <u>have been gang-</u>	<u>raped</u>	, one of them by 10 men ," said Rahab Ngugi,
25	Almost every woman here <u>has been</u>	<u>raped</u>	, some countless times . Some have been so bad
26	were tortured. Some of the women <u>were</u>	<u>raped</u>	, whipped and urinated on . Others had their
27	have died, and 200,000 women <u>have been</u>	<u>raped</u>	. "In the little village that I went to," say
28	understates it. She was brutally beaten and	<u>raped</u>	. Her terrible injuries left doctors convince
29	bore seven children as a result of being	<u>raped</u>	. Three were sent upstairs where they were "a
30	of the case of two women repeatedly	<u>raped</u>	and made pregnant 19 times by their tyrannical

In Table 10 (in **bold**), all lines (apart from 7, 8, 12, and 13) explicitly mention those that could be considered the most violent and sensationalistic details of rape crimes (e.g. serial rapes, gang-rapes, incest, war rapes). These are reported through adverbs or temporal phrases (e.g. *repeatedly*, *systematically*, *twice*, *countless time*), pre-modifiers (e.g. *date-*

raped, gang-raped) and numerals that indicate the number of men who raped the woman/women (e.g. *by two men, by five men*). There are also gruesome details on how the rape was perpetrated (e.g. *paraded half naked, orally raped, in front of her husband, tied her up, whipped and urinated on*), and on the weapons used to perpetrate the rape (e.g. *she was raped at gunpoint, raped at knifepoint*). It could be argued that the inclusion of such details is unnecessary and that they are provided because they can generate strong emotions, thus increasing the newsworthiness of a story (van Dijk 1988:85).

Additionally, Table 7 (lines 1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 15, 19, 26, 29) and Table 10 (lines 3, 7, 16, 17, 19, 23) reveal that survivors are often identified in terms of their age. This is further explored in another group of randomly-selected concordance lines (Table 11).

Table 11: 30 randomly selected concordance lines of *raped*

1	knives, machetes or guns, or who had been	raped	.
2	eight years' jail Edinburgh. A teenager who	raped	a 47-year-old mother while on bail awaiting
3	raped mother-to-be A TEENAGER beat and	raped	a pregnant woman the day after he was allowe
4	> Sally Anne suspect '	raped	a Thai student' A picture of alleged killed
5	the prosecution to spare his two daughters -	raped	and abused for more than 25 years - the
6	women in the trade who have been stabbed,	raped	and beaten. He tells Julie Bindel why they
7	reasons, said she was convinced she would be	raped	and feared for her life. The woman said the
8	EF *The mother of Scarlett Keeling, who was	raped	and murdered in Goa, said she wanted further
9	of Scarlett Keeling, the 15-year-old girl	raped	and murdered in Goa, was due to appear befor
10	daughter's battered body to prove that she was	raped	and murdered. Scarlett's semi-clad body was
11	she travelled to a nearby state. Keeling was	raped	and murdered. Two men are being held in
12	attacks in which women and girls were serially	raped	and the men killed. Health clinics in the
13	investigate the allegation - that a woman was	raped	and/or sexually assaulted by four players -
14	times on her doorstep A teenage model was	raped	as she lay dead or dying after being stabbed
15	From four onwards she was beaten and	raped	by her stepfather, who was "a pillar of the
16	'Taxi' woman raped A 26-year-old woman was	raped	by the driver of what she thought was a
17	of 32 he broke into the flat of a nurse and	raped	her at knifepoint. In her report Kastner
18	cannot be named, had told colleagues Hunt had	raped	her in July 1995, but had originally not wan
19	her clothes removed and that the intruder had	raped	her, she told the Old Bailey. The prosecution
20	the town of Amstetten, where he repeatedly	raped	her. The first Austrian to be tried for slavery
21	over failure to expel charismatic healer who	raped	his patients The world of spiritualism is
22	her twenties and had herself been date-	raped	in her late teens and twenties when she move
23	worsen the position of women who have been	raped	or suffered other violent or sexual assault.
24	British attitudes often partially blaming a	raped	women for her behaviour is part of the reason
25	Last week in north London, a young girl was	raped	, and not only raped. It would appear that
26	. If it was their daughters who were being	raped	, I'm sure they would react differently."
27	estimate seven out of 10 women have been	raped	. Mutilation Doctors say the onslaught
28	doctor and said that she had been repeatedly	raped	. The first-year trainee teacher, who has no
29	at me until I fell to the ground . . . I was	raped	. I don't know how many men raped me. Oth
30	be stabbed, and was hit, spat on and orally	raped	at least 12 times as she was dragged by her

Women's age (Table 11, in purple), particularly their young age, is often emphasised by expressions such as *young girl, schoolgirl, teenager*. Moreover, *old* and *year*, as collocates of *raped* (Table 6) also tend to refer to the survivors' age, co-occurring almost exclusively in the expression *x-year-old* (as shown in the concordance list in Table 12 (in bold)).

