

**Discourses of social problems:
A framing analysis of the use and influences of expert sources in the construction of
child abuse news in selected South African newspapers in 2015**

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Abstract

The study describes how the social problem of child abuse was framed in selected South African newspapers. Of interest is whether experts' presence in news results in a different framing than those without. To reflect on journalist–source dynamics within the context of news construction and claims-maker activities, the study explores the factors that influence journalists' use of expert sources in child abuse news, and documents such sources' experiences of and approaches towards the media.

Located in the social construction paradigm, a particular stream of framing theory concerned with source influences and the media limiting sources to elites due to professional norms, practices and organisational factors is used. As information selected and highlighted (that is, framed) by the media forms interpretative packages that collectively translate into discourses, frames are treated as characteristics of discourses. Entman's (1993) influential definition of a frame is used for analysis, and a normative theory of expertise guides the definition of experts.

The sample focuses on hard news reports from three English daily mainstream newspapers from different publishing houses with the highest readership: *The Citizen*, *Sowetan*, and *The Star*. Qualitative methodology associated with social constructionism is used, in particular discourse analysis, with content (framing) analysis and semi-structured interviews the chosen research methods.

The study shows that experts did not feature that regularly as news sources. When they did, however, they contributed considerably to solutions-based framing. Court and crime reporting dominated the sample; thus violent or sexual abuse were the most reported although experts appeared very seldom in these. Less severe (but more common) abuse forms hardly ever featured. Encouragingly, the reality that children often know their abusers was reflected regularly, thus challenging “stranger-danger” discourses. A considerable amount of attention on human trafficking and missing children in the absence of empirical evidence that these are a serious local problem raises questions about a likely moral panic driven by claims-makers' agendas.

The pro-active, hopeful and empowering prevention discourses of experts were in contrast to the rhetorical, blame or punishment discourses of other sources. Media discourses of deviance and individual blame were evident. Solutions for child abuse

were presented more within the cultural frame of individualism than the collective frame; thus the roles of government and men, and the need for changed societal norms and attitudes were addressed minimally.

The interviews illustrated journalist–source dynamics and organisational factors on both sides that restrict engagement. Experts’ framing power was determined by the purpose of media engagement, how that took place, the status of their institutions, and journalists’ attitudes towards reporting on abuse. Questions arose about source autonomy, limited claims verification by the media, and little focus on poverty as a main causal agent of abuse.

As journalists and experts described similar (positive) roles for themselves in child abuse reporting, it is recommended that this presents an opportunity to join in a public health model partnership on abuse prevention messages – these could present this social problem in a more pro-active and hopeful frame to the public.

Abstrak

Die ondersoek beskryf hoe die sosiale probleem van kindermishandeling begrens (omraam) word in spesifieke Suid-Afrikaanse koerante. Van belang is of die teenwoordigheid van kundiges in nuusdekking lei tot ‘n begrensing (“framing”) wat verskil van nuusdekking daarsonder. Om die dinamika van joernalistieke bronbenutting binne die konteks van nuusskepping en aanspraakmakende aktiwiteite te ondersoek, fokus die studie ook op die faktore wat joernaliste se gebruik van kundiges as bronne in kindermishandeling nuus beïnvloed, en dokumenteer sulke kundiges se ervaring van en benadering tot die nuusmedia.

Vanuit die paradigma van sosiale konstruksie steun die ondersoek op ‘n spesifieke begrensingsteorie bemoeid met broninvloede en die media se beperkte toegang tot bronne weens professionele norme, gebruike en organisatoriese faktore. Aangesien die seleksie en uitlig (dit wil sê, begrensing) van inligting deur die media vertolkende nuusbundels skep wat kollektief lei tot diskoerse, word begrensings gesien as grondslag van diskoerse. Entman (1993) se invloedryke definisie van begrensing lei die begrensingsanalise, en ‘n normatiewe teorie van kundigheid die definisie van kundiges.

Die steekproef fokus op hardenuus-berigte van drie hoofstroom Engelse koerante van verskillende uitgewersgroepe met die hoogste leserstal: *The Citizen*, *Sowetan*, en

The Star. Kwalitatiewe metodologie tesame met sosiale konstruktivisme word benut, spesifiek in diskoersontleding, saam met inhoudsontleding en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude.

Die ondersoek wys dat kundiges nie gereeld geraadpleeg is nie. Wanneer hulle wel benut is, dra hulle noemenswaardig by tot 'n oplossing-gerigte begrensing. Hof- en misdadaverslaggewing oorheers; dus het gewelds- of seksuele mishandeling die meeste dekking gekry het. Maar kundiges verskyn baie selde in hierdie nuusdekking. Minder ernstige (maar meer algemene) vorme van mishandeling het byna geen dekking gekry nie. Wel bemoedigend is dat die nuusdekking gereeld noem dat kinders dikwels hul mishandelaars ken; dus word die diskoers rondom "vreemdeling-gevaar" ("stranger-danger") uitdaag. Die aansienlike hoeveelheid aandag aan mensehandel en vermiste kinders ondanks die afwesigheid van data wat die as ernstige plaaslike probleme bevestig, laat vrae ontstaan oor 'n waarskynlike morele paniek gedryf deur aanspraakmakers se politieke of ekonomiese agendas.

Die pro-aktiewe, hoopvolle en bemagtigende voorkomingsdiskoerse van kundiges is teenstrydig met die diskoerse van retoriek, blaamlegging en straf vanaf ander bronne.

Oplossings vir kindermishandeling is aangebied met meer klem op die kulturele raamwerk van individualisme as die kollektiewe. Dus is die rol van die regering en van mans, en die nodige veranderings in sosiale norme en houdings, minimaal aangespreek.

Die onderhoude het bron-dinamika en organisatoriese faktore wat aan beide kante deelname en betrokkenheid beperk, toegelig. Kundiges se invloed op begrensing is bepaal deur die doel van hul mediabetrokkenheid, hoe dit plaasgevind het, die status van hul organisasie, en joernaliste se houding jeens beriggewing oor mishandeling. Daar is vrae oor bron-outonomieit, beperkte verifiëring van aansprake deur die media, en min aandag aan armoede as 'n hoof-kousale element van mishandeling.

Aangesien joernaliste en kundiges soortgelyke rolle vir hulself in kindermishandeling beriggewing beskryf het, word dit aanbeveel dat dit 'n geleentheid bied vir die media en kundiges om saam te werk in 'n openbare gesondheid vennootskapsmodel om mishandeling-voorkoming vir die publiek in 'n meer pro-aktiewe en hoopvolle begrensing aan te bied.

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Contents

Abstract	4
Abstrak	5
Acknowledgements	7
Contents.....	8
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	13
1. Introduction	13
1.1 The role of elite sources in news construction	14
1.2 Experts as a particular elite source in news construction	15
2. Research problem	15
3. Working definitions and preliminary literature review	16
3.1 Understanding child abuse	16
3.2 Child abuse in the news	17
3.3 Understanding expertise	18
3.4 Influencing factors in news construction.....	19
3.4.1 Views and uses of experts	19
3.4.2 Organisational influences	20
3.4.3 Norms, values and practices	20
4. Framing as part of the journalist–source interplay	22
5. Problem statement	23
5.1 Theoretical foundations	23
5.2 Research questions	24
5.3 Design and methodology	25
5.4 Sample	25
5.5 Data gathering	26
5.6 Data analysis.....	26
6. Thesis outline.....	26
CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical framework.....	28
1. Social constructionism.....	28
2. Framing in constructionism	30
2.1 Definitions	30
2.2 Operationalising a definition	31

2.3 The framing role of sources, journalists and the media organisation	32
2.4 The use of framing devices.....	32
2.5 Framing in discourse	33
3. Social problem framing and discourse	34
4. Theorising expertise	35
5. Conclusion.....	37
CHAPTER 3: Literature review	38
1. Introduction	38
2. Child abuse news coverage	39
2.1 Main characteristics.....	39
2.1.1 Sensationalism.....	40
2.1.2 Crime and offender focus	41
2.1.3 Episodic	42
2.1.4 Lack of addressing solutions	43
2.2 Child abuse discourses	45
2.1 Discourses of fear.....	45
2.2 Discourses of deviance and medicalisation	47
2.3 Discourses of blame	48
3. Culture and cultural themes.....	48
4. Framing, experts and other elites.....	50
5. News production and child abuse.....	50
6. Conclusion.....	52
CHAPTER 4: Design and methodology.....	54
1. Introduction	54
2. Design and methodology	56
3. Sample	57
3.1 Content analysis.....	57
3.2 Interviews	58
4. Interview questionnaire development and pre-testing.....	59
5. Data collection.....	60
6. Data preparation and analysis.....	61
6.1 News reports.....	61

6.1.1 News reports referring to experts (sample A).....	61
6.1.2 News reports not referring to experts (sample B).....	63
6.1.3 Unit of analysis.....	63
6.1.4 Analyses	63
6.2 Interviews	64
6.2.1 Unit of analysis.....	64
6.2.2 Analysis	64
7. Strengths, limitations and challenges	65
 CHAPTER 5: Framing analysis	 66
1. Introduction	66
1.1 Sample A: Reports with expert sources.....	66
1.2 Sample B: Reports without expert sources.....	67
2. Analysis: Sample A	67
2.1 Characteristics	67
2.1.1 Thematic vs episodic	67
2.1.2 Categories of abuse.....	68
2.1.3 Tone.....	68
2.1.4 Uses of experts	69
2.2 Framing	70
2.2.1 Problem and causes	70
2.2.2 Moral judgements.....	72
2.2.3 Solutions.....	73
3. Analysis: Sample B	74
3.1 Characteristics	74
3.1.1 Thematic vs episodic	74
3.1.2 Categories of abuse.....	75
3.1.3 Tone.....	77
3.2 Framing	78
3.2.1 Problem and causes	78
3.2.2 Moral judgements.....	78
3.2.3 Solutions.....	79
4. Discussion.....	79
4.1 Dominant news values.....	80

4.2 Underrepresentation of common abuse types.....	81
4.3 Commemorative events as discourse moments	81
4.4 Signs of a moral panic?	81
4.5 Framing	82
4.5.1 Problem and causes	82
4.5.2 Judgement.....	83
4.5.3 Solutions.....	83
4.5.4 Overall framing	84
4.6 Cultural values and cultural themes.....	85
4.7 Discourses.....	86
4.7.1 Differing discourses.....	86
4.7.2 Overall discourse of individual responsibility	87
4.7.3 Discourses of fear	87
4.7.4 Discourses of deviance	87
4.7.5 Discourses of blame	88
5. Conclusion.....	88
 CHAPTER 6: Interview analysis.....	 90
1. Introduction	90
1.1 About the interviewees	90
2. Interviews with expert sources	91
2.1 Experiences and expectations.....	92
2.2 Value of and attitudes to media engagement.....	94
2.3 Rules of media engagement.....	95
3. Interviews with journalists	96
3.1 Understanding expertise	96
3.2 Value of experts.....	97
3.3 Experiences with expert sources.....	98
3.4 Experts' framing power.....	99
3.5 Media conventions and practices in framing.....	100
3.6 Media organisation and routines as factors	101
4. Discussion.....	101
4.1 Framing and claims-makers' agendas	102
4.2 Tensions.....	103

5. Conclusion.....	104
CHAPTER 7: Conclusion.....	106
1. Overview	106
2. Results in terms of the theory and literature.....	113
3. Gaps and more questions.....	114
4. Larger significance of results	115
5. Recommendations	115
6. Conclusion.....	117
REFERENCES	119
APPENDICES	144
Appendix 1: Research questions in relation to interview themes and key areas of exploration.....	144
Appendix 2: Expert sources interview questionnaire	147
Appendix 3: Journalists interview questionnaire.....	152
Appendix 4: Breakdown of expert and non-expert sources in the sample, by sector, organisation and number of appearances.....	156

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1. Introduction

In South Africa, child abuse and maltreatment are “shockingly high” (Richter & Dawes, 2008: 79). For this reason, it is a social problem which government, civil society and academics regularly foreground – for example, during the annual Child Protection Week and the 16 Days of No Violence Against Women and Children – and the media are important allies in these campaigns. While research has showed that news reporting shape the public’s understanding of social problems such as child abuse (Weatherred, 2015: 17; Fritz & Altheide, 1987: 484), the media are regarded in particular as agents of influence over policy-makers and their policy responses to child abuse (Weatherred, 2015: 16; Lonne & Parton, 2014: 825; Bressers, 2005: 124).

In defining a social problem like child abuse, certain features of the issue are highlighted, or “framed”, by different interest groups who speak through the media (Weatherred, 2015:16; Lowney, 2008: 344). In this way, the media as well as news sources participate in the social construction of reality – a theoretical position that regards different groups as viewing and describing “reality” differently, and with language and symbolism playing a key role in the construction process (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 92; O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005: 59).

The social construction of reality through the media is however a process that is, for the most part, reserved for society’s privileged. This is because the media generally give preference to authoritative, elite sources who participate in a dynamic process of competition to steer discourse (Hesmondhalgh, 2006b: 70). So-called “experts” are one particular group of elites who are called on by the media. In South Africa, experts ranked fourth as the most-accessed primary sources (first quoted in reports) during the 16 Days of No Violence in 2013 alongside other elites such as government, judiciary/legal, and civil society organisations (Government Communication and Information System., no date).

Media–source dynamics involve a hierarchy of power (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989: 378); therefore it is important to consider the “nature and scope of source power” in the sociology of journalism (Schlesinger, 1993: 62–63). In approaching the media’s social construction of reality from a sociological perspective, research aims to

determine how organisational and professional practices influence the news production process (Schudson, 2005: 143). For example, journalists aspire to objectivity and credibility which result in their use of authoritative and reliable voices of elites such as experts to explain news topics (Simpson, 2012: 84; Conboy, 2007: 13; Manning, 2001: 15; Steele, 1995: 800; Gandy, 1982: 61). Journalists also follow certain norms and conventions such as using news values criteria to select news (Gans, 1979: 149). Journalistic language conventions present a simplified picture of the world with limited attention to contexts, and space constraints hamper in-depth discussion of topics (Conboy, 2007: 8). Newsroom realities of time restrictions to interact with sources (Fenton, 2010: 153), and expectations to produce more in less time (Simpson, 2012: 86) are other areas of interest in media research.

These organisational and professional practices have been shown to play a role in child abuse news, too (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 830; Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 26–27; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 52).

While journalists have their own “lenses” (McManus, 1994: 26) through which they interpret the world, news sources aim to influence the media with their own interpretations of news (Davies, 2009). Therefore, in the process of news construction, “[s]ources ... are crucial” (Gans, 1979: 80).

1.1 The role of elite sources in news construction

A news source is “an actor to whom the information in the statement is attributed by quoting or paraphrasing” (Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013: 441). While powerful sources dominate the media, it is not necessarily a result of their manipulation of the media (Hall et al., in Manning, 2001: 14–15), but rather due to the news production processes and media routines that rely on elite organisations (Simpson, 2012: 84; Gandy, 1982: 12).

The “structured preference” for elite sources makes them the “primary definers” of topics (Hall, in Hesmondhalgh, 2006b: 64–65). In child abuse news, “stakeholder” sources, also referred to as “social problem claims-makers” include elite institutions such as the police, schools, hospitals, or protection services; and government officials, politicians, and experts such as researchers and professionals (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 823), as well as the media (Lowney, 2008: 348).

In South African policy responses to child abuse, these stakeholders play an important role in contributing to an understanding of the problem and possible solutions. Experts as claims-makers are of particular interest because they bring a specific body of knowledge to media debates. South African experts – in particularly scientists – were aware of their value in these debates and believed they could promote a better understanding of social issues among policy-makers and the public (Gething, 2001: 45).

1.2 Experts as a particular elite source in news construction

The prominence of institutional and official sources in the news is attributed to the fact that knowledge in contemporary society is linked to institutions (Stehr, 1994: 170), and the news reflects this (Ericson et al., 1989: 398). As such, knowledge experts is an elite grouping who define societal issues and actions (Stehr, 1994: 166) and steer public discourse (Derber, in Stehr, 1994: 167).

How experts' input is treated by journalists can influence the public's understanding of social problems such as child abuse (Weatherred, 2015: 16; Fritz & Altheide, 1987: 484). There is thus value in determining experts' role in the construction of child abuse news by assessing how their knowledge of the topic is presented in news reports, and by exploring journalists' views of and approaches to experts as sources on the topic. This would be a worthy endeavour given the need for "conscientious conceptualizations of social problems" by journalists (Fritz & Altheide, 1987: 488).

2. Research problem

Experts are increasingly used by the media (Albæk, Christiansen, & Togeby, 2003: 937; Soley, 1994: 65) to add credibility and authority (Steele, 1995: 800–801) to news reports. Experts also approach the media, often to explain social problems, or are called on by activists to add credibility to the claims-making process (Lowney, 2008: 334).

Framing is a process of giving meaning to a particular issue or event (Shah, McLeod, Gotlieb & Lee, 2009: 86; Rogers, Hart & Dearing, 1997: 235). Journalists use sources to frame issues (Schneider, 2012: 73) and the media "often" adopt source frames (Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013: 439).

News frames are powerful – they tell the audience “how to think” (McCombs & Estrada, 1997: 240) about topics. Framing plays a significant role in defining social problems (Weatherred, 2015: 16) and is used to help claims about social issues resonate with the broader culture (Lowney, 2008: 338). In the context of South African authorities’ attempts to reduce child abuse, it is important to understand how news sources’ framing of the problem – as well as the media’s treatment thereof in the final news products – contribute to thinking about its solutions. It is a complex picture, however – different news sources will present the problem within their own frames, and with their own agendas. Journalists, as the assemblers of news, also come with their own understanding and approaches to frame the topic while at the same time subjected to professional norms and organisational influences.

Framing is viewed as a characteristic of news discourse (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57). In other words, how an issue is framed contributes to a “particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”, which is Jorgensen and Phillips' (2002: 1) particularly neat definition of discourse. Logically, competing sources who aim to influence the media and policy agendas result in discourse contestation (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). Such contestation can result in multiple understandings of child abuse that can muddle policy decision-makers’ and the public’s understanding of and responses to the problem.

A study on the role of news sources in child abuse framing will benefit from sources’ perspectives (Vliegthart & Van Zoonen, 2011:107; Schlesinger, 1993: 61; Ericson et al., 1989: 24) and such a source-focused approach can tell about their strategies in media engagement (Schlesinger, 1993: 72). A study of expert sources’ role in news can explain how their credibility is determined by journalists, shed light on the distribution of power, and illustrate the nature of media–source practices (Albæk, 2011: 343–344; Kunelius, 2006: 674; Manning, 2001: 18, 33).

3. Working definitions and preliminary literature review

3.1 Understanding child abuse

International literature use the terms “child abuse” and “child maltreatment” interchangeably (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014: 27). Various definitions exist for each, making child abuse “an omnibus category” (Richter & Dawes, 2008: 82). It is a

complex problem which is “not caused by a single risk factor” (Cluver, Meinck, & Omar, 2014: 66) but by a mix of personal, cultural and social characteristics (World Health Organisation, 2014; Niner, Ahmad, & Cuthbert, 2013: 436).

The extent of child abuse in South Africa is not known in specific numbers and statistics – partly because no national surveillance study on child abuse has been done to date (Children’s Institute, 2015: 13) but also because the different definitions of child abuse result in research on different forms of abuse (World Health Organisation, 2014; Richter & Dawes, 2008: 81). Further, the real picture of child abuse in South Africa is not known because of underreporting (Chames & Lomofsky, 2014: 49).

Given these complexities, it is vital to assess how the media communicate child abuse (Cheit, Shavit, & Reiss-Davis, 2010: 100) and a study of the framing of child abuse in South Africa can document the media’s approach to such stories and assist in understanding the “forces” (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 44) that affect how local journalists cover the issue, and their decision-making on which sources to consult on this social problem. Likewise, an inquiry that involves local child abuse experts who participated in the construction of news can help to understand their priorities and attitudes towards the media as an agent that shapes public knowledge about the problem.

3.2 Child abuse in the news

A preliminary review of literature on media coverage of child abuse shows that news values associated with this topic steer the way in which the media report on it. Such news values include drama and crime (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 52), prominence (Cheit et al., 2010: 110), and shock and horror (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 826; Niner et al., 2013: 449–450). These, however, create the impression that this problem involves mostly “unusual and sensational” cases (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 41).

The crime and scandal foci of child abuse news lead to the omission of many details and a lack of depth in describing the problem (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 822, 831; Cheit et al., 2010: 115). In addition, the use of dramatic stories to illustrate a social problem is a political strategy of claims-makers, which can also skew attention towards the worst

and most bizarre cases while more common abuse forms are neglected (Cheit et al., 2010: 115; Loseke, 2008: 101).

Child abuse news are mostly episodic (event) focused (Weatherred, 2015: 23; Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 32–33) which means the broader societal factors that contribute to abuse are not explored (Kunkel, RoUin & Biely, in Bressers, 2005: 125). Such factors include gender, race, class, and related socio-economic and psycho-social consequences. Research by Iyengar (1997: 281) has showed that media audiences tend to place responsibility for the situation on the victims whose stories are told in episodic reports, while they are more inclined to hold society and authorities responsible when social problems are framed thematically. Experts can contribute positively by explaining the problem beyond the immediate cases but they are not always present in child abuse news (Cheit et al., 2010: 115). Therefore, some researchers recommend that experts participate more proactively in the construction of such news (Cheit et al., 2010: 115; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 53).

3.3 Understanding expertise

There are many ways of classifying expertise (Collins & Evans, 2002: 354), and a preliminary review of literature on experts' role in the news indicates that researchers use different definitions for the term "expert". This could be attributed to a shifting understanding of expertise, which has led to a broader and unpredictable definition (Boyce, 2006: 890).

Some studies define experts very narrowly as those working in research institutions (Albæk et al., 2003: 940); others define them broadly as belonging to various elite groups (Schneider, 2012; 75; Powers & Fico, 1994: 91; Soley, 1994: 69; Stehr, 1994: 164).

This study of experts' role in the construction of child abuse in selected South African newspapers proposes to use a definition of expertise that is grounded in a normative framework. The "normative theory of expertise" (Collins & Evans, 2002) is based on the premise that "not all knowledge is expert knowledge" (Boyce, 2006: 895). For this reason, the theory defines experts as those who are specialists by contributing to the science of a particular field (*contributory experts*); and those who interact closely and linguistically with contributory experts (*interactional experts*). Those who do not

fall in these two categories are viewed as not being an expert (Boyce, 2006: 895; Collins & Evans, 2002: 254).

This Contributory-Interactional-None (CIN) definition of expertise is grounded in a theoretical framework which was developed out of sociologists' research experiences, and is applicable to analysing social sciences expertise (Collins & Evans, 2002: 270). It is discussed more in chapter 2.

3.4 Influencing factors in news construction

The construction of news is a complex process that is determined by factors which operate at the level of the individual journalist and the media organisation, and is steered by professional norms, values, routines and rituals as well as news source engagement. These all take place within cultural, social, political and economic contexts (Manning, 2001: 18; Ericson et al., 1989: 31).

3.4.1 Views and uses of experts

Prominent or elite individuals are believed to add to a story's newsworthiness (Brüggemann, 2013: 413), and research on the role of experts in the media points to their increasing value (Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013: 450; Schneider, 2012: 77; Soley, 1994: 69, 72).

Media-source studies indicate various uses of experts in news. These include commentary, short-term predictions, interpretations and analyses (Albæk, 2011: 343, Albæk et al., 2003: 945; Steele, 1995: 809; Dunwoody & Ryan, 1987: 24). While experts such as researchers hold particular knowledge based on their own work, they are more required to comment on topical issues than speak about the research evidence (Wien, 2014: 431; Albæk et al., 2003: 944; Dunwoody & Ryan, 1987: 24).

How child abuse experts' input as sources is treated by the media can also determine the quality of reporting. First, the media's practice of presenting opposing views to create a sense of fairness in reporting can add conflict and drama to the reporting style (Althaus, 2003: 382) that detract from real engagement with the topic. Second, Steele (1995: 809) points out that requesting predictions and commentary from experts (instead of evidence) weakens objectivity.

3.4.2 Organisational influences

Some influencing factors in the use of experts in news are determined by the medium and media organisation itself. Mainstream newspapers call more on expert sources (Wien, 2014: 431; Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013: 449), and such newspapers tend to use more analysis and recommendations (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991: 234). Time and space constraints in newspapers can however be barriers to involving experts, or to reporting on less common forms of child abuse (Bressers, 2005: 131; Powers & Fico, 1994: 92). Sources report that journalists have less time for or interest in explanations for complex issues (Fenton, 2010: 162).

The quality of journalists' engagement with expert sources can be affected by poor access to experts and expert information (Bressers, 2005: 130), by journalists' level of experience (Lacy & Matustik, 1984: 15), or whether journalists were trained in reporting on complex topics (Wien, 2014: 439). How journalists judge the qualities of particular sources can also determine if and how they engage with them (Powers & Fico, 1994: 94).

This study will explore the uses of and attitudes towards child abuse experts in selected South African newspapers reports, particularly in the context of factors and attitudes that influence engagement with experts, as well as the organisational realities and professional norms and practices, outlined next.