Table 12: Concordance lines of *raped* and its collocates *old* and *year*

1	nine children when 15-year-old Scarlett <u>was</u> raped	and killed on Feb 18. Miss Mac- Keown
2	in the world. More than 52,000 women <u>are</u> raped	every year while the ANC is aiming
3	, the mother of 15-year-old Scarlett Keeling, raped	and murdered in Goa last month; all
4	late 1995 but in March 1996 he attacked and raped	a 22-year-old prostitute in Leeds. He
5	looking happy. The 19-year-old girl <u>was</u> raped	in 2001 after leaving a nightclub and has
6	yesterday. The 56-year-old man repeatedly raped	the sisters over more than a quarter
7	at knifepoint, then eight days later he raped	another 17-year-old , again using a knife.
8	. In May that year, he battered and raped	a 22-year-old mother whom he ambushed
9	' The mother of a British 15-year-old raped	and murdered in the Indian seaside state
10	heartless and contemptible man who abducted and raped	an attractive 17-year-old girl . . . and the
11	ordered yesterday that seven teenagers who gang raped	a 14-year-old girl in a brutal "
12	away, a 14-year-old girl <u>was</u> allegedly raped	twice. Harkin appeared before magistrates i
13	that a 26-year-old woman <u>had been</u> raped	. Evans, who has won nine caps for
14	allegations that a 15-year-old girl <u>was</u> raped	in a Birmingham secondary school. The boys,
15	, 11 years ago, a 16-year-old girl <u>was</u> raped	on parkland in Halton, Leeds. The girl
16	to the 14-year-old girl who <u>was</u> raped	twice at knifepoint by Darren Harkin last
17	that a 10-year-old girl <u>had been</u> raped	so violently "as to cause the child
18	-AND-A-HALF years after he kidnapped, raped	and murdered 17-year-old Hannah Foster, Manin
19	heartless and contemptible man who abducted and raped	an attractive 17-year-old girl with everythin
20	of Scarlett Keeling, the 15-year-old girl raped	and murdered in Goa, was due to
21	*The mother of a 15-year-old girl raped	and murdered in Goa has arrived in
22	military. A 52-year-old Dutch woman <u>was</u> raped	and beaten on Friday night on the
23	for attack on schoolgirl, 16 A man who raped	a 16-year-old schoolgirl while on the
24	after the case of an inmate who raped	a 16-year-old girl while he was
25	and said that she <u>had been</u> repeatedly raped	. The first-year trainee teacher, who has
26	psychiatric hospital of a patient who allegedly raped	a 14-year-old girl. Darren Harkin, 20, absc
27	case of Robert Foye, the prisoner who raped	a 16-year-old girl after absconding from
28	who absconded from an open prison and raped	a 16 year-old girl took a new
29	daughter when she was 10 years old and raped	her when she was 17 was jailed yesterday.
30	unsolved case of a 30-year-old woman raped	in her home by a <i>masked man</i>
31	which a 16-year-old schoolgirl <u>was</u> allegedly raped	and doused with acid in Tottenham, North
32	> Boy, 14, raped	girl, 10 A 14-year-old boy has admitted
33	> 'Taxi' woman raped	A 26-year-old woman was raped by
34	' woman raped A 26-year-old woman <u>was</u> raped	by the driver of what she thought
35	eight years' jail Edinburgh. A teenager who raped	a 47-year-old mother while on bail
36	, East London, on 30 April last year and raped .	

Table 12 shows an overlexicalisation (Teo 2000:20) of terms emphasising youth (in most cases, the reported age is below 26, with emphasis on teenagers) in the *RAPE* corpus and, possibly, a focus on rapes committed against young women or on reporting the age of particularly women to signal (that this is considered) an aggravating factor.

Finally, the randomly-selected samples of concordance lines illustrated so far highlight two additional patterns, the first of which is the co-occurrence of *raped* with a form of the verb *BE* (*is, are, been, was, were, being* – underlined in Table 7, 10, 11 and 11) as part of a passive construction. In some cases, the agent is deleted and the verb is truncated (without a *by* phrase); in other instances, the agent is backgrounded (e.g. *by the driver, by a man, by two men*). In a few cases, the action is expressed through a participle clause that provides information about the survivor but not about the perpetrator (e.g. *Scarlett*

Keeling, raped and murdered in Goa – line 3, Table 12) or through a participle adjective (e.g. *raped women* – line 24, Table 11), which presents the rape as an attribute of the woman's identity. As with nominalisation, the transformation of an action (to rape) into a passive process obscures the agent; while this may be due to the fact that, in some cases, the perpetrator is unknown (although the active voice – e.g. *he raped her* – could be used), at the same time, this grammatical structure casts the sentence object in a primary causal role, thus directing emphasis towards the affected rather than towards the agent.

The second pattern (in *italics* in Table 7, 10, 11 and 12) is the collectivisation of perpetrators (e.g. *militia, crowd of teenagers*) or the reference to either through personal pronouns (e.g. *he, they*) or generic terms (e.g. *man, boy, patient, inmate*). Their first names are rarely used. While this shows that generic terms were indeed used to refer to perpetrators, in most cases, the passive voice was preferred, usually with agent deletion or agent backgrounding.

To further investigate the ways in which perpetrators were referred to in the *RAPE* corpus, an additional set of 30 concordance lines was produced (Table 13). Cases of *raped* used in the passive forms were excluded to focus onto the syntactical foregrounding through the active form (for ease of presentation, patterns that have already been discussed above have not been highlighted in Table 13).

Table 13: 30 randomly selected concordance lines of *raped* (active form)

1	psychiatric hospital of a patient who allegedly	raped	a 14-year-old girl. Darren Harkin, 20, abscond
2	prisoner who absconded from an open prison and	raped	a 16 year-old girl took a new twist yesterday
3	on the case of Robert Foye, the prisoner who	raped	a 16-year-old girl after absconding from
4	for attack on schoolgirl, 16 A man who	raped	a 16-year-old schoolgirl while on the run from
5	She was right. Her son, Robert Napper, had	raped	a woman - the first of an estimated 106 sexual
6	a tree on Wimbledon Common in July 1992. He	raped	again in 1992 and attempted two more rapes,
7	and contemptible man who abducted and	raped	an attractive 17-year-old girl with everything
8	ever, lay a cold-blooded sexual predator who	raped	and killed victims with the help of his wife
9	> The evil stranger who	raped	and murdered my Hannah should die in jail,
10	Kohli drove Hannah to a remote location and	raped	and strangled her before dumping her body.
11	was done, and nine months later the same man	raped	another escort girl. The police decided to
12	her in his van, he found somewhere quiet, he	raped	her, he then strangled her and he dumped her
13	night after it insisted that a prisoner who	raped	a schoolgirl after absconding from an open p
14	sent to Broadmoor A mentally ill man who	raped	a schoolgirl after escaping from a low-security
15	her unconscious with the chloroform, or	raped	her. Lucie's mother, Jane Steare, yesterday
16	Chepstow, Monmouthshire, at knifepoint and	raped	her. Harkin, who suffers from autistic
17	in his van. He found somewhere quiet and he	raped	her. He then strangled her and dumped her
18	sex acts, refusing to wear a condom as he	raped	her. When officers arrived McKay refused to
19	away and, in front of these witnesses,	raped	her." Dilawar has a sheaf of legal papers,
20	her. I took her to a deserted place and	raped	her." A month later he retracted the confess
21	office. They "took me into an empty van and	raped	me", she says. "I didn't know what they were
22	at knifepoint, then eight days later he	raped	another 17-year-old, again using a knife. I
23	the robber made the wife go to the bed. " He	raped	me. All the time I was concerned that my husb
24	psychiatric patient who escaped from hospital and	raped	a teenage girl had been taken to see violent
25	his daughter in a cellar for 24 years and	raped	her repeatedly, was an "extreme pervert"
26	During that time he beat his daughter,	raped	her repeatedly and, over the years, fathered
27	, found a quiet place to park his van and	raped	the teenager. His DNA was recovered from
28	inside with machetes and clubs, the youths	raped	them in front of their husbands, some of who
29	barrels into the women's vaginas after they've	raped	them. I saw women who were permanently sat
30	and I was taken by the rebels. Five of them	raped	me. I still have pain in my legs because the

Rapists seem to be described in ways that underline their “abnormality” (e.g. with references to their criminal records – *prisoner* – or mental illness, Table 13, in *italics*)²⁷, a pattern already observed above (e.g. Table 11, where perpetrators are referred to as *cold-blooded sexual predator*, *evil*, and *extreme pervert* and *tyrannical*). Perpetrators are also referred to as *stranger* and *robber*, thus suggesting that they were not known to the woman (or *intruder*, line 19, Table 11, *burglars* and *masked man* lines 7 and 16, Table 10).