3.4.3 Norms, values and practices

News values criteria determine who is accessed and whose views count (Conboy, 2007: 31). Sources can gain prominence by virtue of speaking in the media, which leads to continued access by journalists (Wien, 2014: 435; Albæk, 2011: 340; Boyce, 2006: 902). This pattern can result in such sources being viewed as experts on the topic (which they might not be, necessarily), and can lead to a lack on the part of journalists to grow their pool of expert sources on the topic.

The print media's tendency to return to the same, mainly official, sources were observed in a South African study on HIV/AIDS reporting, which referred to the "rather surprising" (Muchendu, 2005: 68) finding that academic experts featured much less than expected during an intense period of debate on HIV treatment. The use of a limited

number of experts in social problem debates can restrict diverse and contextual input, or sources who gained a reputation as experts by virtue of regular media appearances might not hold expertise in the truest sense. The participation in expert debates by authoritative government sources who do not necessarily have expert credentials negatively affected the quality of information made public (Bell, 1991: 191). Given its complexity, public debates on child abuse could be weakened if the media prioritises “expert” sources who communicate poor quality information.

The reality though is that source expertise is at times confused with grand titles (Soley, 1994: 92) or an individual’s access to newsmakers (Steele, 1995: 804–805). Media professionals cannot necessarily explain how they determine expertise amongst potential sources (Boyce, 2006: 902). Thus, Dunwoody & Ryan (1987: 26) concluded: “Journalists appear to utilize much less rigorous criteria [for determining sources’ expertise]”.

As a weak processes for selecting experts as sources affect journalism quality (Steele, 1995: 799–800), it is important to understand how journalists in South Africa determine who the experts are that they seek to explain child abuse. Source credibility was rated fourth in a South African study of news editors’ final decision-making factors after public interest, newsworthiness and free flow of information (Griffiths, 2010: 74). But credibility does not necessarily equate expertise, raising the question whether South African print journalists consider this difference in their approach to expert sources.

The news media are often associated with negativity and negative events such as conflict, injury or death (Bell, 1991: 156). Child abuse news has been shown to focus overtly on criminal cases, especially sexual abuse, instead of on the complex nature of the problem (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 831). Coverage is also associated with the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes about the problem, and emotive, judgemental language (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 826). Such portrayal can be a deterrent to sources’ participation in media interviews, particularly for experts who value a reputation of objectivity and neutrality. News sources indicated a sense of powerlessness because of the unpredictability of media engagement, especially because of experiences of dramatisation, stereotyping and pre-framing by journalists (Kunelius, 2006: 684, 679). Scientific experts were reluctant to participate in media debates about controversies (Boyce, 2006: 902). This could be because playing opposing opinions off makes

sources feel that journalists seek extreme views (Kunelius, 2006: 677). South African scientific experts indicated a lack of confidence in the national media (Gething, 2001: 57) and viewed them as sensationalist (Gething, 2001: 59–60, 62–64, 77–79).

Such experiences point to the power undercurrents that mark media–source relations (Ericson et al., 1989: 378). While organisational affiliation determines a source’s power (Hänggli, 2012: 303), research shows that the media often have the “upper hand” (Ericson et al., 1989: 378) even though elite sources guard, censor and filter knowledge (Ericson et al., 1989: 379–380, 383; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Such dynamics result in “multi-level interplays” between claims-makers and influence how child abuse is portrayed (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 824).

4. Framing as part of the journalist–source interplay

“Framing” in media research has been described as a “research programme” due to different disciplinary approaches to it (D’Angelo, 2002). It is discussed in depth in chapter 2, but suffice to say here that a frame is an organising principle or idea that is used to keep certain information in or out (Reese, 2007: 150; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3). Therefore the process of framing is often defined as one of selecting and highlighting (making salient) particular aspects about a topic (Entman, 2007: 52).

Studies show that journalists already had story frames in mind when they approached sources (Wien, 2014: 440; Albæk, 2011: 141) and that sources were expected to provide input to fit the frame (Albæk, 2011: 343; Kunelius, 2006: 677). However, expert sources can actively help journalists develop frames to interpret news events, even if the latter had predetermined frames in mind (Albæk, 2011, 343–344).

Experts are mainly called on to evaluate specific problems and possible solutions (Albæk, 2011: 345). Such evaluative information sought from experts is one way of selecting and making salient certain aspects about the issue in order to “define problems ; diagnose causes ...; make moral judgments ...; and suggest remedies”, which is Entman’s (1993: 52) much-cited (Ettema, 2012: 297; Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 264) definition of framing. Experts therefore can play a central role in how a topic is framed.

5. Problem statement

Child abuse is a serious social problem in South Africa. Like elsewhere in the world, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of child abuse that goes beyond the shock and horror, sensationalist, bizarre and episodic media treatment of the topic. This is important because of the media's role in educating the public, but more so because media discourses can influence policy decisions. There are consequences to treating social problems like child abuse in an episodic way: a dominant focus on bizarre and sensational cases ignores the more common, invisible forms of abuse and perpetuates stereotypes and myths. Such approaches can skew public opinion on the nature of the problem, and misinform policy and programme responses. On what basis experts are selected and in what ways they are expected to contribute to news on child abuse can affect how the problem is explained and addressed. In turn, how expert sources view their role, responsibility and willingness to contribute to media debates can give insight on their place in the media framing of child abuse.

The study aims to describe how the social problem of child abuse is framed in hard news reports in selected South African newspapers over a three-month period, with a special focus on the role of experts. The framing analysis will contribute to an understanding of news discourses on child abuse in the selected newspapers. In an effort to understand journalist–source dynamics within the processes of news construction and claims-maker activities, the study will describe the factors that influenced journalists' selection and use of expert sources in child abuse news, and will document such expert sources' experiences with and strategies towards the news media.

5.1 Theoretical foundations

Constructionist theory as it relates to the mass media, with a particular focus on the concept of “framing” as a manner of contributing to discourses, is the theoretical point of departure. Interpretative social constructionism, which is guiding this study, is used in social problem studies and regards social actors' “interpretative claimsmaking” as important in defining social issues (Harris, 2008: 233). The approach focuses on how claims-makers select, classify and narrate an issue (Harris, 2008: 242).

Framing, as understood within the constructivist paradigm, involves a “complex interplay among ... elites, ... journalists, news organizations, professional norms and

practices, and ... culture or ideology” (Shah et al., 2009: 86). Thus, media frames are “a collective struggle over meaning” (Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, 2011: 111) and news frames the “imprint of power” (Entman, 1993: 55). The language of the news frames events and foregrounds who and what is important (Conboy, 2007: 35) and news in this way contributes to public discourses (Conboy, 2007: 5).

The study draws on a conceptual framework, developed by Pan and Kosicki (1993), which proposes to use framing analysis as an approach to analysing news discourse about public policy issues. It treats framing as “a characteristic of the discourse itself” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57). In application, the study undertakes a child abuse news framing analysis that is guided by Entman’s (1993) framing elements. The results are expected to illustrate discourses on child abuse in selected South African newspapers.

5.2 Research questions

Content analysis:

RQ1: How is child abuse framed in the news sample?

RQ2: What discourses emerge on child abuse?

Source focused:

RQ3: What are child abuse experts’ experiences of news co-construction?

RQ4: How do they view their role, and what media strategies do they use?

RQ5: What factors (personal, professional, organisational or other) influence their media engagement?

Media focused:

RQ6: What are South African daily newspaper journalists’ understanding of and approaches to the use of experts in child abuse news?

RQ7: What factors (individual, professional, organisational or other) influence the use of these sources?

5.3 Design and methodology

The study used qualitative methodology associated with social constructionism, in particular discourse analysis, which is an umbrella term for many different theoretical approaches (Nikander, 2008: 413; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 4) that are used to probe “how language constructs phenomena” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 6).

Two methods were used: Content analysis to identify “popular discourses” (Macnamara, 2005: 6); in this study newspaper articles were analysed for frames that collectively point to child abuse discourses. Semi-structured interviews, associated with ethnography, provided detailed descriptions of a group’s perspectives and practices (Mouton, 2001: 148).

“[D]iscourse and frame work together to suggest a taken-for-granted perspective for how one might approach a problem” (Altheide, 1996: 11). In so doing, interpretation of the problem, its cause, and solution is required. Using Entman’s elements of framing, discourses on child abuse will be explored. Sources’ framing of child abuse will present “local meanings”, which is a way in which discourse analysis identifies a “community’s knowledge and beliefs about society” (van Dijk, in Meyers, 2004: 101).

Semi-structured interviews can guide the conversation around research questions (Morse, 2012: 197) while allowing “to move in unanticipated directions” (Du Plooy: 2009: 198). Interviewing those in position to influence the discursive fields is central to media–source studies, as is content analysis (Schlesinger, 1993: 72).

5.4 Sample

A purposive sample is guided by the research aims and knowledge of the population (Babbie & Mouton, 2012: 166), and by the qualities of the informant (Tongco, 2007: 147).

The content analysis used hard news reports from the most-read mainstream daily newspapers owned by different media companies, restricting them to English titles as it is the language of the elite public sphere in South Africa. The motivations for this approach to sample selection are outlined in chapter 4.

For the interviews, informants were journalists who authored selected child abuse reports, and child abuse experts quoted in these, who were identified according to the CIN normative theory of expertise described above.

5.5 Data gathering

Newspaper items were gathered via Library PressDisplay, an online portal that includes 16 local daily mainstream newspapers (NewspaperDirect Inc., 2015). As news reports do not necessarily spell out cases of child abuse in terms such as “child abuse”, “child maltreatment” or “child neglect”, manual searches were used to identify the sample.

The selected journalists and experts were approached for a one-hour interview each; these were transcribed to eliminate using only selectively-captured interview points in the analysis (Atkinson, in Nikander, 2008: 423).

5.6 Data analysis

As is discursive research practice, analysis was guided by the research questions (Nikander, 2008: 418):

RQ1 answered through content analysis by using Entman’s elements of framing to illustrate how different sources, and the overall article, frame child abuse by means of framing devices (see chapter 4) such as headlines, introductions, conclusions, quotes and metaphors. RQ2 by analysing how the emerging frames contribute to discourse on child abuse.

The interview data were analysed for emerging themes within the research question areas: RQ3, RQ4 and RQ5 explained by interviews with the selected child abuse experts, and RQ6 and RQ7 were informed by interviews with journalists from the selected newspapers.

6. Thesis outline

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The current chapter presented an overview of the research area in which this study is located, outlined the problem statement and

rationale for the research, the research aims and significance, research questions, and design and methodology.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework, social constructionism, in which the study is located. Theoretical approaches to media framing within this paradigm are addressed, as well as approaches to framing analysis that aim to contribute to discourse research. The roles of framing and discourses in social problem claims-making are highlighted, and the CIN theory, which informs the definition of experts in this study, is explained.

Chapter 3 presents the main characteristics of child abuse reporting, its framing and related media discourses from a review of international and local literature. It reflects on the role of culture and cultural themes in media discourses on child abuse, and these are discussed in relation to framing by experts and other elite sources. Media-specific factors that influence news construction and which can explain the news representation of child abuse, including the role of elite sources, are discussed.

Chapter 4 explains the research design - it starts with a discussion on qualitative research methodologies, motivates for the chosen research methods, and outlines the research sample, data collection and analysis. Strengths of, limitations to, and challenges for the study are discussed.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings of the content and interview analyses respectively. Chapter 7 in conclusion discusses the findings in relation to the research questions, theory and literature; highlights gaps and further questions; reflects on the larger significance of the results; and makes recommendations for media and source engagements.

CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical framework

1. Social constructionism

Social constructionism, a theoretical approach that is used across disciplines, views everyday realities as being constructed through social interaction, especially language and symbolism (Holstein, Gubrium, Denzin, & Lincoln, 2012: 253; O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005: 59). Constructionism treats human relationships as centre to the meaning-making of reality, and is different from constructivism, which views meaning-making as a product of the individual mind rather than social relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2007: 816). Constructionism regards the world and meanings attached to it as a mediated and negotiated space in which language is central to its construction (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 92; Toynbee, 2006: 158).

Certain codes and conventions are used in the meaning-making of reality through relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2007: 818; Toynbee & Gillespie, 2006: 190). More so, it is believed that the social power that individuals have (or not have) are closely tied to their ability to influence interpretations of social reality (Miller, 2008: 269). Such interpretations are called “discourses”, which are ways of “signifying experience from a particular perspective” (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2012: 148). Discourses not only sustain social relationships but also position individuals or groups socially (Manning, 2001: 21).

Social constructionism has developed out of different research streams and disciplines (Gergen & Gergen, 2007: 816; Manning, 2001: 21), but there are some common principles that unite approaches within the paradigm. These are described by Burr (in Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5) as: taking a critical approach to “reality” as being a product of discourses; that such views of the social world are informed by historical and cultural backgrounds and experiences; that reality is constructed by an interface between knowledge and social interaction; and that the resultant beliefs about reality have social consequences. Social constructionist enquiry, therefore, is “moral, ethical, critical, and political” (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 92).

In conveying their versions of reality, individuals or groups select certain features of the world, and use certain vocabularies and concepts to describe these (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005: 60–61; Manning, 2001: 20). Language thus mediates

claims about the world and reality (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 87), including media depictions. As such, news creates public discourses through its particular language and stories told (Conboy, 2007: 5). Both the consequences of the construction of a certain version of reality as well as the social processes that inform the construction are of interest to constructionist researchers (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 86).

One consequence is that meanings and actions are enabled or constrained by how views of the world are constructed (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 92). Social processes are informed by both individuals' own agency and meaning-making as well as "socio-cultural-historical contexts" (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 98). Social constructionism also acknowledges the influence, role and meaning-making contributions of the researcher in the enquiry process (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 100; Matthes & Kohring: 2008: 258; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 21–22).

There are many approaches within this paradigm, and it is important to indicate what particular stream is used in a study (Harris, 2008: 232). One approach, interpretative social constructionism, which is used in this study, focuses on how reality is constituted through social interaction (Holstein et al., 2012: 254). Studies within this particular theoretical framework aim to capture the "interplay between the everyday reality ... and the institutional conditions, resources, and related discourses" that mediate social interaction (Holstein et al., 2012: 264). It regards views of the "truth" about reality as depending on people's agendas and orientations, and the meaning-making process as reliant on various resources, and as constrained by social and other factors (Harris, 2008: 233).

The goal of this study is to establish how the framing of child abuse in selected South African newspapers is contributing to discourses on the topic. The study also aims to, through interviews with journalists and expert sources, understand the factors that influence their construction of the news reports. As such, the study is guided by the interpretative social constructionist approach which aims to document the "process of selecting, classifying, and narrating elements of experience" in the construction of reality (Harris, 2008: 242).

2. Framing in constructionism

Journalists' reporting on the news, as viewed within this paradigm, is a manner of social construction. The language of the news contributes to setting the context, and contributes to the framing, classification and representation of people, issues and events (Conboy, 2007: 35; Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 70). Journalists have the task of giving meaning to stories about an issue or event and this process is generally regarded as framing in the communication field (Shah et al., 2009: 86).

There are different theoretical approaches to the media's framing of news; these are set out by D'Angelo (2002: 876–878) as follows: The cognitive paradigm regards as supreme journalists' and media audiences' meaning-making processes by drawing on their own knowledge of a topic. A critical approach views the values of political and economic elites as determining influences on what information to include in news. The constructionist approach to framing regards news sources as significant in the interpretation and packaging of news events.

This study approaches news framing (and thus the media's construction of reality) as a product of news sources' involvement in news interpretation, and will utilise interpretative social constructionism to describe the interaction between journalists and expert sources in the news construction process.

2.1 Definitions

Framing, alongside agenda-setting, is part of a research stream that considers how news can affect audiences by means of selecting certain stories or highlighting certain aspects of news stories (Shah et al., 2009: 83; Reese, 2007: 148). Framing is thus viewed as an “active process of creating, selecting, and shaping” (Matthes, 2012: 251) news story structures. The term “frame” is used loosely at times (McQuail, 2010: 380), and a variety of definitions and operational understandings of frames, and framing, abound (Carter, 2013: 1; Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, 2011: 104–105; Matthes, 2009: 349; Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 160, 162).

Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen (2011: 105), however, have extracted some commonalities in the understanding of news frames from different framing studies: that multiple and possible contradictory frames exist socially; they are a “struggle for

meaning” between groupings with different levels of resources; and they are the product of social and routine media processes.

In the framing process, certain features or aspects about the topic are made more prominent. This process of making salient plays an important role in the media’s construction of reality (Carter, 2013: 1). Selection and accentuation are what news presentation is about (De Beer & Botha, 2008: 240), although the salience given to certain aspects in news stories make them “framed apart from their whole” (Carter, 2013: 7).

In the salience-making process, certain attributes of the topic are selected to foreground (De Beer & Botha, 2008: 239; McCombs & Estrada, 1997: 246). Therefore, selection – alongside salience – is a key feature of framing.

Definitions for “frame” describe it – among others – as an “ideological structure” (Gitlin, in Winnett, 1997: 420) and a conceptual tool (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992: 60), or – in the context of sources – as “strategic issue positions” (Matthes, 2012: 253). Such general definitions do not, however, set out how to operationalise the understanding of a frame, according to Matthes (2009: 350).

2.2 Operationalising a definition

Research that aims to identify news frames need criteria for how frames are to be detected, and need to explain the frame elements to enable their identification (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 259–63). Entman (1993) has proposed a definition which identifies elements of a frame (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 264) and this definition is regarded by some, such as Ettema (2012: 297), as the “default” definition of framing in journalism research. A review (Matthes, 2009: 354) of framing studies showed it was the most influential definition in sampled peer-review journals.

Entman (1993: 52) proposes that elements of a frame are: a *problem* definition, a diagnosis of the *causes* of the problem, a *moral judgement* of the causal agents, and suggested *remedies*. These elements resonate with the “social problem schema” which entails problem, cause, responsible agent and proposed solution (Ettema, 2012: 297).

Entman's definition gives "precise operational guidelines" (Matthes, 2009: 350) that will help guide what exactly is measured (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 275) and add to the validity and reliability of framing research.

2.3 The framing role of sources, journalists and the media organisation

It is a journalistic norm to include multiple voices in news articles for the sake of objectivity and balance. It is therefore theoretically fair to expect several frames – that is, issue interpretations (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 276) – in public affairs news; hence the observation of frame competition in news (Matthes, 2012: 252).

An overall frame can be the outcome of "negotiation" (Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013: 439) or a "dialogic process" (Lowney, 2008: 339) between the media and news sources. In the process of framing an issue, journalists, sources – and ultimately audiences – all partake in the making of news discourse (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57).

The constructionist approach to framing pays attention to organisational factors and professional conventions that impact on sources' access to the media. It considers the organisational and journalistic practices as critical in determining journalists' "attitudes and behaviours" (Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, 2011: 111).

2.4 The use of framing devices

Some scholars describe frames as "themes" in news reports (McQuail, 2010: 380), and these themes are communicated with the use of framing devices (D'Angelo, 2002: 873). These are textual, visual, linguistic and narrative cues which indicate the presence of news frames (Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, 2011: 106; McQuail, 2010: 381; D'Angelo, 2002: 881).

Pan and Kosicki (1993), in presenting a conceptual framework for framing analysis as a manner of determining news discourse, propose that the description of a frame as a "central organizing idea" (as put forward by Gamson & Modigliani [1989: 3] and Tankard et al [in Reese, 2001: 10], amongst others) is the same as a theme (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 58–59). They elaborate that a theme is "intrinsically related to meaning" because it brings together different semantic elements to tell a story, and that a theme with such "signifying elements" steer the audience's attention – thus acting as a frame

(Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 59). Signifying elements, they explain, are “structurally located lexical choices of codes constructed by following certain shared rules and conventions” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 59). These rules and conventions are determined by the broader culture and journalistic norms, routines and processes (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 62–63).

There are certain functional relations between signifying elements and the meaning of a story. These elements, Pan & Kosicki (1993: 60–62) propose, act as framing devices in news discourse, and include the story heading, the introduction, conclusion, source quotes, metaphors, catchphrases, depictions and visual images. They suggest that these, grouped in four structure categories of framing devices, realise news discourse (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 62).

The application of framing devices in this study in the above context is discussed in detail in chapter 4.

2.5 Framing in discourse

Media discourse is labelled as “interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue”, with each package structured around a “central organizing idea, or *frame*” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3) (emphasis in original). Such packages are informed by cultural meanings, news sources, journalistic norms, practices, rituals and journalists’ approaches to news (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3). Considering the framing processes of selection and salience, one can therefore argue that frames “bracket or mark off” (Altheide, 1996: 11) specific information about an issue, while they collectively act as “parameters of relevant meaning”, which is how discourse is explained by Altheide (1996: 11). Discourse is also described as an action of constructing versions of the world (Potter & Hepburn, 2008: 275).

Framing analysis, according to Pan & Kosicki (1993: 70), can therefore be used as an approach to foreground news discourses within a constructionist framework of news production. Framing analysis, by examining “how [people] think and talk” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 70) can indicate ideologies and the reproduction of social hierarchies, which is closely associated with discourse (Meyers, 2004: 100–101). With language being central in discourses, text is regarded a “material manifestation of discourse” (Chalaby, in Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 3). News texts (images as well as written and spoken texts) are therefore manifestations of news discourse, which is informed by a

shared culture and beliefs about society (Kosicki, in Carter, 2013: 3; Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57).

3. Social problem framing and discourse

How a social problem like child abuse is constructed and communicated impacts on how it will be perceived publicly. This involves a process of identifying, legitimising, mobilising and planning for action, called the “social problem process” (Fritz & Altheide, 1987: 474). Framing is used in this process by social problem claims-makers to convince others of their interpretation of social reality (Lowney, 2008: 341). However, claims-makers bring their own interpretations and agendas to such a process, and the result is “competing packages” of discourse that contest to influence social policy (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 2).

News discourse is influential in public policy-making and often presents problem causes and possible solutions (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 64). Social problem theory identifies such elements of news discourse in diagnostic frames, which – by using “facts and figures” – describes the social problem, its severity and causes (Lowney, 2008: 332). Social problem theory also outlines the need for a prognostic frame to accompany the problem diagnosis by suggesting ways to remedy the problem (Lowney, 2008: 333). Together, these social problem frames align closely with Entman’s definition of a frame as identifying a problem, explaining its causes, and proposing a remedy.

Media framing analysis can help determine how much consensus exist on a social problem like child abuse (Cheit et al., 2010: 100) amongst claims-makers. Experts are one group who are frequently called on to explain social problems (Lowney, 2008: 334), and their knowledge claims within a bigger pool of descriptions of the problem can be viewed as being in a “struggle between different discourses which represent different ways of understanding aspects of the world” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 2).

As was illustrated in chapter 1, media researchers use different definitions for “expert”. The next section discusses a particular theoretical framework that has been proposed for use in research to define experts.

4. Theorising expertise

Individuals do not acquire knowledge on their own; instead it is a process in which communication and relationships are central (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 91). In the today's knowledge societies, expert knowledge is viewed as a means of controlling problem definitions and "possible social action" (Stehr, 1994: 166, 168), although such power depends on the quality of knowledge claims that are in competition; in other words, how persuasive one body of knowledge is over another (Stehr, 1994: 170). This form of power is not repressive but rather transformative in nature through cognitive or theoretical interpretation of real-world issues (Stehr, 1994: 169).

A challenge for media researchers is how to define an expert, and studies on the use of experts in the news regularly omit a clear definition or do not explain on what grounds they identify certain sources as experts (Boyce, 2006: 891). Chapter 1 also illustrated that different elite groupings are referred to as experts in media studies.

The word "expert" came into use only in the mid-1800s when living standards reached a certain level that allowed the emergence of a new social class who sold advice and specialised services instead of goods (Haskell, in Stehr, 1994: 165). Since then there has been an increasing reliance on experts by virtue of trusting and believing in their claims to specialist knowledge (Stehr, 1994: 165), as well as a broader understanding (scientifically and publicly) of whom to call an expert (Albæk et al., 2003: 940).

There are many ways of classifying expertise. It is often linked to institutions of knowledge (Stehr, 1994: 170), resulting in a "hierarchy of credibility" which makes certain sources default experts by virtue of their place in the institution (Ericson et al., 1989: 396). A different approach to defining experts, as was done by Turner (in Collins & Evans, 2002: 252), is to classify individuals according to how they came to be accepted as experts by virtue of the knowledge they provide to particular "consumer" groups (for example, the therapist). At other times, experts are identified by their social status, or if they have access to information, or by types of information they hold, which does not necessarily equate expertise (Boyce, 2006: 894). Therefore, one consideration when classifying an expert is that of "competence within expertise" (Collins & Evans, 2002: 288).

In today's "age of the expert" (Collins & Evans, 2002: 250), it is necessary to be able to determine "where the limits" of expertise are (Collins & Evans, 2002: 237). An articulate definition of expertise will help media studies to differentiate between expert sources and other sources (Boyce, 2006: 894), and help to explain why their knowledge should be respected, trusted and believed as expertise (Stehr, 1994: 202).

Collins & Evans (2002) put forward a theoretical framework for defining expertise by drawing on sociologists' categorisation of expertise when selecting fieldworkers with the relevant level of knowledge to interact with research participants (Collins & Evans, 2002: 254). In considering an expanded understanding of expertise befitting the age of the expert, their normative theory of expertise identifies three groupings.

First are *contributory experts*, who, together with a small core of experts in the traditional sense – the scientists or theorists (Collins & Evans, 2002: 242) – have enough expertise to contribute to a specific field (Collins & Evans, 2002: 252, 254).

Second are *interactional experts*, who hold enough expertise about the science (or topic) to be able to interact in an informed manner with contributory experts (Collins & Evans, 2002: 254), and who can translate the topic easily for others (Collins & Evans, 2002: 258). Both contributory and interactional experts are viewed as those whose knowledge of the topic is kept up to date by engaging with the academic literature, colleagues and specialist media (Collins & Evans, 2002: 246).

The last group are those with *no expertise* to engage with or contribute to the field (Collins & Evans, 2002: 254) – the only way they could evolve to the level of interactional expertise is by building a knowledge base from technical literature and interaction with contributory experts (Boyce, 2006: 895).

These three categories – "contributory", "interactional" and "none" (CIN) – make up the CIN normative theory of expertise, which has been recommended for use by the media as well as researchers as a measure to identify expertise based on experience rather than trust, which is a common mistake made by journalists (Boyce, 2006: 894–895). Using a definition of expertise that has specific categories will also "provide a more coherent and consistent method of assessing and understanding expertise" (Boyce, 2006: 889).

This study will make use of the CIN normative theory of expertise to identify expert sources who were quoted in the research sample of newspaper articles.

5. Conclusion

Social constructionism, in particularly interpretative social constructionism, pays attention to how topics are viewed or described. Interpretations of social reality through descriptions – in language and symbolism – are called discourses. In such interpretations, certain features are selected and highlighted. This process is called framing, and is used by journalists and sources when they give meaning to an issue in the news.

Constructionism views news sources as significant in the framing process and focuses on media factors that impact on sources' access. While there are many definitions for framing, few have elements that can be operationalised to help understand what is measured. Entman's definition has specific components that can be used in media research, and these resonate with the social problem schema.

Frames bring together different semantic elements to tell a story, and these act as framing devices in news discourse. Elements of framing devices include the story heading, the introduction, conclusion, source quotes, metaphors, catchphrases, depictions and visual images. Frames collectively translate into discourse, but discourses are in constant competition because of the presence of multiple frames. The social problem process involves ongoing competition between different groupings with competing discourses. The diagnostic and prognostic frames that are used in the social problem process collectively resonate closely with Entman's definition of a frame.

Experts are frequently called on by the media to explain social problems and therefore contribute to news discourses. The use of a definition of expertise that has specific categories provides a consistent method of assessing expertise in media research.

CHAPTER 3: Literature review

1. Introduction

Violations against children – whether physical, mental, or emotional – have been perpetrated for centuries. The Victorians referred to it as cruelty to children, and the focus of altruists on this social problem during the late 1800s led to the establishment of the “first formal organisation dedicated to fighting cruelty to children ... the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children” (Hacking, 1999: 134).

But, the violations against children which concerned the Victorians were not understood as exactly the same acts that today are referred to as child abuse. In other words, society’s current understanding of “child abuse” has shifted. This is because public discourses continue to develop over time (Gamson, 1992: 25), and the construction of the public’s understanding of what constitutes child abuse – through discourses by experts, the news media and other claims-makers – is a case in point.

The term “child abuse” was not a common concept in the public sphere before the 1960s (Hacking, 1991: 257). It emerged post-1961, in the United States (US), after research findings on a new phenomenon – “battered child syndrome” were presented to the American Academy of Paediatricians (APA). When the APA issued a press statement on this “new” syndrome, a flurry of media coverage ensued, and it was during this time that the term “child abuse” began to appear in headlines (Hacking, 1991: 267).

The research, the involvement of a respected academic institution, and the mass media’s outcry about this “new scourge” (Hacking, 1999: 136) resulted in increased and continued attention on harm to children, and in this way, public understanding of – and discourses on – child abuse developed. Child abuse, therefore, was “one of the earliest socio-political causes in the 1960s” (Hacking, 1999: 134), and the media’s emotionally-charged accounts of violations to children contributed to the rise of a “movement” to address it (Johnson, in Fritz & Altheide, 1987: 498).

While no grouping contests the reality of child abuse, its framing and resultant discourses have been receiving a good amount of debate and contestation (Beckett, 1996: 57). This chapter restricts the discussion to literature on the news media’s contribution to child abuse framing and discourses. But, child abuse experts who speak

through the media come with their own frames and discourses (Malon, 2009: 75); therefore, in paying attention to media discourses on this topic, one cannot ignore news sources' discursive contributions.

The chapter starts with an overview of international and local literature on child abuse news reporting, framing and discourses. It discusses these in relation to the main characteristics of child abuse framing and discourses, followed by a section on the role of culture and cultural themes in child abuse media discourses, and these are linked to framing by experts and other elites. The chapter concludes with a focus on news production norms and factors that can explain the media's representation of child abuse, including the role of elite sources.

2. Child abuse news coverage

The studies discussed in this section all dealt with media portrayal of child abuse, with two exceptions – Altheide's (2002) study on media discourse of fear, which included related discourses on children, and a journal article (Victor, 1998) which applied a theory on the social construction of deviant behaviour to the case of child ritual abuse, including the media's role.

Twenty-three studies were reviewed, and their findings are discussed in relation to: the main characteristics of child abuse news; discourses of fear; discourses of deviance and medicalisation; and discourses of blame. These characteristics and discourse themes were identified by using a synthesis matrix as a tool for critical analysis of prior research (Sally, 2015).

2.1 Main characteristics

The main characteristics of child abuse news that emerged in the literature are presented according to how frequently they were mentioned in the studies' findings. These key features of the news media's approach to child abuse, when viewed together, indicate the types of information on child abuse that are selected and highlighted in news – in other words, how the media examined in these studies have framed the topic.

2.1.1 Sensationalism

The most-frequently-referred-to characteristic of child abuse reporting was that of sensationalism, including a focus on bizarreness, horror, scandal and conflict.

Child abuse can be described along a continuum, from the less visible, less dramatic cases of neglect and emotional abuse to severe physical assault, the worse which results in death or disability. However – like many other studies reviewed here – New Zealand (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 268) and Australian (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 826) newspapers were shown to report on only certain types of abuse, especially those which generate strong emotional reactions. In the US, reporting on shaken-baby syndrome over 10 years focused on unusual and sensational aspects of this type of abuse (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 41).

In India, the press showed a “clear preference” for child sexual abuse with “grave manifestations” (Taparia, 2014: 6). Horrific child murders were given disproportionate attention in Malaysian press while more common, albeit less visible, abuses reported to authorities were “largely absent” (Niner et al., 2013: 449–450). In South Africa, coverage of the 16 Days of No Violence Against Women and Children concentrated on “extremely negative stories” and child rape (Harries & Bird, 2005: 94).

The literature shows that child sexual abuse is much focused on, especially scandals involving clergy (Hove, Paek, Isaacson, & Cole, 2013: 105) or institutions such as schools and children’s homes (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 49; Lonne & Parton, 2014: 826).

In contrast, Durban-North newspaper coverage of child sexual abuse did not involve the bizarre and the reporting was thus not “unduly sensationalistic” (Corbella & Collings, 2007: 396). The Canadian media’s framing of child maltreatment surveillance data did not involve sensational treatment either and could be attributed to the sober, “drier” nature of statistical reporting (Tonmyr & Jack, 2010: 91).

How various types of abuse are presented has consequences for how this social problem is understood in the context of different countries. In the US, sexual abuse was covered more than all other types of abuse combined, implying that it was a bigger problem compared to neglect, which received little attention although it was the most

prevalent form of abuse (Hove et al., 2013: 103). Similarly, in Canada, sexual abuse – which data showed was least common – was disproportionately represented in the media (Tonmyr & Jack, 2010: 92).

On the other hand, in Malaysia, sexual abuse was found underrepresented in the news compared to recorded cases (Niner et al., 2013: 449), even though it was the “most common category” reported (Niner et al., 2013: 443). Importantly, most reports concentrated on sexual abuse by strangers, while most children actually knew their abusers (Niner et al., 2013: 449). Physical violence against children, too, was underreported (Niner et al., 2013: 449).

Similarly, in India, a much lower rate of reporting on the sexual abuse of boys was observed compared to the real incidences (Taparia, 2014: 6). Reporting on incest was “insignificant” compared to the high prevalence in that country (Taparia, 2014: 7). Much less of a focus on incest as a more common form of child sexual abuse was established in the US too, with news concentrating on bizarre cases involving strangers (Cheit et al., 2010: 115). Underreporting of child sexual abuse was also encountered in a South African study which found the extent of reporting was “negligible” (Corbella & Collings, 2007: 394) compared to the reported cases in the newspapers’ target areas.

2.1.2 Crime and offender focus

The media access news about child abuse predominantly through routine crime and court reporting (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 26–27). Thus the news presents this social problem mainly within a crime frame.

Child sexual abuse especially is overrepresented as a criminal matter in the news (Weatherred, 2015: 23; Lonne & Parton, 2014: 831; Mejia, Cheyne, & Dorfman, 2012: 474). Studies showed the media’s tendency to focus on child abuse cases largely as these made it passed criminal justice system “milestones” – arrest, start of the court case, conviction, and sentencing (Taparia, 2014: 6; Mejia et al., 2012: 480; Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 32–33). In South Africa, too, 16 Days of No Violence news addressed the apprehension of abusers (Harries & Bird, 2005: 95).

Such reporting narrowly focuses on single cases and explain the problem only from the view of criminal justice role-players (Mejia et al., 2012: 481). Indeed, news

sources associated with law and order were dominating child abuse news (Dorfman, Mejia, Gonzalez, & Cheyne, 2012: 3; Dorfman et al., 2012: 3; Mejia et al., 2012: 479; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 48; Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 274).

A consequence of this preference for criminal cases of abuse – or perhaps because of it – is a preoccupation with accused abusers, especially persons of social standing or authority (Hove et al., 2013: 105; Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 270). These tie in with the news value of prominence, but a focus on offenders divert attention from dealing with the topic more holistically (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 831) and providing details on the accused but little on victims could “inadvertently” result in a sympathetic representation of those on trial (Dorfman et al., 2012: 5). Attention on criminal cases also detracts from awareness of abuse types which do not result in criminal proceedings (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 273).

2.1.3 Episodic

The media’s tendency to focus on criminal and sensational cases means this social problem is depicted episodically. This is a finding that was reiterated in a literature review by Weatherred (2015) as well as other studies in the United Kingdom (UK) (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 47), Malaysia (Niner et al., 2013: 441), and India (Taparia, 2014: 6). In the US, Hove et al (2013: 99) found that episodic coverage of child abuse became the dominant frame in major national and urban newspapers over nine years, indicating a shift from thematic discussion.

The media’s emphasis on individual cases, put together in dramatic formats, presented events as “self-contained, isolated happenings” (Bennet, in Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992: 387). Crime incidents of abuse seemed to appear “in a vacuum” (Mejia et al., 2012: 480) with reports giving only case details (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 267).

Scholars point out that this focus on episodic, criminal and sensational abuse logically leaves coverage lacking the broader contexts in which such violations take place. Kitzinger & Skidmore (1995: 50) lament that – out of a sample of more than 1 600 press reports on child sexual abuse in the UK, “only a handful ... attempted to explore broad social, and explicitly political, theories about the underlying causes of sexual abuse, or how to prevent it”. Equally, in US media, “minimal attention” was paid

to the psychology behind sexual abuse, or policy solutions (Cheit et al., 2010: 107). In India, only a quarter of print media coverage addressed child sexual abuse generically (Taparia, 2014: 6). Child abandonment in South African newspapers reports hardly ever explained the problem with statistics, and coverage showed a lack of understanding the issue (Blackie, 2014: 49).

Significantly, however, is that Hove et al (2013: 105) observed an “opposite pattern” in their study which focused on episodic and thematic framing in major US newspapers. They concluded that child abuse as a general topic was “predominately framed thematically as a public problem that has societal causes and solutions” (Hove et al., 2013: 91). Of interest too is that, while various abuse types were treated thematically, physical and verbal abuse were more framed episodically (Hove et al., 2013: 99). In other words, reports on the physical and verbal abuse of children were not taking the discussion beyond episodic incidents of these very common forms of abuse by, for example, probing the causes, circumstances and attitudes behind such incidents.

2.1.4 Lack of addressing solutions

A literature review (Weatherred, 2015: 23) of 16 media studies of child sexual abuse highlighted that all the studies reported little attention on law and public policy, the public health aspect of such abuse, or prevention. Other studies also found the media paid little attention to prevention (Dorfman et al., 2012: 11; Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 34; Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 277). Research showed that coverage of child sexual abuse in the US discussed the individual’s responsibility to act after abuse took place (Dorfman et al., 2012: 11); other studies found no attention to the need for “organizational collaboration” (Tonmyr & Jack, 2010: 90) to tackle abuse; and that the media were reinforcing a view that “institutions and communities have no solutions to offer” (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 27).

Social norms and structural factors behind more common forms of abuse remained unaddressed due to episodic and crime framing (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 832), and reports lacked a focus on how people can get help (Cheit et al., 2010: 115). Social norms are the “social acceptance or tolerance” of child abuse which is passed on from generation to generation (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014: 29). Attention on horror and episodic cases can also lead to “simplistic or inappropriate solutions” (Niner et al.,

2013: 450) as the problem was described rather “superficial” (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 277).

The current study’s concern is with how child abuse news is framed by means of describing the problem, identifying the causes, making moral judgment, and proposing solutions. Several studies in the review paid attention to how causes of and solutions for abuse were described. I turn again to the analysis by Hove et al. (2013), of major US national and urban newspapers, which came to a significantly different conclusion than other literature: that, overall, child abuse news in their sample was framed thematically. This approach to news focuses on the broader context instead of only individual cases. When social problems were framed thematically, Iyengar (1997) found that media audiences tend to hold societal change agents such as government responsible but are inclined to blame individuals when the episodic frame is used. In the absence of contextualising the problem and possible solutions, episodic portrayal of social problems also leaves media audiences with a sense of disengagement and helplessness (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 83). The public and policy-makers’ understanding of the complexities of child abuse therefore can benefit from the thematic frame and resultant focus on societal solutions.

Hove et al. (2013: 99) found that most of the stories on different types of abuse explained the societal causes, except for reports on verbal abuse, which more often used the individual cause frame. Concomitantly, proposed solutions generally focused on societal solutions, except for verbal abuse. When looking at solutions over time, the picture changed, however, as there was “no consistent gain of the societal over the individual solution frame” (Hove et al., 2013: 101–102). Thus, while this study found that child abuse as a generic topic was discussed thematically, solutions put forward over time did not indicate a more concentrated effort to deal with societal solutions.

Mejia et al. (2012) also probed if solutions to child sexual abuse were addressed in routine newspaper coverage in the US. They found these in only 8% of reports, focusing on policy or legislative measures. Some articles (30%) mentioned possible solutions, but these mainly involved post-abuse interventions (Mejia et al., 2012: 477). Kitzinger & Skidmore (1995) also established a dominant focus on interventions if sexual abuse was suspected, while the “very little coverage” of prevention were in so-

called soft news formats – letters or features on the women’s page (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 48).

2.2 Child abuse discourses

The topics which the media focus on are indicators of the “assumptions, beliefs and systems of knowledge and ideologies of the discursive practice” (Sonderling, 1998: 167). This literature review encountered a range of discourses on child abuse in media coverage. These centred mainly on discourses of fear; discourses of deviance and medicalisation; and discourses of blame.

2.1 Discourses of fear

2.1.1 The child victim

Lonne & Parton (2014: 826) highlight that Australian newspapers “tap into public fear and anxiety about child abuse and its pervasiveness”. Their observation is supported by other scholars who have reflected on the “culturally salient image of the ‘child-victim’” (Best, in Beckett, 1996: 59) or, similarly, the “virtual catchphrase” of “children at risk” (Hacking, 1999: 135). In South Africa, press coverage of abandoned children not only portrayed the innocent victim, but elevated this status with representations of disposability, and as illustrative of the country’s high level of abuse (Blackie, 2014: 45–47).

Malon (2009: 77) proposes that the image of children as victims in waiting is used to “denounce” behaviours which are different from the norm. Such fear can be used for political purposes, as Sonderling’s study (1993) of the portrayal of child abuse in South Africa illustrates. By applying the theory on the construction of social problems, he showed how the profile of child sexual abuse was raised by the apartheid government to “counteract” (Sonderling, 1993: 17) media coverage on another (more political) form of child abuse – police detention of children. His analysis of mainstream newspapers and magazines over a 10-year period illustrates how the sexual abuse of (white) children was a “made for the media” (Sonderling, 1993: 13) topic which was promoted by the government as reports of (black) children in detention began to rise. He found that child sexual abuse was not high on the police’s agenda until child protection experts started lobbying about the problem. More or less at the same time,

the first of the police's Child Protection Units (CPUs) were set up, which also attracted media attention.

Sonderling illustrated that emerging discourses on child sexual abuse was aided by elite groups and individuals: a very visible, nationwide police campaign in which segments of the religious sector got involved once the police began speculating that satanism was behind this social problem (Sonderling, 1993: 11–12). Cases which made the headlines had all the right elements for the media: the bizarre (satanism), prominence (celebrities), sensation (pornography), horror (snuff porn movies) and fear (stranger danger).

2.1.2 Stranger danger

So-called “stranger danger” is one discourse of fear that is often detected in media coverage of child abuse. In India (Taparia, 2014: 7) and in South Africa (Collings, 2002b: 3) newspaper coverage perpetuated this myth by over-representing child sexual abuse which took place in public places, while data showed that such abuse happened more in children's own homes. The UK media's focus on child sexual abuse prevention outside of the home (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995: 47); US news magazines' interest in bizarre sexual abuse as opposed to more common instances of incest (Cheit et al., 2010: 115); “stranger danger” messaging in US newspapers (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 6); and over-representation of non-familial abuse in the Malaysian press (Niner et al., 2013: 438) all point to a media discourse of abuse by strangers, while most victims actually know their abusers (Richter & Dawes, 2008: 87).

A possible reason for the focus on outsiders as abusers, especially in relation to sexual abuse, is that it is less troubling and preserves societal solidarity against groupings viewed as different (Beckett, 1996: 73), and avoids dealing with society's “cultural, political and ethical systems” (Niner et al., 2013: 450). Alternatively, the focus on strangers or professionals working with children instead of abusive family members could be how the media preserve the family as an institution (Mendes, 2000: 28). Or, the focus on non-familial authority figures could be because abusive behaviour from upstanding members of society is surprising (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 270).

In contrast with these studies, Corbella & Collings (2007: 394) showed that Durban-North newspapers mostly reflected that offenders were known to victims. The

reports thus did not perpetuate the stranger-danger discourse, although cases involving strangers as abusers were lightly overrepresented compared to police data (Corbella & Collings, 2007: 394).

Stranger-danger discourses on crimes against children, like “ritual child abuse”, Victor (1998: 548) points out, were mainly driven by interest groups like religious, feminist and child protection groups, and aided by the media. Such discourse results in what is termed a moral panic – a collective belief about a new perceived social threat from “moral deviants” (Victor, 1998: 543) who are often stereotyped or even imagined (Victor, 1998: 559). Moral panics – as was illustrated by Sonderling (1993) – are used by elites for economic or political purposes (Altheide, 2002: 247; Victor, 1998: 547). Importantly, sensationalism and fear “waves” in the media, such as moral panics, can result in the public taking little note of legislation aimed at preventing social problems (Janus, 2009: 151).

2.2 Discourses of deviance and medicalisation

Child abuse news is also characterised by a discourse of demonisation or vilification of individual abusers, parents, child protection professionals or their institutions. Hence simplistic, sensationalised and stereotypical depictions of abusers (as evil, mad, or inadequate) without attention to social causes of abuse (Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1993: 276, 279). Simplistic “good and evil” scenarios were present in Malaysian child abuse news (Niner et al., 2013: 450), and depictions of mothers who abandoned their babies resonated with South African media coverage which framed such mothers as irresponsible, immoral, mentally ill or as murderers and criminals (Blackie, 2014: 43). Such depictions risk framing the mother as the cause of this social problem without attention to the broader social context in which they acted to abandon their children.

Tellingly, abusers were depicted as “monsters” (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 826; Dorfman et al., 2012; Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 25; Aubrun & Grady, 2003: 3). In the Australian press, indigenous communities were (racially) stereotyped as dysfunctional, dangerous, and prone to abusing their children (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 826).

These depictions relate to discourses of deviance (acts of nonconformity and abnormality) and such descriptions of those who harm children serve as a metaphor for sickness (Victor, 1998: 551). In the context of society's reliance on medical solutions, views that child abusers are "ill" have led to a discourse of medicalisation (Hacking, 1999: 135) that is perpetuated by experts and other authorities – including the media – who seek medical explanations or solutions to "treat" child abuse (Hacking, 1999: 135; Victor, 1998: 551) or explain the pathology of individual parents (Niner et al., 2013: 450). South African press (via elite sources) depicted mothers who abandoned their babies as "ill" (Blackie, 2014: 49).

2.3 Discourses of blame

Further, child abuse news is characterised by a discourse of blame, either of care professionals under whose watch children were harmed (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 830; Kirkpatrick, 2004: 6), and/or parents who are judged for not keeping children safe from abusers (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 825; Sonderling, 1993: 16). In Malaysia, parent blame and moral judgement emerged through conservative government officials' reaction to child abuse cases (Niner et al., 2013: 445). Weatherred's (2015) literature review of media studies of child sexual abuse also found individual blame abundant.

Offender blame, however, was found mitigated in South African newspapers by stereotypical depictions of blame directed at the child or by positive representations of abusers (Collings, 2002: 3). The study points out that the media's focus on the sexual (rather than abusive) characteristics of such crimes serves to deny the exploitation of the child (Collings, 2002: 3).

3. Culture and cultural themes

The social and political cultures in which claims are made play an important role in how audiences receive them, and successful claims resonate with people's "understandings of cultural themes, which are beliefs about how the world should work" (Loseke, 2008: 63). Cultural themes thus frame issues for audiences in manners that resonate with them. As was discussed in chapter 2, framing can be viewed as a characteristic of discourses; hence the conclusion that cultural themes contribute to discourses. Discourses, in turn, are closely linked to ideology (Meyers, 2004: 100–101), which Philo (2007: 178) describes as an "interest-linked perspective".

Media coverage reflects popular culture and cultural values (Gamson, 1992: 24; Neuman et al., 1992: 72). Several studies indicated such entrenched cultural values, and these are often identifiable by what Gamson and Modigliani (1989: 2) refer to as “interpretative packages” that are constructed by framing devices such as metaphors, catchphrases, moral appeals and visual imagery that make up discourses.

The “discourse of child abuse”, according to Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck (1997: 273) is detected in “certain aspects” of media reporting that are the result of strategic communication by elite groups. In Malaysian newspapers, conservative discourses on child abuse emerged largely from government and religious leaders (Niner et al., 2013: 443, 451). How cultural values are reflected in the media was also evident in the little attention paid to physical abuse – a common occurrence especially in the practice of disciplining children – in countries culturally diverse as the US (Hove et al., 2013: 99) and Malaysia (Niner et al., 2013: 449). Similarly, the underreporting on incest or familial sexual abuse in India (Taparia, 2014: 7) and the US (Cheit et al., 2010: 115) illustrates how this topic remains taboo regardless of the social context.

Sociologist Katherine Beckett was the first to use framing theory in a longitudinal study of child sexual abuse (Weatherred, 2015: 25) with the aim to “identify the culturally available issue frames” that steer media discourses on this topic (Beckett, 1996: 60–61). The issue package of “collective denial” (Beckett, 1996: 61–62) that child sexual abuse takes place, which emerged from her analysis, could explain why the topic of incest features minimally in culturally diverse countries. The media’s framing of child sexual abuse also changed over time, and this was attributed mainly to “claimsmakers or sponsors of various packages, media practices, and cultural resonances” (Beckett, 1996: 71).

These assertions are of particular relevance for the current study of the role of experts in the framing of child abuse in South African newspapers. Experts’ privileged access to the media will contribute to news framing of the topic. How dominant their issue package/s are in the media will depend, however, on how regularly and for what purposes their views are accessed. More importantly, how their frames resonate with established cultural themes – and keep up with shifting themes (Beckett, 1996: 74) – will determine how much success they have in influencing dominant views and discourses on child abuse.

4. Framing, experts and other elites

Studies show that the media's use of experts varies largely according to the medium, format and context in which child abuse is discussed. News magazines quoted experts minimally (Cheit et al., 2010: 115), while legal and medical experts were "most common" (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 31) in US media when legal and conflict frames dominated coverage of contentious forms of abuse (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 33).