The lexical reiteration and patterning found in the concordance lines of *raped* showed an emphasis on extremely violent rape cases perpetrated by deviant individuals. At the same time, other forms of rape were often excluded. In fact, *husbands*, *boyfriends*, *friends* or *colleagues* were never presented as perpetrators.

Discussion

The analysis of the most frequent collocates of *rape* and *raped* revealed that the representation of rape in the *RAPE* corpus is characterised by a limited number of repeatedly deployed images. For example, the analysis of *allegation/s of rape* and *rape allegation/s* showed that these are often used in a context of denial and impersonality and that they tend to be combined with the reporting of violence perpetrated by celebrities or politicians. It could be argued that, since politicians or celebrities are those who, generally, may be more financially ready to pursue legal actions, the frequent use of terms surrounded by denial allows newspapers to report sensationalist stories (including the perpetrator's name, although not in the active voice) while, at the same time, limiting the risk of libel lawsuits. Admittedly, even though in the *RAPE* corpus there appears to be an overall absence of male agency, as shown by the frequent use of the passive voice and nominalisation, perpetrators are mentioned exceptionally often when they are public figures; however, this happens in a context permeated by the denial of the claims. It may be further argued that the strong connection between *allegation(s)* and such cases, combined with the weaker connection between *alleged* (a term that does not have the same aura of denial) and rapes perpetrated by public figures, reinforces the hypothesis that special caution was exercised to report cases involving politicians or celebrities.

The caution to allocate responsibility through the obscuration of the perpetrator in the *RAPE* corpus, particularly celebrities and politicians, is in stark contrast with the fact that the press is known for sometimes confidently allocating blame without evidence (Richardson, 2007: 129-130). It may be speculated that this caution is part of a strategy used by these newspapers not to imply that a rape happened; together with the tendency found in the *RAPE* corpus to i) weaken the relationship of causality between the perpetrator and the survivor and ii) not use *allegation(s)* in relation to crimes that involve visible, physical violence, such caution may indicate that the articles analysed here reflect (and, arguably, reinforce) the public perception that false rape allegations are common²⁸ and that, therefore, rape complaints should be treated with scepticism. This includes the idea that women may falsely report rape for money, fame and/or revenge and that they are more likely to do so if the perpetrator is a rich man. By relying on a strong denial pattern and impersonal style to distance itself from the words of the survivor, these articles may reinforce the idea that such cases should be handled with caution and that rape survivors' stories should be met with disbelief. However, the idea that women often "cry rape" is based on a misconception. In fact, in 2012, a study conducted by the Crown Prosecution Service in the UK showed that only 0.6 percent of all prosecutions for rape were based on false allegations.²⁹

To attribute the frequent use of *allegation(s)* and the resulting aura of denial to a mere choice of newspapers and journalists would be simplistic. While a degree of journalistic freedom certainly exists, other factors, such as the heavy reliance on institutional sources must be considered too. In fact, the analysis showed that terms from the legal domain are

often used in relation to rape crimes. Thus, the use of *allegation(s)* and *alleged* could be both a reflection of the legal language used to describe way sexualised violence, and a choice to reproduce such discourse and, with it, the ideology of a dominant group.

In this scenario, the lack of attention paid to perpetrators would be both a cause and a consequence of established professional traditions and social attitudes towards rape that are reinforced by these practices. Despite the inability of the press to reveal victims' names, which, in functional terms, could be considered as the equivalent of not knowing the identity of the perpetrator, there seems to be much more attention towards the former than the latter. The lack of a conventional expression such as *rape perpetrator* (in stark contrast with the conventional *rape victim*), the absence of an established noun to refer to an unknown or suspect perpetrator (e.g. *attacker*, *rapist*, *offender* or *aggressor*) as collocate of *rape* and *raped*, together with the frequent use of passive voice and nominalisation with agent deletion, suggest that perpetrators are often simply invisible and excluded from the story. This is in line with the propensity that has been found in news reports on rape crimes and during rape trials (Ehrlich 2001; Waterhouse-Watson 2013) to talk about rape as an agentless crime against women in which the responsibility of the perpetrator is obscured. It could be argued that this deletion is caused by and, at the same time, fuels the notion that rape is a 'women's problem' (Scully 1990); in addition to causing a shift of focus from perpetrators to survivors, thus potentially leading to victim blaming, it also excludes men from the discourse of the causes and solutions to male violence against women (Anderson and Doherty 2008).

Finally, the analysis has shown that when perpetrators are mentioned these tend to be strangers and/or deviant individuals. Like rapes perpetrated by public figures or associated with other violent crimes or rapes perpetrated against young women, though, these are the most exceptional, and therefore sensationalistic, cases that do not reflect the experience of rape. In fact, statistics³⁰ show that around 90% of rapes are committed by people known to the woman, that non-consensual intercourse does not always leave visible signs of violence on the body and that women of all ages are raped. It could be argued that by prioritising sensationalism, these articles produced a distorted understanding of rape that reproduces and reinforces existing myths, suggesting that the rape of *normal*, ordinary women by *normal*, ordinary men does not exist.

Acknowledging that the representation of sexualised violence is socially constructed rather than pre-given and monolithic, allowed to identify the discursive representations and the social structures that underpin it in the *RAPE* corpus and to highlight the dialectical relationship between the two. As a social practice, the representation of sexist violence can be challenged and re-constructed. It does not need to be confined within rigid boundaries of its socially accepted definition, but it can become a shifting practice that is renegotiated on the basis of contextual elements. In doing so, it is not only possible to unveil the power relations and interests supported by certain constructions and definitions, but it is also possible to bring about change. By emphasising the dialectical

relationship between the discourse surrounding sexist violence and the social structures that determine it, it is possible to challenge said discourses and structures, starting from the language we use to talk about survivors and perpetrators.

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¹<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/section/1> (05 May 2017)

²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116417/hosb1011.pdf; <https://fullfact.org/crime/rape-conviction-rates-deserve-careful-explanation/>

³<http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/rape-monitoring-group-digests-and-data-2014-15/> (28 May 2017)

⁴<https://www.nexis.com> (29 November 2016)

⁵AntConc was developed by Laurence Anthony. <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html> (29 November 2016).

⁶This paper is based on an ongoing diachronic study on the representation of rape between 2008 and 2018.

⁷Considering the relatively small size of the *RAPE* corpus, words were lower-cased, since 'preserving case distinctions [...] will duplicate word types' (Baroni, 2009: 805), thus reducing the number of occurrences of potentially relevant words.

⁸The minimum frequency of each collocate co-occurring with the node was set to 3.

⁹<http://bncweb.lancs.ac.uk/bncwebSignup/user/login.php> (28 May 2017).

¹⁰Concordance lines were randomly selected using the RAND formula in Excel.

¹¹This also allowed to distinguish between the simple past and the past participle of *to rape*.

¹²Co-occurrences of *rape* with grammatical words were not taken into consideration for this analysis.

¹³In a window span of 4 words on either side of the node word.

¹⁴*Rape* occurs 1207 times in the *RAPE* corpus. It could be either a verbal and nominal form of the lemma *RAPE*, but it was observed that *rape* mostly occurred as a noun (it only occurred 42 times as a verb, mostly in the infinitive form *to rape*).

¹⁵<http://www.oed.com/> (9 September 2016)

¹⁶In a window span of 4 to the right and 4 to the left of the node word, sorted by T-score and with a minimum frequency of 3 occurrences.

¹⁷<https://wordnet.princeton.edu/> (23 November 2016)

¹⁸http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/v_to_z/witness_protection_and_anonymity/

¹⁹<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/key-issues-parliament-2015/justice/anonymity-for-defendants/>

²⁰In some cases, the expression *taken seriously* is used. However, the need to specify that rape allegations are taken seriously may implicitly suggest that this is not always the case.

²¹This is absent in the BNCweb too.

²²Except for line 25 and 29, where *alleged* appears as a verb.

²³In total, 23 cases of *allegation* out of 35 and 10 out of 25 occurrences of *allegations* refer to celebrities or politicians.

²⁴*Raped* occurred 450 in the *RAPE* corpus.

²⁵The minimum frequency was set to 1 to collect all the terms that referred to criminal actions. The window span was 1 word on either side of the node word sorted in descending order of T-score.

²⁶The minimum frequency was set to 1. Each crime present in the *RAPE* corpus was searched in the *General News* corpus using the formula **some_crime* and* or *and *some_crime**.

²⁷ But also (line 24 and 26, Table 12).

²⁸http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/under_the_spotlight/ (28 November 2016)

²⁹http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/research/perverting_course_of_justice_march_2013.pdf (21 October 2016)

³⁰http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/rape_and_sexual_offences/societal_myths/;
<http://cambridgerapecrisis.org.uk/rape-myths>