Various elite sources framed the topic differently, and with differential treatment by the media. In Malaysia, government sources received uncritical reporting and their commentary was framed in some instances as "maternal" (Niner et al., 2013: 443) while at other times condemning of (Muslim) mothers (Niner et al., 2013: 445). Religious leaders framed abuse as due to the lack of moral values, with punishment and strict religious morals put forward as solutions (Niner et al., 2013: 444). Academic and other "liberal progressives", however, framed child abuse thematically and with policy solutions (Niner et al., 2013: 442). Similarly, in South Africa, child protection experts in the media highlighted the broader context of structural violence which led to baby abandonment (Blackie, 2014: 44).

On the other hand, child advocates quoted often in routine US newspaper coverage did not raise prevention much but rather reacted passionately to "horrors" of cases (Mejia et al., 2012: 479). Similar sources, however, were found to explain prevention policies and the nature of child sexual abuse more generally (Dorfman et al., 2012: 11).

5. News production and child abuse

While studies show that elite source proactively have a hand in the media's framing of and discourses on social problems like child abuse (Victor, 1998), they are only one of many news construction influences. Two other dynamics are of consideration for the current study, as was set out in chapter 1. Firstly, the constructionist approach to framing regards journalists as viewing few sources as credible, and thus limit who gets to speak on topics (D'Angelo, 2002: 877). Secondly, the sociology of news construction is not only interested in sources' strategies and related power dynamics (Manning, 2001: 40), but also with news production routines, including media conventions, norms and practices (Cottle, 2000: 248–249).

Credibility, as was shown in a study (Ericson et al., 1989: 4) of elite news sources, is closely linked to a source's expertise but more so to the authority and institutional power that come with the individual, which explains media preference for such voices. This approach does limit who gets to speak on social problems, too (Schneider, 2012). Due to their position in the "hierarchy of credibility", experts are favoured by the media's goal to present topics objectively and balanced (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978: 58). However, balanced reporting – by presenting different views – leads to conflict frames (Hennink-Kaminski & Dougall, 2009: 41–42) and in the process "verification and depth" are lost (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Scammell, Karapu, & Nikora, 2008: 54).

The balance norm is aided by sources with varying opinions on the same topic who use the media to get their views across (Schlesinger & Tumbler, 1994), especially through well-packaged, ready-to-use material (what Gandy [1982: 61] called "information subsidies") which are welcomed in an era of dwindling news-gathering resources (Davis, 2002: 32–33).

As the literature review showed, the media favour child abuse of the sensational kind, meeting news values of human drama, horror, the bizarre, and crime. News values, as a primary factor in news selection, "are based on assumptions of the world" (Conboy, 2007: 36) and contribute – together with news production routines – to dominant ideas and media ideologies and practices (Hall et al, in Hesmondhalgh, 2006b: 64–65). News production factors such as deadlines, routine access to official (police) sources and routine (criminal justice) events were shown to contribute the construction of news on child sexual abuse (Strelitz & Riddle, 1992: 50). A result was that the police were key in the framing of such news because they were regarded as "primary definers" of the topic (Strelitz & Riddle, 1992: 53).

The dependence on official sources like the police, courts and child protection organisations in child abuse news could also be explained by the sensitivity, secrecy and confidentiality that surround especially sexual abuse, particularly when – as is often the case – it happens within the family (Strelitz & Riddle, 1992: 50). Long-term and continued engagement with "principle sources", Cottle (2000: 437) points out, results in journalists becoming "steadily immersed in the professional worldview" of these sources. As such, primary definers' framing of the problem "sets the limit" for

discussion (Hall et al., 1978: 59). It leads to the media echoing officials' explanations and constructs of events (Ericson et al., 1989: 8; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 8) and acts as a barrier to journalists seeking alternative sources (Hodgetts et al., 2008: 55). The demand for official sources are also likely to increase their power in media relations (Davis, 2002: 31–32).

Reliance on police sources as primary definers of child abuse has consequences, according to Lonne & Parton (2014: 831): it leads to an overt focus on criminal matters, which leaves the public uninformed about more common types of maltreatment – such as neglect – that do not make headlines often, and how these can be prevented through support to families under strain.

By interacting more with the media, experts could assist with a more comprehensive understanding of child abuse – they could as such contribute to “agenda-building” on the topic (Cottle, 2000: 437). Several studies in the review point to such an agenda-building value of experts' engagement with the media, as well as the benefits for the media in understanding the value of more holistic reporting on abuse. In particular, approaching child abuse as preventable – which resonates with the public health model – is encouraged by some scholars (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 834; Coleman & Thorson, 2002: 402; Kitlinger & Skidmore, 1995: 49).

6. Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of literature relevant to the current study on the framing of and discourses on child abuse, particularly the role of experts. It showed that the media – across northern and southern hemisphere countries – largely focus on certain types of abuse. These are predominantly single cases with sensational qualities. Sexual abuse receives the most attention, often through scandals involving prominent offenders or institutions, and is overrepresented compared to the real incidences in some countries, and underrepresented in others. Reports regularly focus on abuse by strangers whereas most child victims know their abuser. Cases are largely accessed through routine crime and court reporting, which results in a crime focus that tracks single cases through the criminal justice system. Thus, child abuse is mainly explained via criminal justice sources, and with a focus on the offender.

The preoccupation with sensational and criminal cases means little attention is paid to more common forms of abuse, especially those which take place in the family home or which do not lead to criminal prosecution. The dominant episodic framing leads to little attention on the broader contexts, underlying causes and proposed solutions. When solutions are addressed in the news, they deal with post-abuse interventions rather than prevention, and ignore the roles of communities or society more broadly.

Discourses on child abuse that emerged in this review were those of fear, deviance and blame. Fear discourses include presenting the child as a (potential) victim of abuse by strangers. The child-victim discourse is a culturally-salient image that is used successfully – with the media’s help – together with the stranger-danger discourse by elites for political and economic purposes.

The skewed focus on strangers is a less troubling topic for the media to deal with than familial abuse, thus preserving the family as an institution of safety. It also serves to denounce behaviour that is deviant. Discourses of deviance can be detected in the demonisation of abusers or vilification of parents, child care institutions or professionals. The stereotyping of abusers, parents or institutions as ill or inadequate is a result of the medicalisation of social problems like child abuse, which leads to a focus on treating or curing abusers, the abused, negligent parents or institutions of care. In the process, these are also subjected to discourses of blame.

The role and discourses of news sources such as claims-makers, experts or official sources were highlighted. These groups have privileged access to the media that are associated with their authority, institutional power and therefore perceived credibility, and they use cultural themes that resonate with the public. Their influence in child abuse framing is explained by news production factors such as deadlines, reporting conventions such as news values and the goal of balanced reporting, and a reliance on pre-scheduled events and routine sources who assist with information subsidies, especially officials in the criminal justice system. Such sources’ role as primary definers of child abuse however traps the media’s treatment of this social problem within a crime frame. Child abuse experts can assist in taking the media’s gaze beyond episodic cases to highlight the social context and possibilities offered by a prevention approach to abuse.

CHAPTER 4: Design and methodology

1. Introduction

This study, conducted within the social constructionist paradigm, views “truth and reality as socially constructed” (Hesmondhalgh, 2006a: 146). As was outlined in chapter 1, the purpose is to describe how child abuse is framed in selected South African daily mainstream newspapers, with a special focus on expert news sources, and to determine how the framing contributes to child abuse discourses. As the constructionist approach to framing views sources who are deemed credible by the media as key in the framing process (D’Angelo, 2002: 877), the study design factored in the need to approach the enquiry from “a range of perspectives” (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 97). It draws on what Holstein et al. (2012: 255) call “interpretative practice” which considers the procedures, conditions and resources that are used by individuals as well as determined by organisational factors in the construction of reality.

As is relevant in social construction research, the study links micro-level communication practices (specific language in written and spoken text) to the macro level by paying attention to the role of context – at an individual level (the roles of the journalists and sources in the construction of news) and the social, historical and cultural contexts (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 98).

The study has three components:

1. to establish the framing of, and related discourses on, child abuse in selected newspapers, with a special focus on the role of child abuse experts (RQs 1 and 2);
2. to explore experts’ experiences in the co-construction of news, their views and strategies in news-making, and factors that influence their media engagement (RQs 3, 4 and 5); and
3. to explore journalists’ understanding of and approaches to the use of child abuse experts in news construction, and factors that influence their use (RQs 6 and 7).

Using more than one method of data collection is a manner of triangulation, which can enhance the accuracy and confidence in the findings of qualitative studies (Du

Plooy, 2009: 133–134). The choice of a qualitative approach to this media–source study is based on the premise that “variables and vested interests involved make quantitative assessments impossible” in this kind of study (Davis, 2002: 31–32).

In the social constructionist approach, representations of the world are the “products of discourse” (Burr, in Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5). The investigation of discourses in a body of text, however, does not explain the factors that resulted in the discursive practices, which is why Maynard (in Holstein et al., 2012: 265) recommends combining discourse analysis with ethnographic studies. In their seminal study of journalist–source relations, Ericson et al. (1989) point out that an ethnographic research design (by means of participant observation) is most desired for this type of study as it “provides a means of documenting independently what people do, as opposed to what they say they do in interviews or organizational documents” (Ericson et al., 1989: 27). For this researcher, such a design was not possible due to limitations of time and other resources. Semi-structured interviews, however, are also used in ethnographic studies (Mouton, 2001: 148), and were thus the most practical manner of data collection for the second and third components of the study. Interviews are also more appropriate than observation when investigating attitudes (Titscher et al., 2012: 6), which the current study aimed to do.

As discussed in the remainder of the chapter, the study followed the following steps: Qualitative studies use “known literature to contextualise their readings of given texts” (Krippendorff, 2004: 87–88); therefore a literature review of studies on child abuse framing and discourses in the media; media framing; and the role of experts in news construction was necessary (presented in chapter 3). Based on these readings, the data collection instruments were developed. Data were collected via selected newspaper reports on child abuse, and through semi-structured interviews to provide detailed descriptions of the perspectives and practices (Mouton, 2001: 148) of the journalist authors of the selected reports as well as those of quoted experts sources.

Content analysis which made use of Entman's (1993) definition of a frame was used to describe the framing of child abuse in the sample, together with an analysis of framing devices in the reports. The emerging frames were discussed as contributors to discourses on child abuse. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to content analysis to answer the relevant research questions.

The last section in the chapter reflects on the strengths, limitations and challenges of the design and methodology.

2. Design and methodology

Qualitative content analysis is both a research design used in studies that analyse texts or documents (Mouton, 2001: 165) as well as a research technique to interpret small amounts of text via narratives that give new insight or increase knowledge about a topic (Krippendorff, 2004: 17–18). It involves the study of key elements in text – of relevance for this study are contextual factors such as the social standing of the sources quoted (Macnamara, 2005: 17). “Content” not only refers to words and meanings, but also images, symbols and themes (Mouton, 2001: 165). Context is critical in the interpretation of qualitative content analysis, especially paying attention to “relevant historical, cultural, political and/or economic contexts” (Brennen, 2013: 22). Researchers also use their own knowledge of the text in relation to the broader culture (Brennen, 2013: 206).

The study is both of a descriptive and interpretative type.

The framing analysis of selected newspaper reports on child abuse – as a manner of content analysis – was interpretative by applying Entman’s (1993: 52) elements of a frame (defining the *problem*, diagnosing the *cause* of the problem, making a *moral judgement* of the causal agent/s, and suggesting *remedies*). This approach resonates with interpretative social constructionism, which focuses on the “process of selecting, classifying, and narrating elements of experience” (Harris, 2008: 242) by claim-makers of social phenomena such as child abuse. Emerging frames from this analysis were interpreted as characteristics of discourses on child abuse because the sources’ framing presented “local meanings”, which is a way in which discourse analysis identifies a “community’s knowledge and beliefs about society” (van Dijk, in Meyers, 2004: 101). Of importance, however, is that such interpretative analysis is more limited in making generalisable claims than quantitative analysis (Hesmondhalgh, 2006a: 146).

On the other hand, the content analysis of the interviews was of the descriptive kind. Semi-structured interviews are a recommended method to use when the topic is known to the researcher and thus the “investigator knows the questions that need to be asked but not all the possible responses” (Morse, 2012: 195).

3. Sample

Qualitative analysis does not require a representative sample, but should be guided by the research question/s (Miles & Huberman, in Macnamara, 2005: 17–18), and discourse analysis “thrives” on a limited sample size (Olorunnisola, 2006: 173). It is important however to collect enough reports to illustrate the differences within its range (Altheide, 1996: 15–16).

The qualities of the informant (Tongco, 2007: 147), and the research aims and knowledge of the population (Babbie & Mouton, 2012: 166) guided the selection of interview participants, making it a purposive sample.

3.1 Content analysis

Despite the digital media technology revolution of the last decades, newspapers remain influential in setting news agendas (Lonne & Parton, 2014: 823) and discourses due to their mix of news, editorials and opinion pieces (Ericson et al., 1991: 183). Expert sources appear more in mainstream newspapers than in other media (Wien, 2014: 431; Vasterman & Ruigrok, 2013: 449; Soley, 1994: 93), and especially in hard news (Schneider, 2012: 81), which is defined as “items that report on or respond to specific events” (Schneider, 2012: 76).

For these reasons, the sample was made up of hard news reports from selected daily mainstream newspapers. Mainstream journalism is “largely defined in terms of its gravity and depth” (Froneman, in Wasserman, 2010: 63), and “proper”, rational news” (as opposed to popular [tabloid] news targeted at working-class readers) is associated with information, analysis, edutainment, public affairs, hard news, fact and issue coverage (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett, in Wasserman, 2010: 58).

These characteristics guided the selection of the daily newspaper sample, which was restricted to English as it is the language of the elite public sphere. Times Media Group (TMG), Caxton & CTP Publishers, and Independent Newspapers were identified as the dominating role-players in the mainstream English print media (Daniels, 2014: 2; Mtimde, 2014: 24). For sample diversity, and with the aim to assess the titles with the most reach, hard news reports from each publisher’s most-read daily mainstream newspaper were used.

The titles were, according to the *All Media and Products Survey* (AMPS) figures (South African Audience Research Foundation, 2014: 1): *The Citizen* (Caxton); *Sowetan* (TMG); and *The Star* (Independent Publishers).ⁱ

The Citizen is a daily national newspaper located in Gauteng, where the bulk of its readership is based. While published in tabloid size, it “carries quality content” across “editorial pillars” that includes news, business, opinion and features and reaches 437 000 readers, the majority of which are located in the top-income audience groups (*The Citizen*, 2015). Its average issue readership figure (for December 2014) stood at 391 00 (South African Audience Research Foundation, 2014).

The *Sowetan*, also Gauteng-based but distributed nationally, describes itself as “one of the most widely read dailies” and “advocate of political truth and national development” with 1 655 000 readers (Times Media Group, 2015). This “mainstream stalwart of black journalism” (Wasserman, 2008: 791) has had its roots in black consciousness during the apartheid years, but started targeted the “powerful black middle class” that emerged since 1994 (Caldwell, 2011: 873). It was now viewed as having lost “some of the essence” that connected it to its original Soweto reading community (Kupe, 2014: 32). Since the arrival of the *Daily Sun* tabloid, it has been introducing a “popular approach” to retain readers “but remained ‘at root ... factual’” (Berger, in Wasserman, 2010: 62).

Also in Gauteng, where most of its readers reside, *The Star* views itself as “the most influential daily newspaper” with 840 000 average number of readers (Independent Publishers, 2015). The AMPS lists its readership at 598 000 (South African Audience Research Foundation, 2014), still making it the most-read title of this publisher.

3.2 Interviews

Participants were journalist who authored child abuse reports in the sample, and quoted child abuse experts who were identified by using the CIN normative theory of expertise (Collins & Evans, 2002) described in chapter 2. These are experts who

ⁱ At the time of research design, the December 2014 figures were the latest. Since then, the June 2015 figures were released; however, the figures remained similar and these three titles from different publishing houses were still the most read.

contribute to the empirical evidence on child abuse (contributory experts), or individuals who have enough expertise about the topic of child abuse (interactional experts) to be able to engage in an informed manner with contributory experts.

The ideal was to recruit an equal number of journalists from all three newspapers, and to match their interviews up with experts quoted in their reports. The target was six interviews each with journalists and experts, and all interactions with prospective interviewees were documented meticulously as is best practice (Lillrank, 2012: 292).

4. Interview questionnaire development and pre-testing

The interview questions were guided by themes in the study's research questions. Appendix 1 outlines the research questions relating to journalists and expert sources respectively, together with the themes and key areas of exploration, the latter which served as initial categories for the data analysis. The first three themes relate to sources' interview experiences and expectations, the value of media engagement, and factors that influence their interaction with the media. The last two themes aimed to explore journalists' views of and approaches to the use of expert sources – generally as well as specifically in child abuse news – and the factors that influence their use of expert sources. The latter theme was explored with both groups through reconstruction interview questions, which “allow[s] systematic access to the usually confidential sphere in which sources and reporters exchange information” (Reich, 2006: 501).

The questions for semi-structured interviews cannot be changed once the data collection begins (Morse, 2012: 197); hence the questions were pre-tested in a series of limited pilot-study projects (Smith, 2015a; Smith, 2015b). These dealt with different topics (tabloid journalists' approaches to and uses of sources; and experts' framing role in news on violence against children) but the purpose of enquiry – the interaction between journalists and their sources – was the same. The interview experiences were documented and modifications made to the interview schedules for use in the current study.

The interview schedules are included as appendices 2 and 3.

5. Data collection

Library PressDisplay, an online portal (NewspaperDirect Inc., 2015) that hosts digital versions of the original (paper) format of the three selected newspapers was used to gather the sample. Manual searches, which were aided by this researcher's knowledgeⁱⁱ of the topic, were necessary because electronic search terms like "child abuse", "child maltreatment" or "child neglect" would not have picked up all relevant articles because abuse is not always described in such specific terms in reporting.

A broad definition of child abuse as all acts that harm a child's health, survival, development or dignity (World Health Organisation, 2014) guided selection, as did the South African Constitution's definition of a child as a person younger than 18 years. The sample excluded reports that mentioned child abuse in the passing, and foreign news items. Articles on child-on-child violence were also excluded as these did not form part of the literature review.

The articles were collected for the three-month period April to June 2015. This period coincided with the annual Child Protection Week/Month in South Africa which provided for more continued reporting on the topic. This period therefore included a "critical discourse moment" during which "efforts at framing issues are especially likely to appear" (Gamson, 1992: 26). Journalist authors and quoted experts were approached for interviews soon after publication to ensure the best possible recall of their interaction. A one-hour interview either in person, over the telephone or via online video-calling was requested first by calling them to make personal contact and explain the study, and followed by a formal written request via e-mail, with the news report in question attached. Once a participant agreed, a "consent to participate" letter was emailed and explained with a request to return the signed form if the participant was comfortable with the terms.

Interviews were transcribed to avoid using only selectively-captured interview points in the analysis (Atkinson, in Nikander, 2008: 423).

ⁱⁱ The author is qualified and former journalist and since 2003 the communication manager of a university-based child rights research unit where she served as a co-editor in 2014 for a publication on violence against children.

6. Data preparation and analysis

Prior to data preparation, both sets of data were read several times as it was recommended to first get immersed in the content (Elo & Kyngas, 2008: 109; Nikander, 2008: 418; Altheide, 1996: 23). Thereafter the data were prepared for analysis as follows.

6.1 News reports

The hard news sample was firstly categorised for those reports which referred to, or quoted, a child abuse expert (defined by the CIN theory) and those which did not.

6.1.1 News reports referring to experts (sample A)

This part of the sample was prepared for data analysis through three levels of coding:

1. **Basic details and treatment of experts' input:** In a spreadsheet, the basic details of each article (title, author, publication, date, page number, name, job title and organisation of expert) were captured. The context in which the expert was quoted, the length of quote, and other sources used (to assess the prominence of the expert in the article) were noted. Aggregating by source helped the researcher determine which articles engaged sufficiently with an expert's view to warrant an interview request.
2. **Entman's frame elements:** In a spreadsheet, it was coded how the problem, causes, possible moral judgements and proposed remedies for child abuse were outlined in each article, as described by different sources. This level of coding aimed to enable analysis of the different sources' framing of child abuse.
3. **Framing devices, frame type and discourse elements:** In a spreadsheet, coded data for each article according to their appearance in framing devices (discussed below) were captured. Noted, too, was thematic or episodic topic presentation, or dominant characteristics of, or discourses on, child abuse as guided by the literature review.

This study is concerned with the reports' framing of child abuse; in other words, what aspects about the topic were selected and made salient (Matthes, 2009: 349).

Framing studies do this by analysing the appearances of framing devices in news reports (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 263; D'Angelo, 2002: 881). There can be different frames in a single article (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 264) because “[f]rames can be understood as strategic views on issues put forth by actors” (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 276). Aside from the journalist authors, other “actors” were the news sources quoted. The journalistic convention of “objectivity” results in the use of especially expert or official sources; thus information from such sources act as framing devices (McQuail, 2010: 380; Entman, 2007: 52; Tankard, in Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 173; Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 60; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 17).

Other framing devices that are frequently used in analysis are:

- *Metaphors* (Matthes, 2009: 349; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3–4) – a “description of one phenomenon in terms of another” (Conboy, 2007: 40).
- *Stereotypes* (Matthes, 2009: 349; Entman, 2007: 52) – a “prejudiced, generalised, simplified conception” of a person or group which usually reflect negatively on them (Fourie, 2007: 258).
- *Catchphrases* – “attempted summary statements about the principal subject” (Gamson & Lasch, in Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 170).
- *Depictions* – “routine characterizations of the principal subject” (Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 170).
- *Visual images* (McQuail, 2010: 380; Matthes, 2009: 349; Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 170; Macnamara, 2005: 16; Tankard, in Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 173; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3–4).
- *Rhetoric* (Lowney, 2008: 339; Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 260; Carter, 2013: 6), which is a “linguistic feature” which mainly aims to persuade towards “a particular point of view” (Conboy, 2007: 73). Numbers are especially used for this purpose, as well as to indicate credibility (Hesmondhalgh, 2006a: 131–134).

In addition, *headlines*, *sub-heads*, “*kickers*” – short taglines summarising stories – *pull quotes*, *introductions* and *conclusions* all give a particular slant to the story and are therefore regarded as key in media framing and discourse (Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 165; Tankard, in Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 173; Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 59–60; Bell, 1991: 176, 183; Ericson et al., 1991: 188; van Dijk, 1991: 114–115).

This study used the above-mentioned framing devices for analysis as these assist “to identify the signifying elements that might be used by audience members” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 58). It also paid attention to the prompt that: “Most frames are defined by what they omit as well as include” (Entman, 1993: 54).

6.1.2 News reports not referring to experts (sample B)

The literature review has showed that child abuse news is predominantly presented episodically and within a crime frame due to the media’s dependence on police sources and court cases. While this study has a special interest in the framing of child abuse by expert sources, the role of other sources – especially from the dominant criminal justice services – cannot be ignored in considering the media’s overall framing of the topic. Analysis of this sample could also indicate if there was a difference in framing from those that did include experts, thus pointing to expert sources’ likely framing influence.

For these reasons, this sample was also analysed for Entman’s elements of a frame, as well as framing devices.

6.1.3 Unit of analysis

Matthes and Kohring (2008) – in a review of framing studies – state that “single frame elements [units] achieve a higher reliability in comparison to abstract, holistic frames” (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 264). For the analysis of sources’ framing of child abuse, as per Entman (1993), propositional units of text were used, which are, for example, “statements, assertions or arguments” (Du Plooy, 2009: 214), while the framing device analysis used syntactic units, which are paragraphs, sentences, phrases, clauses, or words (Du Plooy, 2009: 214).

6.1.4 Analyses

As is discursive research practice, analyses were guided by the research questions (Nikander, 2008: 418). For the news reports, the research questions relate to how child abuse is framed, and how the framing translates into discourses. Interpretative social constructionism is concerned with “how things are viewed and described” (Harris, 2008: 238). Thus, the framing analysis was concerned with how the

topic of child abuse was described in the media by applying Entman's frame definition, and by analysing framing devices. This is a manner of testing coded categories, which is a form of deductive analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008: 112). Predetermined categories, according to Macnamara (2005: 17), "increases the systematicity of qualitative analysis".

With framing viewed as a characteristic of discourse (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57), the findings of the Entman frame analysis by different actors – author and sources – were reviewed to interpret for discourses by these groupings. The findings were also considered by sample to assess whether differences could be detected in how those using expert sources framed child abuse from reports which did not include experts.

6.2 Interviews

Content analysis is recommended for data gathered through semi-structured interviews (Morse, 2012: 197). As outlined in appendix 1, the themes and key areas for exploration were predetermined in relation to the research questions. The key areas served as categories for coding the transcriptions, while unrelated text with corresponding content were categorised together as is practice in content analysis (Morse, 2012: 197–198) through "open coding", a technique used to create categories in qualitative content analysis of an inductive nature (Elo & Kyngas, 2008: 109).

6.2.1 Unit of analysis

Propositional units of interview text were used, such as phrases, sentences or multiple sentences.

6.2.2 Analysis

Data coded for the same categories were assessed together across the interview transcriptions, and the results written up by starting with mini-summaries of each category (Altheide, 1996: 23) as a useful way of compiling an overview of the analysis before elaborating these with explanations and quotes from participants. This content analysis was descriptive rather than interpretative (Morse, 2012: 198).

7. Strengths, limitations and challenges

Strengths: The use of triangulation in the data collection could add “confidence in the findings” (Du Plooy, 2009: 133–134), especially regarding the “divergent constructions of reality” by “seeking different sources” (Babbie & Mouton, 2012: 277). The news analysis was thus strengthened by the interviews aimed at understanding the construction process and related decision-making on either side. Operationalising Entman’s (1993) frame definition by source group, and the overall framing of the topic in each report by framing devices enabled systematic framing analysis.

Limitations: Entman’s frame definition was not always applicable to reports, especially the episodic crime reports (discussed in the next chapter). Due to the limited sample size and qualitative nature of the study, the findings cannot be generalised for the South African media. The interviews were likely subjected to the “self-reflexive accounts of participants” (Bird, 1990: 387) and might not correspond with their actual practice (Wasserman, 2010: 174). In addition, qualitative research of this nature is subject to the fact that the researcher’s “attempts to speak for, write about, or represent other people’s lives necessarily are partial, situated, and mediated” (Foster & Bochner, 2008: 87). A related point is that the application of Entman’s frame definition in the analysis was based on the research’s own interpretations of these elements in the news text.

Challenges: An hour-long interview was a challenge to commit to for busy journalists as well as experts who occupy senior positions in their organisations. Telephonic interviews also did not provide an opportunity for eye contact and observation of body language, nor did it provide insight into the multitude of factors of influence on news construction which would have been more evident through participant observation.

CHAPTER 5: Framing analysis

1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate the framing of – and related discourses on – child abuse in selected South African newspapers, with a specific focus on the role of experts as news sources. The three English language mainstream daily newspapers from different publishers with the highest readership were selected: *The Citizen*, *Sowetan*, and *The Star*. Hard news stories – defined in chapter 4 as newspaper coverage about an event or in response to an event – were selected over the three-month period April – June 2015.

The main focus of analysis was on reports that used contributory or interactional experts as news sources (sample A) – see definitions of these sources in chapter 4. A selection of these experts were interviewed on their experiences of the news construction process, as were a selection of journalist authors from the sample. The interview findings are discussed in the next chapter.

A total of 155 reports on child abuse were collected, and their categorisation into two samples is discussed below.

1.1 Sample A: Reports with expert sources

Twenty-five reports referred to contributory or interactional experts; from these one was excluded as it mentioned child abuse in passing. Therefore, a total of 24 reports that used expert news sources were analysed for the framing of child abuse by applying Entman's (1993) definition of a frame as well as analysis of framing devices. Twelve of the reports were from *The Star*, seven from the *Sowetan*, and five from *The Citizen*.

Appendix 4 shows that the majority of cited experts were from non-profit organisations (NPOs). The remaining experts were from research institutions, a human rights watchdog, a United Nations agency, and the South African Police Services (SAPS) specialised units for child abuse and victim support.

Six of the reports refer to the expert source exclusively, while other sources in the remaining reports were from government (high profile, or spokespersons); professionals (mainly associated with the criminal justice system [CJS]); abuse victims; and others (relatives, a pupil, politicians, and an accused abuser).

Understandably, given the choice of research period, a good number (9) of the reports were directly related to either Child Protection Week (CPW), Child Protection Month, or Substance Abuse Awareness week, or about the launch of a campaign.

1.2 Sample B: Reports without expert sources

A total of 130 articles did not quote contributory or interactional experts, and three were excluded as they referred to abuse in passing. The majority cited government sources, especially from the police and courts. Linked to these were legal professionals such as lawyers, advocates, prosecutors. While victims were predominantly quoted in relation to court testimonies, relatives or friends of victims featured in a good number of articles in explaining or commenting on the abuse. Accused or convicted offenders were only cited in relation to court testimonies, while a small group of “others”, such as members of the public, commented on individual cases. The business sector was quoted only once.

Only five reports in sample B were related to the CPW period, while another three reported on the release of annual figures relevant to child abuse. The rest of the 127 articles were largely crime or court reports, and a small number tracked developing news stories.

2. Analysis: Sample A

2.1 Characteristics

2.1.1 Thematic vs episodic

In contrast with the literature review findings which indicated that child abuse is mainly depicted episodically, only eight out of the 24 reports that quote experts were presented episodically. These were, with one exception (Phaladi, 2015a: 2), court and crime reports.

Some episodic reports contained thematic elements, such as statistics, and a contextual quote from an expert (Mncube, 2015: 2). While five reports were framed around an event – two on an NPO’s campaign, linked with CPW; one each on a summit; a human trafficking awareness campaign, and the official closing of CPW – these all contained thematic elements by describing the child abuse problem, causes, and/or proposed solutions.

Ten reports were presented thematically, with three of these constructed around the story of an abuse victim.

2.1.2 Categories of abuse

The 24 reports fall in five categories related to child abuse: Protection/abuse prevention; sexual abuse; physical abuse; emotional abuse; and “multiple” abuse.

Significantly, the five child protection/abuse prevention articles all appeared in *The Star*, and are all linked to CPW/Month. While all five raise awareness of child protection broadly, one (Kuang, 2015b: 4) emphasised sexual abuse.

Eight reports dealt explicitly with sexual abuse – five about rape; and one each about child sex work; women who abuse, and child pornography.

Only one (Kuang, 2015a: 1) report involved emotional abuse – the case of a child locked up in a cupboard as punishment.

The reports on “multiple” abuse include two on child trafficking, and one each on missing children, foetal alcohol syndrome, and virginity testingⁱⁱⁱ.

2.1.3 Tone

Also in contrast with the literature review is that very few of the articles sensationalised the topic. Only three reports show signs of sensationalism. The *Sowetan* article (Mashego, 2015b: 2) on the crèche principal charged for compelled rape sensationalised what happened, with the headline, “Kids ‘ordered’ to have sex”, and the kicker, “Principal films boy (2), girl (5)”, conjuring images of child pornography. A second *Sowetan* report (Mazibila, 2015: 8) dealt with a court case on initiation school rapes. Graphic descriptions of the girls’ ordeal add sensation, as were the journalist’s descriptions of the accused who “hatched the plot” and “lured the girls”.

The third report (Els, 2015a: 2) with markings of sensationalism was published in *The Citizen*, although it originated at a sister (community) newspaper. The headline

ⁱⁱⁱ The Children’s Act No 38 of 2005 allows virginity testing of children older than 16 years. While the practice is increasingly termed harmful to women and girls (and with the African National Congress Women’s League having spoken out strongly against it in the past year), it is a cultural practice that is currently still legal. The practice does not only raise concerns of sexual violation, but also of violations of dignity and bodily integrity. For this reason, virginity testing was categorised as “multiple” abuse.

“Men luring young girls to Montclair to molest them” and a similar introduction gave the impression of a prevalent problem in this area. A conversation with the expert who appeared as the source however established that these were isolated cases which were reported as a trend (see the discussion in chapter 6).

2.1.4 Uses of experts

Analysis of the experts’ contributions to the reports illustrates the various source roles described in chapter 1. In many instances, they served to verify the occurrence (Serrao, 2015c: 11), prevalence of (Abreu, 2015b: 6; Farber, 2015a: 14; Monama, 2015a: 6; Tsinde, 2015: 5) and examples (Serrao, 2015c: 11) of types of abuse, or the seriousness of the problem (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5; Serrao, 2015: 11). Such input also defined or explained the problem (Mncube, 2015: 2), risk factors (Molosankwe, 2015a: 4; Serrao, 2015c: 11) and underlying reasons for abuse (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5; Serrao, 2015c: 11). In some instances, they clarified the legal framework that governs a particular type of abuse (Germaner, 2015c: 6; Maponya, 2015a: 6) or the risks for the victims (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5).

Several of the articles explained the work (Kuang, 2015b: 4) or role (Maponya, 2015a: 6) of the expert organisation, or a particular campaign (Abreu, 2015b: 6; Chernick, 2015a: 11; Motsoeneng, 2015: 5; Tsinde, 2015: 5). The experts also described attempts to address the problem (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5), contextualised it regionally and globally (Monama, 2015a: 6; Tsinde, 2015: 5) or spelt out or illustrated the long-term consequences for abuse victims (Farber, 2015a: 14; Mashaba, 2015b: 2; Mashego, 2015b: 2; Molosankwe, 2015a: 4; Motsoeneng, 2015: 5).

The experts were frequently quoted in relation to recommendations on how to tackle child abuse – whether generally through prevention, including education and awareness, or specifically involving the government (Serrao, 2015a: 11), communities (Chernick, 2015b: 2; Kuang, 2015b: 4), parents or children (Chernick, 2015a: 11; Els, 2015a: 2). They were quoted on practical advice to parents (Els, 2015a: 2; Germaner, 2015c: 6; Kuang, 2015b: 4; Serrao, 2015c: 11), or the need for victim support (Germaner, 2015c: 6; Mashego, 2015b: 2).

Commentary from experts was present in episodic reports only (Germaner, 2015c: 6; Mashego, 2015b: 2; Phaladi, 2015a: 2). Opinion was expressed in only one

case (Sidimba, 2015: 6), or speculation (Mazibila, 2015: 8), or a claim made without verification from other sources or data (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5).

In seven reports, the experts were the only sources quoted, other than background data sources.

2.2 Framing

The framing analysis applied Entman's (1993) definition of a frame to reports in sample A, with a focus on experts' and other sources' framing contributions, and analysis of framing devices, detailed in chapter 4.

2.2.1 Problem and causes

Entman (1993: 52) proposes that frames “*define problems* – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs”, and “*diagnose causes* – identify the forces creating the problem” (emphasis in original). As these two frame elements are closely linked, they are discussed together.

Experts

The experts defined child abuse at multiple levels that approach the problem from the individual to the societal. In many instances, they explained it in the South African context as a prevalent problem (Farber, 2015a: 14; Phaladi, 2015a: 2; Tsinde, 2015: 5), of magnitude (Abreu, 2015b: 6) and scale (Germaner, 2015c: 6; Mazibila, 2015: 8) that has reached “epidemic proportions” (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5). Child abuse was characterised by a culture of secrecy, especially if committed by family (Kuang, 2015b: 4), while denial or ignorance (Chernick, 2015a: 11; Serrao, 2015c: 11) or a lack of attention or awareness (Chernick, 2015a: 11) were part of the problem. Abuse came in many forms (Germaner, 2015c: 6) and was also perpetuated by those who cared for children (Serrao, 2015c: 11). Part of the problem involved psycho-social factors such as stress on the family, which was caused by challenging socio-economic conditions and domestic violence (Mashaba, 2015b: 2; Serrao, 2015a: 11).

Some experts attributed the problem to a child care institution (Mashego, 2015b: 2), mothers or families failing children (Monama, 2015a: 6; Motsoeneng, 2015: 5). Others attributed it to a disregard for children's or women's rights (Mashaba, 2015b: 2; Sidimba, 2015: 6). A culture of violence and neglect (Mncube, 2015: 2) and abuse

(Mazibila, 2015: 8) was referred to, as was the abuse of culture and religion (Monama, 2015a: 6), and gaps in the legal framework (Maponya, 2015a: 6).

Analysis showed that experts' framing of the problem and causes were often captured in framing devices. Examples are:

- Headline: "Child pornography not taken seriously in SA, activists say" (Germaner, 2015c: 6)
- Kicker: "South Africa needs to prevent youngsters from trafficking, says expert" (Phaladi, 2015a: 2)
- Pull-out quote: "Child violence an epidemic in SA, Unicef says" (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5)

The framing device of rhetoric, through statistics to highlight the scale and prevalence, was attributed to experts in many instances (Abreu, 2015b: 6; Farber, 2015a: 14; Molosankwe, 2015: 4; Monama, 2015a: 6; Serrao, 2015c: 11; Tsinde, 2015: 5).

Other sources

Three Cabinet ministers, the police commissioner, a director-general, a SAPS major-general and four departmental spokespersons appear in sample A, but child abuse was explained by only one of these – a minister, who attributed it to children's vulnerability (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5).

Professionals attributed the problem to lenient court sentences because of gaps in the legal framework (Maponya, 2015a: 6), or children in denial or ignorant about a harmful practice (Farber, 2015a: 14).

A pupil who spoke at a public event described the problem eloquently as caused by parents' own experiences of abuse as children, and as parents siding with abusive step-parents (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5).

Victims' reflections on causes included South Africa's apartheid history (Serrao, 2015c: 11) and poverty (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5). One mother blamed her lack of education (thus unemployment) as a reason for selling her daughter for sex (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5).

Cultural beliefs (Mazibila, 2015: 8) and practices (Sidimba, 2015: 6) were referred to as part of the problem by other sources (an accused, and politicians).

There was a fair amount of problem definition by journalist authors too, although these in some cases echoed the experts' contributions with regard to the scale of the problem (Mashaba, 2015b: 2; Tsinde, 2015: 5) or a comprehensive understanding of (sexual) abuse (Serrao, 2015c: 11). In one instance it was clear that isolated cases of abuse (rape) were interpreted as a trend (Els, 2015a: 2), while in other reports the author pointed to a cultural institution (Mazibila, 2015: 8), or the mother (Maponya, 2015a: 6; Molosankwe, 2015a: 4) as the problem. For the latter, substance abuse was highlighted as a cause.

Problem definitions or solutions by other sources were not detected in framing devices, other than an information graphic from a health website (Molosankwe, 2015a: 4).

2.2.2 Moral judgements

Moral judgement is the third frame element of Entman. The use of framing device analysis assisted largely in identifying such judgements.

Experts

A few moral or other judgements by experts emerged in sample A. These include a judgement of the criminal system (Germaner, 2015c: 6), of mothers' ignorance (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5), and of a "drunk out of her mind" mother (Molosankwe, 2015a: 4).

Other sources

Only one government source is quoted in relation to a judgemental view – of families (Tsinde, 2015: 5).

A few moral judgements were detected from journalist authors, directed at mothers of victims. One is described as unapproachable (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5); another is judged for being "an alcoholic" who made bad choices, and as cold-hearted by having "just upped and left" (abandoned) the infant (Molosankwe, 2015a: 4).

2.2.3 Solutions

Solutions, or in Entman's term, "remedies", are the fourth frame element used in the analysis.

Experts

A great number of solutions put forward by experts implied the need for an understanding of, education on, and knowledge or awareness of child abuse; and the need for abuse prevention.

While education and awareness were referred to broadly (Germaner, 2015c: 6), some experts spelt out which groups to target: children (Germaner, 2015c: 6; Monama, 2015a: 6); men (Monama, 2015a: 6); the community (Chernick, 2015a: 11) and society (Tsinde, 2015: 5).

Preventing abuse was the starting point, and experts called on different role-players. These especially included pro-active parents (Els, 2015a: 2; Germaner, 2015c: 6; Kuang, 2015b: 4; Molosankwe, 2015a: 4; Serrao, 2015c: 11). Children's role in preventing abuse was raised only once (Els, 2015a: 2) by an expert, as was the government's role (Serrao, 2015a: 11). Some experts spoke of the need for prevention at the collective level by changing norms and attitudes (Farber, 2015a: 14), the need for a "collective voice" (Germaner, 2015c: 6), community involvement (Chernick, 2015a: 11), and that prevention is "everyone's business" (Farber, 2015a: 14).

Other solutions put forward by experts highlighted community and child agency, and offenders taking responsibility (Chernick, 2015a: 11), or more specifically, men taking responsibility (Monama, 2015a: 6). In several instances legal or legislative solutions were raised (Germaner, 2015c: 6; Maponya, 2015a: 6; Phaladi, 2015a: 2), as was tougher sentencing for offenders (Germaner, 2015c: 6). Other solutions focused on post-abuse interventions (Chernick, 2015a: 11; Germaner, 2015c: 6; Kuang, 2015b: 4; Mashego, 2015b: 2; Monama, 2015a: 6).

Experts' solutions also appeared in framing devices, for example:

- **Headline:** "Watch children's online activity" [quote from expert] (Kuang, 2015b: 4)

- Pull-out quote: “Males must take responsibility for this abuse” (Monama, 2015a: 6)
- Conclusion: “Parents must work to overcome the 'generational digital divide' ...” (Germaner, 2015c: 6)

Others

Government sources reflected on child abuse solutions in much less detail, and at times bordering on rhetoric. Thus, one minister speaks of “society to take responsibility” (Abreu, 2015b: 6); another says the nation should “think deeply about the contribution each of us can make to promote the wellbeing of children” (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5). The same minister on another occasion spoke more meaningfully about community involvement, victim support services and skills training for professionals (Monama, 2015a: 6). Senior SAPS officials proposed that children “had to be protected” (Tsinde, 2015: 5) or report abuse (Ndlazi, 2015b: 5).

The other source groupings who were quoted on solutions was a professional, who spoke of victim support (Motsoeneng, 2015: 5), and a victim, who mentioned governments’ responsibility to protect girls (Monama, 2015a: 6).

Proposed solutions from non-experts were not detected in framing devices.

3. Analysis: Sample B

3.1 Characteristics

3.1.1 Thematic vs episodic

In stark contrast were the 127 reports which do not refer to experts – these, with the exception of 10 articles, focused on single cases of child abuse without broader engagement with the numbers, causes, or possible solutions. A small number (8) of the episodic reports have some thematic elements, referring to social norms (Mashaba, 2015a: 9), and the roles of various groupings, and the collective, in preventing abuse (Monama, 2015b: 6; Ndlazi, 2015: 6; sanews.gov.za, 2015b: 2).

The 10 thematic reports were characterised by the influence from sources such as educators (Louw, 2015: 9; Macupe, 2015a: 8; Skelton, 2015: 9), government regulators (Mahope, 2015: 9; Mbuli, 2015: 8), and anti-crime campaigners (Kalipa,

2015: 6). Three reports were based on the release of annual statistics, and another three emerged out of public events.

3.1.2 Categories of abuse

Sample B include various types of child abuse reports, while a small number addressed child protection more generally – these were all linked to CPW.

Emotional abuse, which – like neglect – is “commonplace in South Africa” (Seedat et al, in Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014: 28) appeared least, presenting only once (Kuang, 2015a: 1).

Abandoned children featured in only four “news briefs” reports – all involved infants, three of whom died. Seven reports touched on physical neglect, although in only two instances (Naik, 2015: 5; Selebi, 2015: 2) were these spelt out as neglect.

Reports on kidnapping/abduction, trafficking, missing children and harmful cultural practices were clustered in a “multiple abuse” category. Six reports on missing children were present, while two more articles (Kalipa, 2015: 6; Ndlazi, 2015a: 6) – on Child Protection Week – also raised this issue. In addition, six reports were about child trafficking, the majority about a high-profile case of siblings returned from Malawi by government officials. A further four described other kidnappings or abductions. Others centred on virginity testing (Motha, 2015a: 2), or on the regulation of initiation schools (Mahope, 2015: 9; Mbuli, 2015: 8).

Reports on physical abuse were largely dominated by corporal punishment cases (9), mainly at schools, where it remains a persistent problem (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014: 28). Three other reports involved the severe, sometimes fatal, beating of children by their fathers (Oliphant, 2015c: 2; Oliphant & Ndaba, 2015: 4; Prince, 2015: 2), or father’s partner (Maphumulo, 2015: 6). Four centred on the assault of children, predominantly by those in prominent social positions: a teacher (Caxton News Service, 2015a: 6), local politician (Somniso-Abraham, 2015: 3), and doctor (Mitchley, 2015c: 3).

The categories of child abuse which featured most, by far, were killings^{iv} and sexual abuse. While disaggregated data are difficult to come, these were very prevalent in South Africa: in 2013/14, an average of 51 child rapes per day were reported to the police (Wilkinson, 2015b) – a likely a gross underreporting (Institute for Security Studies, 2014: 3). And, in 2012/13, more than two children were murdered each day (Gould, 2014).

A total of 30 reports were about severe, horrific, bizarre and unusual killings involving, amongst others, mutilation (African News Agency, 2015a: 2; African News Agency, 2015c: 2; Citizen reporter, 2015b: 6), burning a child to death (African News Agency, 2015b: 2; Falanga, 2015: 2; Henderson, 2015: 6; Tshehle, 2015: 1), poisoning (Macupe, 2015b: 6; Mtakati, 2015: 7), dead babies in the mother's freezer (Mitchley, 2015a: 8), a child stabbed 99 times by her aunt (Citizen reporter, 2015a: 2), a fatal exorcism ritual by family (Motha, 2015b: 6; Motha, 2015c: 9) and the contract killing of a baby (Staff reporter, 2015b: 2).

Reports on sexual abuse presented 49 times in this sample. These, with the exception of four, were from court and crime reporting. Two of the exceptions (Macupe, 2015a: 8; Makhubu, 2015: 6) were informed by the release of annual figures on teacher misconduct, and the other two a developing story involving a billionaire (Germaner, 2015e: 2; Watson, 2015: 4).

Forty-two of the 49 reports focus on cases of rape, and a good number involved prominent individuals: a model agency "boss" (Germaner, 2015a: 2), a tennis champion, (Germaner, 2015b: 5; Staff reporter, 2015a: 3), a musician (Oliphant, 2015a: 2), the billionaire (Germaner, 2015e: 2; Watson, 2015: 4). In other cases, individuals in respected or trusted social positions were implicated: police officers (African News Agency, 2015d: 2; Citizen reporter, 2015c: 7; Germaner, 2015d: 4; Khumalo, 2015: 6; Oliphant, 2015b: 2), local councillors (de Lange, 2015a: 6; Venter, 2015a: 2), a community leader (Mbangeni & Maphumulo, 2015: 2), traditional healers (de Lange,

^{iv} The World Health Organisation (2014) defines child abuse as all acts that harm a child's health, survival, development or dignity. It has been noted (Mathews, Abrahams, et al, 2013) that the deaths of children which involved adults are more likely to occur in an environment of ongoing abuse, thus such deaths are viewed as the worst outcome of child abuse, and for this reason included in the analysis of child abuse news.

2015b: 9; Venter, 2015b: 2), teachers (Mashego, 2015a: 12), a sports coach (Ntlemo, 2015: 2), a priest (Khumela, 2015: 2), and a mother (Selebi, 2015: 2).

In stark contrast was the handful (literally, five) reports in sample B which focused more generally on child abuse. These all referred to CPW/Month – either in passing (sanews.gov.za, 2015a: 2; Skelton, 2015: 9), or to its launch or closing (Kalipa, 2015: 6; Ndlazi, 2015a: 6; no author, 2015: 9).

3.1.3 Tone

A good number (28) were very short, 1 – 3 paragraph news briefs. These just reflected the basics of abuse cases mainly in relation to court or crime incidents.

Lengthier reports, on the other hand, spelt out the details of cases and, in court reports specifically, explicit and graphic language added sensation in many cases. Sexual abuse, especially, provided much such material for use, and 14 reports gave explicit descriptions of sexual nature, mainly by narrating court testimonies. Almost all (11) of these were about sexual abuse by close family.

Even more present in the sample were explicit depictions of physical harm – “right arm was cut off, skin was missing from her thigh, her private parts were removed and her throat was cut open” (Citizen reporter, 2015b: 6) – and at times gut-wrenching descriptions of violent abuse – “carrying the infant by the feet” and “was found in a pool of her own vomit” (Mitchley, 2015b: 7), or injury – “Her innards pulled out of vagina” (Motha, 2015b: 6). These were detected not only in the narration of 20 reports, but also in 10 pull quotes and kickers, and 14 headers. Hence, graphic violence was most often present in framing devices, although sexual abuse was the most-reported type of abuse.

Significantly, and in contrast to the literature review, more than 50 of the 127 reports indicated children knew their abusers. A good number (16) of these implicated close family members in the header. Only 20 in the sample focused on abuse by a stranger.

3.2 Framing

Sample B was also analysed for Entman's (1993) frame elements as well as analysis of framing devices. However, many of the episodic reports did not lend themselves to the Entman definition analysis as child abuse was seldom discussed beyond the case at hand.

3.2.1 Problem and causes

The child abuse problem was not defined in many reports. Where it did come up, it was at times explained by gaps in legislation (Germaner, 2015e: 2; Mahope, 2015: 9; Serrao, 2015b: 11), or caused by the non-enforcement of regulations (Mahope, 2015: 9; Mbuli, 2015: 8). Parents and family were in several instances implicated as part of the problem (Macupe, 2015a: 8; Maphumulo, 2015: 2; Mbangeni, 2015: 2; Monama, 2015b: 6; Ndlazi: 15a: 6). The framing around parental responsibility was mainly by professionals, or high-profile government officials.

The child abuse problem was framed in a more realistic and thematic way by "ordinary" sources. Thus, pupils blamed a culture of silence (Mashaba, 2015a: 8), denial (Monama, 2015a: 6) and fear (Oliphant & Ndaba, 2015: 4), and a grandmother referred to vulnerabilities created by poverty (Khumela, 2015: 2).

The socio-economic realities as a causal agent of abuse was acknowledged in only one other report (Louw, 2015: 9).

3.2.2 Moral judgements

Moral judgements from sources were detected in very few reports – where they do appear, they were largely directed at institutions: a church (Khumela, 2015: 2), initiation schools (Mbuli, 2015: 8), and a children's home (Mbangeni, 2015: 2). In one instance, a mother was judged (Selebi, 2015: 2).

Stereotypes of abusers as mentally ill appeared a number of times (Caxton News Service, 2015b: 8; Citizen reporter, 2015a: 2; Haripersad, 2015: 8; Masuku, 2015b: 7; Mitchley, 2015a: 8; Perumal, 2015: 4).

3.2.3 Solutions

Remedies for child abuse that emerged from the analysis implicated various role-players – parents (Monama, 2015b: 6; Ndlazi, 2015a: 6), families (Mabotja, 2015: 2), teachers (Makhubu, 2015: 6) and schools and the police (Louw, 2015: 9), the courts (Masuku, 2015a: 2), and traditional leaders (Mbuli, 2015: 8). Law reform was put forward several times (Abreu, 2015a: 6; Germaner, 2015e: 2; Mahope, 2015: 9; Seleka, 2015: 6), as well as institutional practices (Makhubu, 2015: 6; Seleka, 2015: 6) and cooperation (Mbuli, 2015: 8; Seleka, 2015: 6). Punishment as a means to stop abuse came up several times (Germaner, 2015f: 2; Macupe, 2015a: 8; Makhubu, 2015: 6; Mashaba, 2015a: 9; Staff reporter, 2015b: 2).

A good number of articles mentioned solutions that involve the collective. While communities were once encouraged to report abuse (Mbuli, 2015: 8), calls on the collective were expressed in rhetoric and without useful specifics in most instances. Thus, communities were called on to “root out this evil” (Ndlazi, 2015a: 6), “vigilance” is cautioned (sanews.gov.za, 2015b: 2) and “collective consensus and public investment in safety” (Ndlazi, 2015a: 6) were advocated.

Of interest is that public education as a solution surfaced only twice, and rather superficially: “sensitising people” (Ndlazi, 2015a: 6) and raising awareness (Kalipa, 2015: 6). The need for changed cultural norms were mention twice (Kalipa, 2015: 6; Motha, 2015a: 2).

4. Discussion

The majority of the articles in sample A treated child abuse thematically, and were informed by commemorative child abuse events or campaign launches, while those in sample B presented mainly episodically, mostly as court and crime reports. Many of the few thematic reports in sample B were the result of commemorative events, or the release of annual statistics.

Thus, evident in both samples is the influence of news sources towards thematic reporting by staging events, or releasing reports. Sample B showed that the dominant court and crime reporting results in episodic framing, and restricts the media’s attention to abuse of a criminal nature.

4.1 Dominant news values

Most of the reports in sample A dealt with sexual abuse, which was also one of the most encountered categories in sample B, alongside murders and homicides. Sample B predominantly reports on rape, while sample A illustrates different types of sexual abuse.

Of interest is that none of the sexual abuse reports in sample A was about an offender in a prominent or respected social position, while sample B included plenty. Here the news values of prominence and scandal were evident, especially in crime reporting.

The tone of sample A was serious, and with little sensationalism. Sample B presented sexual abuse in a good number of cases with graphic descriptions. These mostly involved cases of familial sexual abuse. The graphic accounts of sexual nature contributed to a news value of sensationalism, and when family members were involved, with it the added news values of scandal and deviance. The media's focus on the sexual (rather than abusive) nature of such crimes however served to deny the exploitation of the child (Collings, 2002: 3). Explicit sexual descriptions in the media also "raised questions about the role of voyeurism in the detailed reportage of sexual crime" (Schlesinger & Tumbler, 1994: 247). Further, graphic sexual depictions are problematic as they are highly gendered violations of victims' bodies.^v

The same goes for many reports, in sample B, on severe, horrific, bizarre and unusual killings which give graphic descriptions of injury. Such reports were completely absent in sample A. This finding raises questions as to why experts were not used as sources in this dominant category of child abuse news. One possible explanation is that such reports are largely accessed via the CJS, and that the resultant episodic framing does not lend itself to experts' input.

^v While acknowledging a rich literature on the gendered nature of media depictions – and some encountered in the literature review – this study was not constructed with specific research questions aimed at exploring such dynamics in the social construction of reality. Thus, these (undoubtedly present) aspects of child abuse reporting are not foregrounded in this study.

4.2 Underrepresentation of common abuse types

The literature showed that neglect is a common form of abuse that seldom makes the news, unless in extreme cases. In sample A, an expert is quoted on neglect as one of the biggest challenges, alongside violence, for children in South Africa (Mncube, 2015: 2). But this type of abuse, as well as emotional abuse (also more common), hardly feature in either of the samples, nor does corporal punishment at home, which is a form of physical and emotion abuse regularly experienced by many children (Dawes et al, in Bower & Dawes, 2014: 58).

These absences in child abuse coverage could also be explained by the media's access to cases mainly via the CJS. Such abuse was less visible, and might often take place in the privacy of the home.

4.3 Commemorative events as discourse moments

CPW/Month, Substance Abuse Awareness Week and several campaign launches fell within the sample^{vi} period, and a good number of reports linked up to these events. Their focus on prevention – mainly with experts' input – resonates within the public health approach that was recommended in the literature review.

Similar articles in sample B quoted especially government rhetoric on a collective duty to protect children. The child is depicted as the vulnerable victim-in-the-waiting (Abreu, 2015a: 6; Ndlazi, 2015a: 6) which is “every parent's worst nightmare” (Kalipa, 2015: 6). It is interesting that the event-based reports in this sample all addressed the missing children “problem”, discussed next.

4.4 Signs of a moral panic?

The Citizen items in sample A were all, with one exception, about missing children or child trafficking; two of these were based on claims-makers' events. Sample B contains a good number on kidnappings, trafficking or missing children.

^{vi} Of note is that, in both samples, commemorative events only featured in *The Star*; the *Sowetan* did not have a dedicated CPW report other than a photograph of the closing ceremony, and *The Citizen* did not mention or focus on the event at all.

These forms of abuse were profiled during the sample period – by reports on the CPW launch which focused on a missing children theme (Abreu, 2015b: 6; Ndlazi, 2015a: 6) – but especially by the case of siblings “trafficked” to Malawi (Mabotja, 2015: 2; Masombuka, 2015: 2; Mbangeni, 2015: 2; Phaladi, 2015b: 14; Seleka, 2015: 6). A media event at the airport, with the national and a provincial ministers of social development in attendance, met their return. It is noted that this case received such high-profile attention during a time that the government was soothing public sentiment over a new travel regulation which was explained as a measure to prevent trafficking (Phaladi, 2015a: 2). It would have been in their interest to promote this case, which was referred to as abduction and “trafficking” (Mabotja, 2015: 2) although reports noted that the siblings left with their “abductor” with permission from their caretaker.

The good amount of media attention on kidnapping and trafficking in the overall sample is revealing because South Africa does not feature in the top 11 African countries affected by human trafficking (Lexus Nexis database, in Mbangeni, 2015: 2). The child trafficking figures that are often circulated in the South African media by claims-makers such as government and NPOs have been found to be “unsubstantiated”, “exaggerated, and sensational” (Wilkinson, 2015a; Wilkinson & Chiumia, 2013). The focus on human trafficking in South Africa has even been termed a “moral panic” (Gould, 2010) that can benefit NPOs financially (Wilkinson & Chiumia, 2013). However, other scholars believe it is a (growing) problem in South Africa, although accurate statistics are lacking (van der Watt, 2015).

4.5 Framing

4.5.1 Problem and causes

There are marked differences between how child abuse and its causes were defined by the experts compared to other news sources. The experts defined child abuse at multiple levels, from the individual to the societal. They indicated it came in many forms, including abuse by those known to children. As such, the stranger-danger myth was challenged. They highlighted that it is a big problem in South Africa due to a culture of secrecy, denial or ignorance, and a lack of attention or awareness. A culture of violence, neglect and abuse as a contributory cause was raised, as well as gender dynamics and rights violations. Problems with laws that govern certain abuse also

emerged as a proposed cause of (continued) abuse. Experts in three instances referred to underlying psycho-social or socio-economic risk factors of abuse, while only one was quoted on the need for changed social norms.

Sources other than experts in both samples defined the problem less comprehensively. While some pointed to issues with laws and their enforcement, parents (especially mothers) and families were in several instances described as the problem. Only in two instances were poverty and the apartheid legacy raised as underlying causes, and cultural beliefs and practices were mentioned twice.

Sample A includes numerous statistics on the prevalence of various abuse types and their consequences, but only six out of the 127 reports in sample B gave data on child abuse. Significantly, five of these were about the missing children/trafficking “problem”.

4.5.2 Judgement

Mothers were judged in several reports, by experts, other sources and journalist authors. In other cases, (child care/religious/cultural) institutions were judged by sources for their roles in abuse cases.

4.5.3 Solutions

Solutions to child abuse put forward by the experts were mainly about prevention, education and awareness. They proposed targeting these at different spheres of society.

Significantly, sample A includes only one report where an expert was quoted on government’s role in remedies for child abuse. In a few cases, legal solutions, tougher punishment, offenders or men taking responsibility, and post-abuse interventions were proposed. The experts, however, in many instances indicated that parents and communities were key to addressing abuse.

Sources in sample B referred to a wider variety of role-players to end abuse than sample A. Government sources, however, in both samples were regularly quoted on collective action as a solution to the problem, but these were in unspecific, rhetorical terms. Mentioned fairly frequently – by a range of sources – was (stricter) punishment

of offenders as a solution. In contrast to sample A, public education was mentioned only twice as a solution in sample B.

4.5.4 Overall framing

Different types of knowledge are communicated in news: primary (factual), secondary (explanatory), tertiary (descriptive), evaluative (moral), and recommendations (Ericson et al., 1991: 204). The framing analysis shows that reports in sample A provided more explanatory knowledge and recommendations than sample B, which dealt mainly with factual and descriptive knowledge.

In explaining a social problem like child abuse, claims-makers provide what Loseke (2008: 59) terms a “diagnostic frame” – this resonates with Entman’s problem definition and causal frame elements. In the spirit of social construction, it is common to encounter multiple diagnostic frames (Loseke, 2008: 60).

Poverty is regarded as the “primary distal cause of high levels of child abuse” in the country (Richter & Dawes, 2008: 86). This raises an interesting observation: socio-economic conditions appeared in diagnostic frames in only a handful of articles (Khumela, 2015: 2; Mashaba, 2015b: 2; Motsoeneng, 2015: 5; Monama, 2015a: 6; Serrao, 2015a: 11) – these, with one exception, were all in sample A.

By considering that diagnostic frames highlight the problem as due to either social or to individual causes (Loseke, 2008: 60), very differing frames emerge from the two samples: Sample A framed, with two exceptions, the cause of child abuse as of social origin, whereas sample B framed the causes predominantly at individual level.

Following on from the diagnostic frame used by social problems claims-makers is the prognostic frame, which proposes what should be done about the problem, and by whom (Loseke, 2008: 98). This frame resonates with Entman’s remedy frame element.

The prognostic frames in sample A were often geared towards prevention, education and awareness at different levels of society. However, the absence (bar one) of references to the government’s responsibility to address child abuse by experts in sample A raises questions about power dynamics in addressing or criticising

government via the media (discussed in the next chapter). Sample B, however, in more instances contained prognostic frames on the contributions of different arms of government (departments, courts, the police), often as a result of government officials promoting their work.

Another prognostic frame of interest was the multitude of education and awareness-raising solutions put forward by experts in sample A, but only mentioned once in sample B. Just as striking is that a change in cultural norms as a solution for child abuse was mentioned only once in each sample.

As mentioned earlier, especially government officials were quoted on solutions that involve collective, sometimes vague or symbolic actions. Symbolic solutions are a claims-maker strategy used by politicians as “they cost nothing and they make people feel good” (Loseke, 2008: 106). These, however, do not easily lead to action, and quoting news sources on unspecific solutions can leave media consumers with a sense of hopelessness – as is also the case with episodic framing (Neuman et al., 1992: 75–76). In public affairs reporting journalists unconsciously “position the reader” (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 81). For this reason, it is important – for the media as well as claims-makers – to consider that readers respond enthusiastically to “information about how to take control of public issues” (Neuman et al., 1992: 111). Recommended, therefore, is an approach of “inclusive” framing with the purpose of “giving people a road map for change” (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 83).

4.6 Cultural values and cultural themes

Entman's (1993: 52) definition of frames points out that “common cultural values” are typically used to define the costs and benefits of the causal agent that is foregrounded by frames. Such cultural values are found in cultural themes, which are “beliefs about how the world should work” (Loseke, 2008: 63). These themes are historically and culturally specific and are used by claims-makers to canvass support for their cause (Loseke, 2008: 64).

South Africa since 1994 has been operating within a strong rights framework. Hence references to rights and rights violations emerged as a cultural theme in reports – raised mainly by experts (Mashaba, 2015b: 2; Mazibila, 2015: 6; Monama, 2015a: 6;

Motsoeneng, 2015: 5; Sidimba, 2015: 6), but also by members of the media (Kalipa, 2015: 6; Motha, 2015a: 2; no author, 2015: 9).

Prognostic (solutions) frames can be informed by conflicting cultural themes (Loseke, 2008: 99). Two oppositional cultural themes emerge out of the solution frames – those aimed at individuals or individual groupings, and those implying the collective. The latter resonates strongly with the cultural notion of “Ubuntu”.^{vii} Individualism is again associated with democratic pluralism. Analysis show that, in both samples, the individualism cultural theme emerge in solution frames more regularly than the “Ubuntu” theme.

Finally, the need for cultural change, which is advocated by some social problem claims-makers (Loseke, 2008: 113) is largely absent from both samples. Related to this point is that, while men regularly feature in the news as abuse perpetrators (Harries & Bird, 2005: 94), their role as part of the solution was mentioned, by an expert, only once (Monama, 2015a: 6).

4.7 Discourses

This study views framing as a characteristic of discourses, as was motivated in chapter 2. For this reason, this section discusses the discourses that emerge from the framing analyses, and also reflects on the presence of discourses pointed out by the literature review.

4.7.1 Differing discourses

As illustrated earlier, the framing of the child abuse differs in the two samples: experts emphasised the problem’s social origin, while other sources tended to address it at an individual level, which could lead to a discourse of individual blame.

The different ways of framing the problem leads to differing discourses on what to do: Experts’ discourses are pro-active, hopeful, empowering, centred on prevention, and address both individual and collective role-players. Discourses by other sources also address role-players in less specific terms, and the role of parents and education

^{vii} “Ubuntu lacks a simple and a generally agreed upon definition” (Idoniboye-Obu & Whetho, 2013: 231), and is used to describe an “assortment of values” (Idoniboye-Obu & Whetho, 2013: 244) relating to community, the individual, and interconnectedness.

feature little. More importantly, the presence of punishment discourses in sample B are oppositional to the pro-active prevention discourses in sample A.

4.7.2 Overall discourse of individual responsibility

In considering the overall sample, the dominant discourses were that individuals are responsible for child abuse as well as solution to the problem with very little attention to poverty and other underlying factors such as parenting in adverse circumstances. More importantly, the minimal attention on the role of men and government (in specific ways rather than through symbolic actions) risks perpetuating a discourse of non-accountability. The focus on individual offenders in especially court and crime reporting portrays an “evil” and “sick” society in need of more legislative and other punitive action, rather than one which can prevent abuse through conscious changes in norms and cultural attitudes towards children, and by addressing the underlying risk factors.

4.7.3 Discourses of fear

On the surface, because “stranger danger” was not overrepresented in either sample, this myth was challenged in many instances by reports on abusers known to children. The regular attention on trafficked and missing children by prominent government officials and NPOs seems to be a mismatch to the prevalence of this form of abuse in South Africa and raises questions about possible political agendas or economic goals of claims-makers. Promoting these agendas, however, could result in a moral panic that diverts attention from more prevalent child abuse forms.

4.7.4 Discourses of deviance

A good amount of discourses on deviance (defined earlier as acts of non-conformity and abnormality) were detected. It was particularly evident by a regular focus on sexual abuse by family members, often with graphically explicit descriptions. Such descriptions, encountered even more in reports on brutal child murders or homicide, can serve to illustrate not only the abnormality of the abuser, but also broadly the abnormality of South African society.

Additionally, a dominant focus on individuals in respected and trusted positions elevated the implied deviance.

4.7.5 Discourses of blame

Mothers (and sometimes families) were portrayed as inadequate, with resultant moral judgements – this discourse was present across both samples. Such discursive practice risks treating mothers or families as the problem without attention to the broader, underlying social causes. Blame was also directed at child protection professionals or institutions at times. No blame or criticism was expressed towards government outside of calls for law reform, and harsher sentences.

5. Conclusion

The analysis showed that contributory and interactional experts did not regularly feature as news sources. Child abuse news – largely because of its court and crime orientation – foregrounded mainly violent and sexual abuse, and these with little input from experts. This emphasis also meant little attention on less severe abuse not addressed through the CJS.

News values can explain the focus on crime, sex and horror, while these are also rife in South Africa. The court and crime focus also serves to illustrate a sick society; hence the presence of punishment discourses.

More importantly, the little attention on solutions in the episodic (mainly crime) reports risks leaving readers with a sense of disempowerment and even hopelessness. Also, episodic reporting has been shown to result in media audiences holding individuals responsible for social situations, rather than societal forces. The little attention to the overall role of government, of public education, and of required changes in social norms and attitudes, raises questions about the media's level of engagement with this complex social problem.

It is encouraging that “stranger-danger” discourses were not dominating the sample, although the high-profile attention on the (deemed less prevalent) problem of trafficking and missing children by government and NPOs, via the media, point to a possible moral panic. Discourses of deviance were evident in the attention on sexual

abuse by family and those in respected positions, while blame discourses were largely directed at mothers.

The findings show that, while not called on very regularly, experts' presence as sources resulted in showcasing a more preventative, practical approach to the problem. A more conscientious and regular inclusion of child abuse experts in reporting thus have the potential to educate and contribute to discourses around prevention.

Significantly, neither experts nor other sources were quoted on long-term approaches by addressing socio-economic factors as underlying causes of abuse. Just as absent was attention on the role of men, and government, as part of the solution, which risks a discourse of non-accountability.

Lastly – the individualism cultural theme emerged in solution frames more regularly than the Ubuntu theme. The pre-occupation with individuals' (or groups of individuals') role as a solution to the problem could also be a reason for the lack of attention on the overall role of government, or of society more broadly.

CHAPTER 6: Interview analysis

1. Introduction

The previous chapter has presented insight into the media's social construction of child abuse by means of framing analyses of hard news reports of three daily newspapers in South Africa over a three-month period, and offered observations on resultant discourses on this social problem, with a special focus on the role of expert sources. In this chapter, I turn to role-players in the construction of some of these reports – journalist authors and expert sources – who were interviewed to explore how they related to one another, and what factors influenced their interactions.

1.1 About the interviewees

By applying the Contributory-Interactional-None normative theory of expertise (Collins & Evans, 2002) to the sample, 24 reports that used expert sources were identified. The interviewees were selected and recruited through the following process:

Reports which quoted experts extensively were prioritised throughout the three-month sample collection process, as these were most likely the result of an engaged process between the journalist and source. The authors and experts were first phoned to assess interest in participation, followed by an e-mail outlining the study, if interest was expressed. Priority attention was paid to secure interviews with the other co-creator of a report once a journalist or expert agreed.

Thirteen journalists were approached for interviews. In three cases, journalists were not reachable via their newsrooms, three declined after expressing interest initially, and two turned unresponsive during the course of communication. Five interviews were conducted in the end – two (Chernick, 2015c; Molosankwe, 2015b) from *The Star*; two (Farber, 2015b; Maponya, 2015b) from *The Sowetan* (although Faber is based at two sister newspapers), and one (Els, 2015b) with *The Citizen* (this author was from a community title under the same ownership). Several were seniors in their field: a provincial bureau chief (Maponya, 2015b), a senior specialist reporter (Farber, 2015b), and a senior general reporter (Molosankwe, 2015b), while the others were in journalism for four years (Els, 2015b) and just over one year (Chernick, 2015c) respectively. While

some journalists agreed easily, the main challenge was to get replies to requests, or settle on an interview date and time due to their concerns over time availability.

Nine experts were approached for interviews. Of these, one declined, one turned unresponsive, one kept postponing the interview, and another could not commit time for a full interview. The final five interviewees occupied senior positions: the director of (Nala, 2015) and a consultant to (Blackie, 2015) non-profit organisations, a child protection expert (Benvenuti, 2015) from a United Nations agency, a PhD graduate (Pieterse, 2015b) who is a government department director, and the provincial legal advisor (Matatoka, 2015) for a human rights watchdog (Chapter 9) institution. The experts agreed more readily to participate, although a confirmed interview with the head of the police's Family, Child Protection and Sexual Offences unit failed to materialise in time due to bureaucratic permission delays and several last-minute postponements.^{viii}

The interview schedules appear in appendices 2 and 3. Not all questions were asked in each interview, as sources in their elaborations sometimes answered pending questions. Follow-up questions for clarity or further explanation were raised where necessary.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the data were prepared by coding each with pre-determined categories for the various questions (set out in appendix 1). These were collated by categories, and sub-categories were identified where relevant. The findings are discussed below under themes related to the research questions.

2. Interviews with expert sources

The source interviews were structured around three research questions:

- RQ3: What are child abuse experts' experiences of news co-construction?
- RQ4: How do they view their role in this, and what media strategies do they use?
- RQ5: What factors (personal, professional, organisational or other) influence their media engagement?

^{viii} Another additional possible delay was that this chapter, once completed, had to be reviewed by the interviewee's office, as per the police's research permission protocols; such a condition for participation also raised concerns about possible censorship.

2.1 Experiences and expectations

The sources indicated that they were approached for different kinds of information, depending on the type of news story. Two experts were asked for their views on a court case – either to comment on the behaviour of the accused (Nala, 2015), or on the court ruling (Matatoka, 2015). When a media event was held by the expert's organisation, where media packs with much information were handed out, the journalist focused more on the expert's personal experiences that inspired the new campaign (Blackie, 2015). When the story involved new research on child abuse (Pieterse, 2015b), the expert was asked about the value and application of the research.

In the case of another event-based report – on the official closure of CPW – the expert was not aware of being quoted by the journalist, as she was “not approached” by him (Benvenuti, 2015). In trying to make sense with her how it happened that she was quoted without giving an interview, two likely explanations emerged: That the journalist was either present when the expert was interviewed for television at the event (there were by-standers), or that he quoted from that interview after watching it online. Unfortunately, the journalist involved declined participating on the basis that it was against company policy.

The experts expressed mixed reactions about the end-product in relation to their expectations. Pieterse (2015b) appreciated the journalist's interest in the application of his research, and that she kept to the technical measures in the research report instead of expressing those in other terms, which could create inaccuracies. The slight misrepresentations of his study that he observed were attributed to the journalist's deadline and length restrictions. For Matatoka (2015), it was good that the report illustrated his organisation's role.

Blackie (2015) believed the event-based report “served the purpose” of raising awareness, but thought there was value in quoting other sources who were at the event. Matatoka (2015) and Nala (2015) also raised the issue of including different role-players as sources. And more probing: “what brought about that case is something that we are never asked” (Matatoka, 2015); and that questions on “the stories behind” the case were never asked (Nala, 2015).

The interviewees did not allude to pre-conceived frames from journalists who interviewed them; however, they had clear views of how the stories should be framed, often in terms of prevention: Blackie (2015) spoke of the need to showcase “real people who show real efforts” to address child abuse, and Nala (2015) was concerned with the crèche’s responsibility to prevent children from being alone in risky situations. She and Blackie also spoke of the need to contextualise child abuse, while Pieterse (2015b) felt attention on the underlying trends would be more useful than the disproportionate graphic depictions of abuse, which desensitised people, and raised questions about responsible journalism.

Nala (2015) observed a lack of focus on policy and legislation, unless it can be sensationalised, while Matatoka (2015) pointed out that naming victims, or giving explicit details of abuse, resulted in secondary victimisation. By concentrating on “horror stories”, the media distracted from “the real stuff, what is actually happening” (Blackie, 2015) and hampered “systematic, long-term effort that could actually change the psyche of the citizens” (Benvenuti, 2015). The result was an “imbalance” in media reporting, with more attention on politics, which the “media buy into” (Blackie, 2015).

Interviewees spoke with concern about the media’s approach to child abuse news: as episodic (Matatoka, 2015), superficial and fragmented (Blackie, 2015), not holistic (Blackie, 2015; Pieterse, 2015b) or focused on the underlying causes of abuse (Matatoka, 2015). Blackie (2015) has observed an “easy shame and blame game”, although Nala (2015) felt there was a shift from blame reporting to reflecting what is going on in society, but without enough attention on protection issues.

The “negative” (Nala, 2015) and sensational coverage for the sake of profits (Pieterse, 2015b) resulted in a preference for high-profile, shocking cases while abuse was actually underreported compared to the real numbers on this “social emergency” (Benvenuti, 2015). The shock framing without solutions can cause people to “stick their head in the sand and say, ‘well there's nothing I can do about it’” (Blackie, 2015).

Benvenuti (2015) recommended that the media addressed the consequences and told stories of the impact of abuse, and focused on positive stories that gave people hope. A focus on informative and educational pieces could be enhanced by experts’ insights (Nala, 2015), and by portraying the prevention roles of different groupings

(Benvenuti, 2015). Partnerships with the police and others could feed into the news (Pieterse, 2015b), while forums where experts and the media could engage on reporting abuse would be welcomed (Matatoka, 2015).

2.2 Value of and attitudes to media engagement

Experts, said Benvenuti (2015), needed to “recognise that our role is very limited. So we need others to disseminate the knowledge”. The purpose of such dissemination was described differently: to raise awareness (Benvenuti, 2015; Matatoka, 2015), educate and inspire action (Benvenuti, 2015) and advocate (Nala, 2015). Media coverage not only benefited the cause by getting people involved (Blackie, 2015), but also an organisation’s public visibility (Benvenuti, 2015; Matatoka, 2015). Coverage led to more media attention (Blackie, 2015; Nala, 2015).

Experts could play an important role by using media engagement as an opportunity to set the record straight on misperceptions (Nala, 2015), by looking out for the best interests of abuse victims reported on (Matatoka, 2015; Nala, 2015), by helping to tell relevant stories, especially those that are sensitive (Nala, 2015), and by putting journalists in touch with other relevant sources (Blackie, 2015; Nala, 2015). Experts in the news helped contextualise issues (Nala, 2015; Pieterse, 2015b), inform, raise awareness and educate about child abuse (Matatoka, 2015; Nala, 2015). More importantly, their participation in news construction “shift[ed] the agenda” on what could be done (Nala, 2015), and how to solve the problem (Pieterse, 2015b). It however required simplifying information for the media, and recognising the need to be “available and generous” with the media as it was a “responsibility” that “comes with the job” (Benvenuti, 2015).

The interviews showed that the experts’ approaches to media engagement depended on their role in their organisations, and their professional background. On one side of the spectrum was Blackie (2015), a former journalist and brand manager, now child protection activist and researcher, who proactively used commemorative and other events to engage the media. An avid media consumer, she paid attention to the needs of different mediums, knew the value of a good news angle, and saw enormous value in using online and social media. On the opposite side was Pieterse (2015b), a government director for whom media engagement was not important – they had a

designated unit who dealt with the media, and he (as well as colleagues) were wary of the media due to bad past experiences. Matatoka (2015) also had a communications department who took care of media strategies; his role was only reactive when contacted for comments. While they had a media strategy, Nala (2015) explained that her organisation – like many non-profits – struggled to be proactive due to time and resource challenges.

2.3 Rules of media engagement

Nala (2015) expressed discomfort with how she was quoted – explaining that she was merely “thinking things through” with the journalist while not aware she will be quoted on those remarks. Blackie (2015) shared a similar experience: that she told a personal story to a journalist to illustrate a point, and in the end the story was included in the report, which could have damaged relationships with partners. Sharing personal stories relating to child abuse was important to her, but that was difficult when individuals’ identities had to be protected.

Other interviewees also mentioned uncomfortable past experiences with the media. Pieterse (2015b) was “wary” and “cautious” of the media after a journalist used privileged access to his government department to raise an issue that was not on the agenda, which put him as the question-taker on the spot. Matatoka (2015) experienced journalists wanting “unfair” comments, or “eye-catching and more intriguing” answers than warranted. Nala (2015) told of how “snippets” of a conversation with a journalist was “slaughtered” by using it in an unrelated story, making her feel there is “no control” over media interviews.

She has also been “played against another” (government) source in an interview, and her reluctance to get involved in an argument was interpreted by the interviewer as an unwillingness to critique government because it funds the organisation. This, she pointed out, “derails” the conversation on the actual subject of child abuse. Blackie (2015) as an independent consultant could more easily express public criticism than her coalition partners, who walked a “very difficult tightrope” between working with government and “pushing” them on service delivery.

Expectations from experts to respond to journalists within tight deadlines, which left little time for preparation, was an issue for some (Benvenuti, 2015; Nala, 2015). All

interviewees indicated that they did not receive media training (Blackie [2015] trained and worked as a journalist, but she did not seem to view these as “training” for engagement with them as a source when prompted in the interview). For Pieterse (2015b) it was not a problem; he engaged only in exceptional cases with journalists. The others said media training would be beneficial, even though it was a skill that was developed over time (Blackie, 2015; Matatoka, 2015; Nala, 2015). For Nala (2015), media interview skills would help more careful communication, and assist how the organisation was portrayed publically.

As media participation came with risks to organisations’ reputations, Pieterse (2015b) asked the journalist not to link his research findings to his government department because it could be misused by lobbyists. Reputation risks explained source organisations’ control measures such as using only dedicated media liaisons, or protocols on who may speak on what issues (Benvenuti, 2015; Matatoka, 2015; Nala, 2015; Pieterse, 2015b).

3. Interviews with journalists

The interviews were structured around the research questions:

- RQ6: What are selected South African daily newspaper journalists’ understanding of and approaches to the use of experts in child abuse news?
- RQ7: What factors (individual, professional, organisational or other) influence the use of these sources?

3.1 Understanding expertise

The journalists defined “expert sources” at multiple levels, most notably qualifying it as both education and experience related. First, experts were viewed as individuals with subject knowledge (Chernick, 2015c; Els, 2015b; Maponya, 2015b) that was gained as academics (Chernick, 2015c; Farber, 2015b; Molosankwe, 2015b), or via professional qualifications (Els, 2015b) or training (Chernick, 2015c). They were well read and could do analysis (Maponya, 2015b), were published (Molosankwe, 2015b) and spent a good amount of time in their field (Chernick, 2015c; Els, 2015b; Molosankwe, 2015b). They could also be individuals “at the coal-face” (Farber, 2015b) where they had “access to the situation” and thus able to explain it (Maponya, 2015b).

Or, they could be witnesses to an incident or had “life experience” (Chernick, 2015c), such as “victims or survivors” (Farber, 2015b). For Molosankwe (2015b), the ideal expert source had both expertise and life experience in the subject; and the best news story included both expert and experienced sources (Chernick, 2015c). For Farber (2015b), the perfect expert source not only knew their subject, but was also media savvy and immediately available. And, “whether you think [government] is an expert or not, they need to weigh in on the debate” for the sake of “accountability” (Farber, 2015b).

The interviewees identified experts by recommendation from colleagues (Chernick, 2015c; Els, 2015b), or other sources (Farber, 2015b). Online searches (Chernick, 2015c; Farber, 2015b; Molosankwe, 2015b), an online directory (Farber, 2015b), and social media (Chernick, 2015c) were much used for this purpose, too. At times, “relevant organisations” were presumed to have experts in their midst (Chernick, 2015c), or the journalist relied on his years of experience to know who relevant experts were (Maponya, 2015b).

3.2 Value of experts

At the most basic level, the journalists cited experts’ value to explain, clarify and help understand (Chernick, 2015c) or give “informed insights” (Maponya, 2015b) on news topics. They interpreted (Molosankwe, 2015b), verified facts and confirmed instances (Chernick, 2015; Els, 2015b; Maponya, 2015b), assisted with statistics (Chernick, 2015c; Farber, 2015b) and led to other sources (Molosankwe, 2015b). Their contributions gave credibility to news stories (Els, 2015b; Maponya, 2015b), were educational (Maponya, 2015b) and advisory (Els, 2015b), while their opinions (Chernick, 2015c; Maponya, 2015b), judgements of events (Chernick, 2015c) or the way forward (Maponya, 2015b) were appreciated. On a deeper level, they helped give an overview of the topic and “intersecting” issues (Farber, 2015b). Thus, engagement with them “makes you actually think” (Chernick, 2015c), “think differently” (Els, 2015b), and increased journalists’ critical thinking (Farber, 2015b).

While these reflections indicated the experts’ influences as news sources, some interviewees struggled to explain what precisely made an expert credible. Characteristics that were mentioned were experience (Chernick, 2015c; Els, 2015b; Molosankwe, 2015b), qualifications (Els, 2015b; Farber, 2015b), their level of

knowledge (Els, 2015b), working for an institution with good reputation, or having done research (Farber, 2015b).

3.3 Experiences with expert sources

Journalists expressed an understanding of expert sources' work dynamics, but also a good amount of frustration that pointed to tensions and power plays. Some experts were "uncooperative" (Maponya, 2015b), difficult to reach at times (Els, 2015b), and academics were "impossible to get hold of" and did not share cell phone numbers (Farber, 2015b).

Expert sources needed to be given time to reply (Chernick, 2015c; Maponya, 2015b), often via e-mailed questions (Els, 2015b) as they "do not speak off the cuff" (Farber, 2015b). For Els, (2015b) it was not problematic to present his draft article before publication if an expert asked, while Farber (2015b) indicated she was not obliged to do that; it showed that experts did not understand the editorial process and pointed to a lack of trust. Similarly, an understanding of deadline pressures was lacking (Farber, 2015b), which was frustrating (Chernick, 2015c).

A poor grasp of what was newsworthy, and how to package that in useful soundbites, were mentioned (Farber, 2015b). There was a particular tension with academics' "pedantic", "very thorough and very pure" approach to sharing information, while "the public just wants to know the basic thing" (Farber, 2015b). They were hesitant to speak on topics viewed as other experts' speciality areas, although – for Farber (2015b) – all that was required was general comment on the topic from not necessarily the most specialised person.

Other power dynamics raised was sources' caution to be quoted in a context that can damage relationships with others, and an awareness of sources' own agendas when deciding whom to contact (Farber, 2015b). It was a delicate dance, however, as journalists needed to "keep a good relationship with them because you don't know when you going to need them again" (Els, 2015b).

3.4 Experts' framing power

Interview questions to determine experts' frame influences on the news reports shed further light on the dynamics of news construction. These were well illustrated by the three instances where I could interview both author and source of the same report.

Els (2015b) indicated that the child abuse expert he interviewed wanted to raise public awareness of the "trend" of a "ring" (in his understanding) of older men who befriended young girls to rape them. The expert^{ix} confirmed that awareness was their intention, but not about a "trend" – which was not the case according to her – and would cause "unnecessary alarm". Instead, they wanted general public awareness about parents' responsibility to keep tabs on where and with whom their children socialise, and the rape cases shared with the journalist merely served as examples of parents not being involved in or aware of what the young girls were doing (Neal, pers. comm., 14 July 2015). The reporter did not get any documented proof that warranted a "trend" interpretation; in fact, he could recall only three cases mentioned by the source (although the report cited two only).

Farber (2015b) approached the expert with a particular frame in mind – she wanted to know how his research could be used to make a practical difference. However, he cautioned against recommendations that could have policy or budgetary implications for the government department he works for. In the end, the article (Farber, 2015a) was framed (heading, intro, and problem definition) around the consequences of abuse (his research), and did not include his carefully-worded recommendation^x to assess home-based interventions to prevent maltreatment (Pieterse, 2015a).

The expert source's framing influence emerged most strongly in the interview with Chernick (2015c). She felt "lucky, the angle was ... there already", it was "positive", saying "let's fix [abuse]; let's change things." The news story was about the launch of a campaign to involve communities in child protection by making use of material that transcends language and cultural barriers. This (action-oriented, solutions-

^{ix} Brenda Neal, SAPS Victim Support Centre coordinator, Montclair, KwaZulu-Natal, was unable to commit time for an interview, but agreed to go on record on her views of how the report was framed.

^x In an e-mail to the journalist, dated 24 April 2015, which he shared with this author (on file).

based) frame made her feel “passionate” about writing the article, and resulted in a second one.

3.5 Media conventions and practices in framing

The expert sources were accessed in different ways: a media statement on a campaign launch event (Chernick, 2015c); routine events – a weekly meeting with the source organisation (police) (Els, 2015b) and a court sentencing (Maponya, 2015b); and online – a topic search (Molosankwe, 2015b) and an online article passed on by a colleague (Farber, 2015b).

The process of deciding on an expert to approach was “hard” (Chernick, 2015c) because there were many to choose from. Farber (2015b) “tend[ed] to” approach experts for all her stories, while for Chernick (2015c) it depended on the type of story. The “sound bite” source would be chosen over a more specialist but less articulate source (Farber, 2015b; Molosankwe, 2015b), but this meant less source diversity as journalists kept returning to the same sources (Farber, 2015b).

The news value of child abuse was high; it was a “hot topic” due to the high prevalence in South Africa (Farber, 2015b); it was a “serious matter” (Els, 2015b) that was “coming more to the forefront” these days (Chernick, 2015c). Stories were newsworthy when trending on social media, or when associated with commemorative calendar days (Chernick, 2015c). Reporting on the consequences of abuse is “negative news that will get people reading” (Farber, 2015b); there is human drama (Molosankwe, 2015b) in such reports. A focus on children always pulls heart-strings, while “editors [were] getting more and more desperate to attract readers, so they’re sensationalising things” (Farber, 2015b).

But Farber (2015b) recognised value beyond the negativity and sensation draw cards – that talking about the consequences of abuse could make people realise the seriousness, and spur them into action. It was a conscious frame that she used, inspired by the notion of “constructive journalism” – a “solutions-focused kind of journalism”. She believed South African audiences were “empathy-fatigued”; they wanted to “hear something different” than that yet another child was harmed.

Nevertheless, Farber's (2015b) original brief from her editor was to “find a child who was abused”. Of course, telling stories of people’s experiences is a journalistic convention, and part and parcel of news reporting, although “a power story” included a victim’s story alongside expert insight (Chernick, 2015c). But restricted access to story details – particularly access to victims (Els, 2015b; Farber, 2015b) – made reporting a challenge. It was not only a sensitive topic to talk about (with family of victims) (Els, 2015b), but finding sources who would go public with their stories was also difficult (Molosankwe, 2015b), and child victims were seldom allowed to speak to the media (Els, 2015b; Farber, 2015b). Added complications were that victims may not be named (Chernick, 2015c; Farber, 2015b; Molosankwe, 2015b), or their photos used (Farber, 2015b). Data on abuse was also “not readily available” (Els, 2015b).

3.6 Media organisation and routines as factors

Daily newspapers have a fast turn-around of news copy, and Farber (2015b) was “always on deadline”. The time factor was one reason why Molosankwe (2015b) did not approach other sources than the expert for her report (although she did online searches to identify someone who could speak on the topic, which led her to the expert). Chernick (2015c) described that, at times, there would be only 20 minutes to “get the story and still file it”. Newspapers were “stretched” and, while “the editor still wants depth”, time was hardly ever made available for such probing into topics (Farber, 2015b).

Space restrictions, too, were a challenge to nuanced and inclusive reporting (Maponya, 2015b) and the reason why Farber (2015b) limited her number of questions to sources. Newspapers were also deliberately making articles “shorter and shorter” either due to the “bite-sized” packaging of information in the digital age, or because the media “think that people’s attention spans are shorter” (Farber, 2015b). In 15 years as a journalist, Farber (2015b) witnessed the required length of a daily newspaper article shrinking from 1 200 to between 250 – 350 words. Online news sites, Chernick (2015c) pointed out, however allowed for lengthier reports.

4. Discussion

The interviews showed the experts’ awareness of the media’s value of contributing to public knowledge of child abuse, and that they recognised that their own expert input

would benefit reporting. Likewise, journalists outlined a range of contributions from expert sources that they valued and – of relevance for this study – which helped journalists to think differently and more analytically about the topic.

4.1 Framing and claims-makers' agendas

The interviews showed that experts' framing power depended on the purpose of their interaction with the media, how they engaged with the journalists, the status of their organisation, and the journalists' own attitude to reporting child abuse.

At the most pro-active level, a passionate media-savvy expert who pre-packaged information to hand to media at an event had a strong hand in the final framing of the report. In spite of having received a press pack with plenty of sombre facts and figures on child abuse in the country, the journalist chose to echo the source's positive, solution-based frame that everyone can play a role in preventing abuse.

Solution-based frames were also an inspiration for another journalist, but there was caution from the expert she interviewed that solutions proposed in the report could implicate a bigger responsibility on government. The report was instead largely framed around the consequences of abuse – from his research – which the journalist hoped would encourage role-players towards action. She concluded the report with a proposed solution from a previous news story encounter with an expert.

The misinterpretation of an expert source's frame intention in the third case however resulted in a report that raised alarm about a seemingly non-existing trend instead of the (source's intended) prevention frame. While the report addressed this responsibility, it did not frame the story. Instead, the "trend" interpretation elevated the news value, and ultimately perpetuated a stranger-danger discourse without much evidence that there really was a trend. This was a good example of how a source and a journalist enter into co-construction of news with different expectations of the outcome.

Framing power also resides in the source's organisational affiliation, as was illustrated by the experience of the expert from a United Nations development agency, who was quoted in a report (Ndlazi, 2015b) without even being interviewed by the journalist. The framing analysis presented in the previous chapter showed her

contribution – presumably lifted from the television interview – appeared both in the important framing devices of the headline, and an accompanying pull quote.

One last framing power observation warrants mentioning. Blackie (2015) commented that the media did not report enough on child protection, and that this “imbalance” was “driven by politics”, which the media bought into. This observation resonated with the moral panic framing of child trafficking discussed in the previous chapter, which was highlighted by the high-profile attention from government on a single “trafficking” case of two siblings taken to Malawi during a time when the public needed to be convinced of the merits of a controversial new travel regulation.

The media’s watchdog function of holding the government accountable, and routines and protocols of verifying cases or getting comment through official spokesperson, of course also intensified their framing potency. However, the “trafficking” reports in the sample did not include verifications of the prevalence or magnitude of the presumed problem.

4.2 Tensions

The experts’ expectations of appropriate child abuse framing contrast with approaches to news as dictated by professional norms and practices and newsroom realities. The experts spoke of the need for thematic framing by addressing the bigger picture in detail; by contextualising and foregrounding the underlying factors of abuse; and by including more (expert) sources and other role-players. The journalists were interested in basic explanations, communicated in quick sound bites expressed appropriately for media audiences, but struggled to get hold of experts or get speedy replies, were referred to other experts due to concerns over expertise “turf”, or had to manoeuvre time-consuming rules and protocols put in place to minimise risks for the source organisation. They indicated that such thematic framing needed more time and column space – neither which they had. Added to this tension was sources’ lack of trust in the media due to poor experiences in the past, such as being quoted inappropriately, which led some to request draft reports before going to print – yet another time delay as well as unduly involvement in the editorial process.

The journalistic convention of using news values to select and frame stories emerged as a source of tension. The experts viewed the media’s preference for drama,

negativity and sensation to draw readers as detracting from the broader issues and long-term goals, while the attention-grabbing focus on extreme abuse desensitised people and could leave them feeling helpless. While some experts and all journalists reflected on the value of telling victims' stories, the need to protect their identities, and the taboo and shame associated with abuse, made it difficult.

5. Conclusion

The interviews showed that both the journalists and experts appreciated the educational value of reporting on child abuse. The overall sample – as was pointed out in the previous chapter – however did not address education and aware-raising of prevention solutions that much, except when reports quoted experts. A conclusion is, therefore, that more expert involvement in child abuse news construction could help raise the educational value of these. More importantly, their input – often within thematic and solution frames – can assist the public and those working for child protection to understand and address this social problem beyond episodic cases.

Here are some ways of working better together which emerged from the interviews:

How sources can help:

- Help the media access and tell stories, including the positive, and guide them on the sensitive ones.
- Acknowledge the value of personal communication with journalists.
- Be available for media contact, and work with their tight timeframes.
- Acquire the skills to package expert knowledge for media use, especially data, which can assist in how the problem is understood.
- Do not give them too much information; it is time-consuming to digest.
- Focus on what is new – that is what the media are looking for.
- Know the audience, medium and message that are targeted.
- Promote expert knowledge more proactively by growing (good) media contacts to keep in touch with.
- Improve online and social media visibility.
- Understand that events-based reporting is good for awareness, but might not result in contextual reporting.

- Reach out to media with less deadline and space restriction, such as community and weekly newspapers, and online media.
- Understand that, in the social construction of reality, journalists will rework expert input in ways that work for their audiences rather than the expert.

How journalists can help:

- Understand that the media have a powerful role and opportunity in seeking (expert) solutions to social problems like child abuse, instead of just reporting on cases.
- Cultivate an awareness that source selection is a powerful element of framing, and that experts have a constructive and educational role to play.
- Use data to reflect the problem and where it occurs.
- Use data to verify claims and engage critically with sources' statements.
- Focus on underlying factors of abuse – that is where the real problem (and solution) are located.
- Tell more stories, including the positive work being done.
- Include more sources who can reflect on the complexities of abuse.
- Pay attention to the roles of different role-players in preventing abuse.
- Pay attention to long-term solutions, such as changing social norms and behaviours.
- Focus more on abuse prevention topics – media audiences will benefit from the knowledge and it will address the public's sense of powerlessness.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

1. Overview

The study set out to describe how the social problem of child abuse was framed in hard news reports of selected South African daily mainstream newspapers over a three-month period, with a special focus on the role of expert sources. The framing results were interpreted as characteristics of the news discourse on child abuse in the selected newspapers. To get a better understanding of journalist–source dynamics within the context of news construction and claims-maker activities, the study undertook to describe the factors that influenced journalists’ understanding of and approaches to the use of experts in child abuse news, and to document such sources’ experiences of and approaches towards the news media.

Chapter 1 outlined that many factors influence the media’s portrayal of “reality”, and that news sources play an important role as far as who gets to speak on an issue, and how these are framed publically. This notion of the “social construction of reality” regards different groups as viewing and describing “reality” differently, with the help of language and symbolism.

The constructionist approach to framing views source influences as critical, and pays attention to the media limiting sources to the privileged because of organisational and professional factors. The media have a preference for elites and social problem claims are influenced by sources’ own agendas. Experts are a particular group regularly called on by journalists because they add credibility and authority to news reports; they therefore have considerable framing power.

The discussion showed that media–source relations are dynamic and influenced by a hierarchy of power, as well as organisational influences and professional norms and practices such as striving for objectivity and credibility; using news values; time and space constraints; and how the value of experts is understood.

Child abuse is a serious social problem in South Africa that receives much public attention, and media reporting plays an important role in how the issue is viewed and approached. The chapter therefore motivated for the value in determining experts’ role

in the child abuse news framing and to triangulate the findings with interviews with journalists and expert sources to explore the media–source dynamics.

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework and related theories that informed this study. Set within the social constructionism paradigm, reality is regarded as a construct that is mediated and interpreted by different individuals or groupings who rely on their own historical and cultural knowledge and experiences. Interpretative social constructionism focuses particularly on how people’s agendas, orientations and social and other factors inform reality construction, and therefore was an appropriate framework for this media–source study of framing and the factors of influence in the framing process.

The discussion showed that framing research is concerned with the selection and highlighting of certain stories or certain aspects about topics. News frames bring together different semantical elements which together act as framing devices and these can be used in analysis to indicate the presence of frames. While there are plenty of definitions for frames, Entman's (1993) is most influential and contains clear elements that can be operationalised. His definition also resonates with the social problem schema, which underlines its relevance for a study on child abuse.

Information selected and highlighted by the media form interpretative packages that collectively translate into discourses; thus frames are treated as characteristics of discourses. In the social problem process, diagnostic and prognostic frames – which in their definitions resonate with Entman’s frame definition – are used by claims-makers to create news discourses. As one group of claims-makers that contributes to the media’s construction of social problems, experts – and expertise – are defined in different ways which raise questions about the boundaries of expertise in people’s understanding of the term. For this reason, the study proposed to use a normative theory of expertise to identify experts in the news sample.

Chapter 3 gave an overview of international and local literature on child abuse news reporting, framing and discourses. Child abuse news is characterised by reports on single (episodic) cases of abuse with high (sensationalist) news values. Sexual abuse is the most-reported type of abuse, often involving scandals about prominent individuals

or institutions. A regular focus on “stranger danger” masks the reality that most children know their abusers.

The literature showed that child abuse news is mainly accessed via routine court and crime reporting, which meant little attention on abuse not addressed by the criminal justice system. The single-case focus of crime reporting means little attention on the contexts in which abuse takes place, or proposed solutions. Prevention approaches especially receive very little attention, and reports tend to ignore the role of communities.

Studies detected discourses of fear in abuse news, especially in relation to the child as a (potential) victim of “stranger danger”, and such discourses are used by political or economic elites, with the media’s help, for their own purposes. The media’s interest in reporting on that which is out of the norm results in discourses of deviance, with related demonisation, stereotyping, and the medicalisation of this social problem, which feed into discourses of blame.

While experts hold elite framing power because of their (institutional) authority and perceived credibility and contribution to objectivity, the reliance on pre-scheduled events such as police briefings and court cases give criminal justice system sources much more framing power, and prevent journalists from seeking alternative voices or expanding their pool of sources.

For these reasons, and based on the literature, a case was made for the value of experts’ interaction with the media to contribute to “agenda-building” towards a more conscious focus on solution-based reporting, especially the public health model approach of prevention; as well as for journalists to become more aware of the need to report abuse more contextually.

Chapter 4 motivated for a relevant design and methodology for the study. Guided by the constructionist approach to framing, sources’ “interpretative packages” are believed to be affected by procedures, conditions, resources and organisational factors that influence reporting. Such an approach pays attention to the micro (media text) as well as macro (construction roles of journalists and sources, and the social, cultural, historical, political and economic contexts). The appropriateness of using the

qualitative methodologies of ethnography (semi-structured interviews) and content analysis (media and interview text analyses) was illustrated.

The logic of restricting the news report sample to hard news in the three most-read mainstream English daily newspapers of different ownership, over a three-month period, was set out. The Contributory-Interactional-None (CIN) normative theory of expertise was motivated as appropriate to use for the identification of child abuse experts in the sample reports. A selection of such sources, as well as journalist authors of these reports (sample A), were approached for interviews.

The framing analyses of sample A and sample B (reports without expert sources) involved operationalising Entman's (1993) definition of a frame, together with framing device analysis. An interest was whether experts' presence in news resulted in a different framing than those without, and if so, in what ways child abuse was framed differently.

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore interviewees' approaches to and views of each other, and to describe the news production and media and source organisation factors that influence news construction. Content analysis of the transcribed interviews used pre-determined categories in relation to the research questions, but also allowed for open coding of other emerging categories.

Chapter 5 presented the findings of the framing analyses, and addressed the first two research questions:

RQ1: How is child abuse framed in the news sample?

While the literature indicated the media's preference for sources viewed as authoritative and credible, experts did not feature that regularly in the overall sample. Official sources accessed via the prescheduled events of the criminal justice system dominated, which resulted in little thematic framing of the topic.

Due to the dominance of court and crime reporting, violent or sexual abuse were the most reported types of abuse in the overall sample, but experts appeared very seldom in these. Less severe (but often more common) forms of abuse hardly ever featured, and solutions to end child abuse were not often addressed, either.

Experts appeared as sources more due to their own involvement in campaigns or self-staged events than being approached for comment. Their presence in reports resulted in considerable attention to prevention and solutions-based framing, like education, awareness-raising and the contributions of role-players such as parents and communities. However, even in this sample (A), poverty as an underlying risk factor of abuse, the role of government and men, and the need for changes in societal norms and attitudes were addressed minimally.

There was a noticeable difference between reports informed by experts' framing – pointing to causal agents of social origin, accompanied by pro-active, hopeful messages of prevention solutions – and reports framed by other sources only, who tended to blame the individual as the origin of the problem but proposed rhetorical or symbolic solutions rather than specific ones.

RQ2: What discourses emerge on child abuse?

Media discourses of deviance were evident in the regular focus on individuals in prominent or respected social positions, as well as on sexual abuse by family members, the latter often with graphic descriptions. Graphic depictions were encountered even more in reports on violent forms of abuse.

In contrast with studies in the literature, not much institution blame was encountered, and discourses of blame were directed more at abusers or those responsible for children's safety (especially mothers) by stereotyping them as either ill, or inadequate.

Not much "stranger-danger" reports were identified, although the high-profile attention on human trafficking and missing children by government and non-profit organisations in the absence of data that confirm these as a serious local problem point to a likely moral panic driven by political or economic agendas.

The literature showed that claims-makers use cultural themes to present their causes, and successful framing uses those that resonate with audiences. Child abuse solutions were found to be presented more within the cultural frame of individualism than the collective frame. Hence little attention on government's role other than stricter punishment (and not its role in abuse prevention), little emphasis on public education,

and hardly any mention of men's role or the need for changed social norms and attitudes.

Chapter 6 presented the interview results in relation to five research questions:

RQ3: What are child abuse experts' experiences of news co-construction?

Input required from experts ranged from commenting on cases, to recommending solutions based on own work, to steering the media's framing through involvement in public events. Across these various functions, media engagement benefitted them by foregrounding their organisations and work.

Media engagement, however, came with risks for the expert organisation and experts were mindful of how information was put to them, and they all had disappointing past experiences with the media.

There was mixed reaction about the final product. Journalists were not perceived to come with pre-conceived frames, but quoting more sources and probing the underlying factors were suggested, as well as more focus on prevention. The interviewees' experiences indicated how framing power shifts: expert framing was dominant when involved in staged events, while the media's preference for sensation meant a source's attempt to foreground a prevention topic ended in a misrepresentation of the problem.

RQ4: How do they view their role, and what media strategies do they use?

The experts highlighted similar roles for them and the media in child abuse reporting: to raise awareness, educate, advocate (shift the agenda), and spur to action. But added to that were experts' particular roles to contextualise and tell stories – a mix of the thematic and episodic. They also spoke of ethical obligations – to set misrepresentations straight through the media, and to look out for victims who were reported on.

While the media's value was acknowledged, the interviewees' attitudes towards media strategies differed, depending on their positions and their organisations. Attitudes varied from little desire for media interaction; to keen but limited by organisational protocols, resources and knowledge of media engagement; to proactive and innovative. Most indicated that they could benefit from media training.

RQ5: What factors (personal, professional, organisational or other) influence their media engagement?

Bad past media experiences left them cautious, annoyed or even regretful. Other factors that influenced interaction were responding to the media's tight deadlines, their know-how of media liaison, resources such as time and money, and their own role in their organisations and related protocols.

The experts expressed concern about the media's approach to child abuse news: that the dominant focus on episodic cases with news values of drama and sensation results in superficial, negative coverage that detracted from broader issues and can leave the public desensitised and in despair. They believed a focus on positive stories and contextual and educational reports, with more input from experts, would benefit the portrayal of this social problem.

RQ6: What are South African daily newspaper journalists' understanding of and approaches to the use of experts in child abuse news?

The journalists regarded experts as individuals with academic qualifications, or with practical or first-hand experiences of the issue. A mixture of expertise and experience elevated a source's value.

Experts' value for the media was to explain, clarify, help understand and educate; verify, confirm and give numbers or opinion, or insight or interpret; but also to make the journalist engage more with the topic. The credibility associated with experts were explained by their qualifications, experience or the status of the source organisation. For the journalists, the presence of these characteristics meant they were credible, and an expert's input was seldom double-checked against others'.

RQ7: What factors (individual, professional, organisational or other) influence the use of these sources?

In most cases, the journalists accessed the experts via police and courts (routine events) or sources' (staged) events. In general, they identify experts through referral from colleagues, the help of other sources, internet or social media. Expertise was also presumed to be located in certain institutions.

The journalists viewed child abuse news as newsworthy because it is a big problem in South Africa, but also because it comes with news values of drama and negativity, but these can get sensationalised to draw readers. While the value of story-telling was acknowledged by journalists as well as some sources, access to victims and their families, and the need to protect them, restricted useful narration which could be educational and assist a deeper understanding of child abuse.

Journalist–source dynamics highlighted by the literature emerged in the interviews too, such as different expectations of experts’ level (or quality) of input in news, and organisational conditions on both sides that can restrict engagement. These – the fast turn-around of news reporting, “stretched” newsrooms, space restrictions, source organisations’ media protocols, experts’ reluctance to speak outside their “turf”, their inability to share knowledge in sought-after sound bites or demands to approve draft reports – are all possible reasons for experts’ limited appearance in the overall sample.

2. Results in terms of the theory and literature

In terms of theory, Entman’s definition of frames did not apply well to episodic reports – especially crime and court reports – because these often lacked the frame elements of causal agents and proposed remedies.

The framing results resonated with the interpretative social constructionist view that groups are responsible for different, often competing discourses. Experts’ discourses on child abuse were pro-active, hopeful and empowering by focusing largely on prevention, while discourses by other sources were less about solutions and more about rhetoric or individual blame. The pro-active, prevention-oriented discourses from experts were in opposition to the punishment discourse in sample B. A culture of individualism (associated with pluralism and democracy) was also at odds with the collective cultural theme associated with “Ubuntu”. The former dominated discourses on the origin of the problem and solutions centred more on the role of the individual than the collective.

The results of the framing analysis correlated in many ways with the literature: That certain types of abuse – sexual and violent – dominated coverage, and these were largely treated episodically, and with little input from experts. The reality of a very high level of violent and sexual abuse of children in South Africa meant that a strong focus

on these abuse types was not inappropriate, but it left absent more common, less headline-grabbing forms. Preference for the news values of shock, bizarreness, drama and prominence were evident in the sample.

Experts' framing power was determined by the purpose of their engagement with the media, how that took place, the status of their institution, and the journalists' attitudes towards reporting on abuse.

As per the literature review, there were tensions on both sides: the experts expected more thematic reporting that contextualises and addresses underlying causes of abuse, and the inclusion of more expert and other role-player voices. Journalists on the other hand were interested in basic, straightforward input by experts, delivered in sound bites appropriate for their audiences, but faced deadline challenges in connecting with experts.

3. Gaps, and more questions

This study was small – ideally, media framing should be analysed over a longer period. However, if experts featured relatively little during the time of the year when child protection is highlighted by claims-makers, then their representation (and accumulative framing power) in a sample over a longer period might even be smaller.

The interviews provided a glimpse into journalist–expert source dynamics, but a one-hour conversation (mostly telephonic) is a scratch on the surface. Participant observation would have been the ideal, and could have addressed the likely effects of researcher “reflexivity”.

As framing is concerned with the causes and effects on media audiences, the conclusions from this study that a more thematic approach by the media, with the regular participation of experts, will contribute to an improved understanding of, and solution-oriented approach to, child abuse remain untested.

There are larger questions, too, that warrant further investigation. Government's role in the context of child abuse – especially prevention – hardly featured, while some expert sources spoke of power dynamics which influenced if and how they addressed the government's role in child protection via the media. This raises questions about

source autonomy, and in particular the notion of the “objective” expert, and this could be extended to the argument that insight into “the differential autonomy of sources [can] tell us about the contribution of news to their place in the knowledge structure of society” (Ericson et al., 1989: 27).

Very little attention was paid in both samples to poverty as a main causal agent of abuse, which raises questions about the media’s lack of engagement with this reality for children in South Africa. It also raises questions about how much commercial, mainstream media, who are targeting middle-to-upper income classes, are willing to deal with issues of poverty. Lastly, the minimum attention on men’s role in efforts to reduce child abuse poses questions about the possible lack of awareness, or willingness, to address cultural and societal attitudes.

4. Larger significance of results

Experts’ influence could be detected in framing devices which often used their descriptions of the child abuse problem, causes or solutions, even when the expert contributed minimally to the overall report. Experts could capitalise on this framing power through more regular and focused engagement with the media. As an elite group, they already have privileged access to the media, but how dominant their issue package/s are in the media will depend on how regular and for what purposes they are accessed, and how their frames resonate – and keep up – with cultural themes.

The pre-occupation with the cultural theme of individualism by focusing on individuals’ role in the problem and solution could be a reason for the lack of attention on the role of government, or society more broadly. That changing norms and cultural attitudes towards children were hardly raised in the overall sample could indicate that the *status quo* was accepted as one requiring punishment rather than prevention. Further, the minimal attention on the roles of men and the government (in specific ways instead of symbolic actions) risked perpetuating a discourse of non-accountability.

5. Recommendations

The previous chapter concluded with some recommendations for both journalists and expert sources which emerged out of the interviews. I build further on those with the following observations:

Due to their framing power, experts could contribute to thematic reporting by virtue of how they approach the topic, and their engagement with the media could serve as opportunities to educate and steer discourses towards abuse prevention. But this can only be successful if messages are well defined, meet news values, speak to the target audience and are relevant and exciting for the media and the public. One way of doing this could be to combine expert knowledge, facts and figures with stories to bring issues alive. Experts – by virtue of their social capital – have unique access to contacts in different sectors, and child protection professionals in particular to personal stories.

The interviews surfaced the tensions between journalists' aim to present a simplified, easily-digestible understanding of the world to their readers, while child abuse experts have a more comprehensive and careful consideration of the different social issues at play, and are often reluctant to make judgements without the necessary evidence. In the author's view, there is thus a need for a better understanding of each other's approaches to the topic, and to find ways to work around constraints.

It is common knowledge that the media – especially newspapers – are cutting back or pooling staff because of a changing media landscape. These realities meant opportunities for experts to contribute to more conscious framing of child abuse through more regular, pro-active contributions to the media. Regular engagement with experts will also expose journalists to the broader issues related to child abuse – in several of the journalist interviewees' words, “making them think” about the issue.

More importantly, there seems to be a need for the language of experts to find an interface with the language of the media. This goal could be closer through efforts from both sides to seek and present evidence on and explanations for child abuse beyond the daily cases that make the headlines, and for the media to call more on experts to verify claims about the problem – child trafficking is a case in point. Experts and government agencies like the police can play an important role to help understand child abuse by providing disaggregated data on prevalence. Such evidence can assist claims verification tremendously, and counteract the likelihood that unsubstantiated or exaggerated claims are elevated into moral panics through the media.

The goal of interfacing the language of experts with that of the media could even be positioned towards a partnership by both sides focusing on abuse prevention

messages, which would serve the educational roles of both institutions, and could present this social problem in a more pro-active and hopeful frame to the public.

For such a partnership to work, journalists would need to be more conscious of the value of child abuse experts in reporting, and generally be more aware about the framing power of sources who they select, especially to question the use of meaningless rhetoric often encountered from government. The value of graphic descriptions, and a focus on offenders instead of the broader problem and role-players in solutions, also warrant reflection on the media's part. A focus on role-players closer to home, such as local government and community safety structures, can help to shift the conversation to the collective, shared responsibility to prevent child abuse.

6. Conclusion

In the absence of regular and systematic evidence on child abuse, the South African government, protection agencies, and the public are largely informed by media reporting on the problem, which has been shown to be fragmented, episodic accounts of abuse, often without attention to the underlying causes, or possible solutions. Such reporting can result in media audiences holding individuals responsible for their social situation rather than societal forces. This in turn can influence how child protection policies and strategies are conceptualised.

Discourses are informed by a shared culture and belief about society. The results indicate that these shared views are shaped by an apparent belief that child abuse is a situation that cannot be addressed through prevention, especially changed behaviour, that government is not accountable to prevent abuse and men have no role to play, and that a sick society is responsible for the abuse rather than underlying socio-economic and psycho-social causes.

With a more concerted effort from the media, child abuse experts can assist in taking the public gaze beyond the episodic to highlight the social contexts of abuse and the possibilities offered by a prevention approach that pays attention to all the spheres of influence – from the individual to societal. Such framing can steer media discourses towards the more hopeful and proactive, resonating with the notion of “constructive journalism” raised by Farber (2015b) in an interview.

If the South African media were to contribute to public discourses that can positively inform the country's strategy to reduce the incredible high level of child abuse, there would be value in exploring such a "solutions-based approach" to reporting on social problems. Not only will such an approach bring more (expert) evidence into the discourses, but it could also be "positioning the citizen as a potential participant" (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 83), and in that is tremendous promise in making child protection everyone's business.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research questions in relation to interview themes and key areas of exploration

Research questions	Themes	Key areas
<i>For expert sources</i>		
RQ3: What are child abuse experts' experiences of news co-construction?	Interview experiences and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INFORMATION REQUIRED • PRE-CONCEIVED MEDIA FRAME • OWN FRAME • EXPECTATIONS OF AND VIEWS OF END PRODUCT
RQ4: How do they view their role in news co-construction, and what media strategies do they use?	Value of media engagement and attitudes to engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIEW OF EXPERT ROLE • VIEW OF MEDIA VALUE • MEDIA PROACTIVENESS • KNOWLEDGE OF MEDIA • MEDIA STRATEGIES

<p>RQ5: What factors (personal, professional, organisational or other) influence their media engagement?</p>	<p>Realities of media engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS COVERAGE • VIEWS OF NEWS ANGLES • MEDIA TRAINING • ORGANISATIONAL PROCESSES
<p>Research questions</p>	<p>Themes</p>	<p>Key areas</p>
<p><i>For journalists</i></p>		
<p>RQ3: What are South African daily newspaper journalists' views of and approaches to the use of experts in child abuse news?</p>	<p>Understanding expertise</p> <p>Value of experts as sources</p> <p>Experts' contribution to child abuse news</p> <p>Experiences with expert source</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEFINITION OF EXPERT SOURCE • IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERT SOURCE • VALUE OF EXPERT SOURCE • CONTRIBUTIONS OF EXPERT SOURCE • CREDIBILITY OF EXPERT SOURCE • ENGAGEMENT WITH EXPERT SOURCE • INFLUENCES OF EXPERT SOURCE FRAMES • CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EXPERTS' INPUT

<p>RQ4: What factors (individual, professional, organisational or other) influence the use of these sources?</p>	<p>Story production reconstruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACCESS TO STORY/SOURCE• SELECTION CRITERIA• NEWS VALUE• PRECONCEIVED FRAMES• MEDIA CONVENTIONS AND PRACTICES• MEDIA ORGANISATION AND ROUTINES
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Appendix 2: Expert sources interview questionnaire

Journalist-source study on child abuse news and discourse

Charmaine Smith, student number 18022936, for thesis contribution towards MA: Journalism

Version 1, 15 March

Basic demographics

Gender:

Age:

Job title:

Area of expertise:

Years of expertise:

About the interview process

VIEW OF EXPERT ROLE

VIEW OF MEDIA VALUE

MEDIA PROACTIVENESS

MEDIA STRATEGY

Why did you agree to participate in this specific interview?

Follow-up:

Why do you think were you selected to be interviewed?

Follow-up:

Is it important for you to participate in media interviews? Why?

Follow-up:

Are there other reasons why you participated [trying to establish what benefits they expect from participation (whether pro-active engagement with the media or not)]

Follow-up:

Were you contacted by other media for an interview on the same topic? If so, did you participate/decline – why?

EXPERIENCES Tell me about the interview process itself – how did the process unfold?
[looking out for issues of time restrictions, type of information required, in what ways the conversation took
place – tel, email]

MEDIA KNOWLEDGE: How did you prepare for interview?

Follow-up: How did you decide on what information to provide?

INFORMATION REQUIRED

PRE-CONCEIVED MEDIA FRAME What kinds of information was the journalist looking for?

Follow-up: What did you think about the kinds of questions you were asked?

SOURCE FRAME: Did you feel there was information / perspectives that you should have
been asked about but which didn't come up?

Follow-up: Did you bring these up in your conversation - elaborate.

SOURCE FRAME What information did you prioritise to share with the journalist – why?

Follow-up: Were there certain information/types of information that you decided not
to speak about? What and why?

About expectations about the end result

EXPERIENCES Generally, how did you feel about the way in which the interview worked out?

Follow-up: What about it where you satisfied with? Why?

Follow-up: What about it could have been better – why?

EXPECTATIONS How do you feel about what was quoted in the final report from your interview vs what was not used?

Follow-up: Where there other news sources or voices that you think could have been included or excluded? Why?

Follow-up: How do your expectations about the interview compare with the end result in the final article?

Views of media coverage of child abuse

MEDIA PERCEPTIONS

VIEWS OF NEWS ANGLES How do you feel about how the journalist described the topic of child safety in the report?

Follow-up: Generally, how do you view the reporting on child abuse in the South African media? Give reasons for this view.

Follow-up: What kinds of things about child abuse do not make the news that you think are important to foreground. Elaborate

Follow-up: What can the media do to improve child abuse coverage [if negative view is communicated]

Views on media engagement and approaches to media interaction

VIEW OF MEDIA VALUE: What is the value for you in engaging with the media?

Follow-up: What is the value for child abuse experts to engage with media?

EXPERIENCES

STRATEGY How regularly do you participate in media interviews?

Follow-on: Is it expected of you in your work to engage with the media, how much of that is pro-active vs reactive?

Follow-on: Does your organisation have a media strategy; do you have certain “rules” of when to engage, who is allowed to do so?

Follow-on: Have you had training in media engagement? Elaborate on what is needed for more comfortable engagement with media

Follow-on: Are there organisational factors that affect your engagement with the media engagement?

MEDIA PREFERENCE

MEDIA EXPERIENCES: Do you prefer a particular medium over others to give interviews to?
Which, and why?

Follow-up: Do you prefer a particular way of being interviewed [probing mode of contact – eg face to face vs written interview]

Follow-up: In your experience, are there differences in how journalists from different mediums/media formats engage with the interview process? How?

CONCLUDING: **Any other experiences or views about your interaction with the media, or generally child experts' engagement with the media, that you'd like to share?**

Appendix 3: Journalists interview questionnaire

Questions for journalist-source study on child abuse news and discourse

Charmaine Smith, student number 18022936, for thesis contribution towards MA: Journalism

Version 1, 15 March

FOR JOURNALISTS:

Basic demographics

Gender:

Age:

Job title:

Years of journalism experience:

[Ice-breaker: What kinds of stories do you usually report on?]

ACCESS How did you hear about this story/issue?

SELECTION

NEWSWORTHINESS

PRACTICES Can you tell me how you came to focus on this news story by explaining the process that you followed from hearing about it, through to writing it? PROBE FOR MORE DETAIL THAN GOT FROM SHARL

Follow-up: What about this process worked well, and what didn't?

Why do you think was that the case?

SOURCE ACCESS

PRACTICES How did you contact the expert source/s, and what steps did you follow to get input?

SOURCE PURPOSE: Why did you feel it was necessary to get this expert's input on the story?

Follow-up: Were you satisfied with the interview – why/why not?

Follow-up: How long was your interview with the expert?

PRECONCEIVED FRAME

VIEW OF AUDIENCE What was your approach in writing the story – what did you feel was necessary to communicate to your readers?

CONVENTIONS

SOURCE ENGAGEMENT

PRE-CONCEIVED FRAME What questions did you have for the expert source?

Follow-up: Did you find the answers that you were looking for, if not, why do you think could this source not help?

SOURCE FRAME/ANGLE Did the source tell you things that made you view the topic (CHILD ABUSE/PROTECTION) differently to what you thought about it before the interview/press release?

Follow-up: Did the new information make you change the approach to the story; please elaborate.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

VALUE OF SOURCE Did you do checks on the information shared to you by the source, either background checks, or input from other sources to get an idea on the level of consensus and accuracy? [This question is especially important if the expert source information was received pre-packaged via press release, etc]

CREDIBILITY: If you have interviewed this expert before, what about him or her made you call on him/her for input again?

“BACKGROUND” EXPERTS: For this story, did you speak to sources whom you in the end did not name or include information from in the report – if so, elaborate

FOLLOW-UP: I see you quoted Wikipedia to explain FAS – was there a reason for using Wiki instead of information from for example from the FAS Info Centre’s website?

ORGANISATION & ROUTINES: What kinds of things about your work environment and work routines make it easy to engage with the expert source/s?

Follow-up: What make it difficult?

General views about experts

DEFINING AN EXPERT: How would you define an expert?

Follow-up: Describe the characteristics of an ideal expert source, what are you looking for in expert source when you feel you need input on a story.

IDENTIFYING EXPERT: How do you determine who is an expert on a specific topic?

PURPOSE OF EXPERT: When do you feel it necessary to approach an expert while working on a story?

SOURCE VALUE: What is the value of using expert sources in the construction of news reports?

Follow up: In what ways do you draw on experts’ input [probe for different ways of using info from experts – stats, quotes, opinion, commentary]

CREDIBILITY: What makes an expert source credible?

ACCESS: How do you find experts?

General about child abuse and experts

EXPERTS ROLE

What is the role of experts in such child abuse news?

Follow-on:
understanding child abuse?

Are there ways in which experts can contribute more in news to help

NEWS VALUE

Why are media reporting on child abuse?

Follow-on:
daily. Why do only certain cases make the news?

If one looks at the statistics, then it is clear that child abuse is happening

WRAP-UP:
which I didn't ask about that you'd like to share?

Any other experiences or views about your interaction with expert sources

Appendix 4: Breakdown of expert and non-expert sources in the sample, by sector, organisation and number of appearances

Sample A: Articles with contributory and interactional experts		Sample B: Articles without contributory and interactional experts	
Group category	Appearance in no. of articles	Group category	Appearance in no. of articles
<i>NPOs:</i>	16	<i>Government:</i>	86
Childline South Africa	3	Executive (Cabinet ministers, members of executive councils, premiers)	13
Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Information Centre	1	Departments (spokespersons)	16
Greater Research Intervention Programme	1	Police	37
Missing Children South Africa	1	Judiciary (judges, magistrates, National Prosecuting Authority)	18
National Adoption Coalition of South Africa	2	Local	2
Open Door Crisis Centre	1	<i>Professionals:</i> Prosecutors, lawyers, advocates, medical expert witnesses, educators, ambulance personnel	28
Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce	1		

Sonke Gender Justice	1	Victims:	15
The Teddy Bear Clinic	2	Relatives:	35
Women and Men Against Child Abuse	1	Relatives or friends of the victim	30
World Vision South Africa	1	Relatives or friends of the accused	5
Young Women's Christian Association	1	Media:	8
Research institutes:	3	Media outlet as primary source	4
Children's Institute, University of Cape Town	1	Media spokesperson	2
University of Cape Town researcher	1	Social media	2
Centre for Child Law, University of Pretoria	1	Accused/Convicted offenders:	15
Other:	5	Other:	13
Commission for Gender Equality	1	Political parties	4
United Nations Children's Fund	1	Members of community/public	3
SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Abuse Unit	1	Sportsmen/sport bodies	2

[SAPS district] Victim Support Unit	1	Eyewitnesses	3
Social worker	1	Business	1
Total	24	Total	192