Discovering Conversation Spaces in the Public Discourse of Gender Violence: a Comparative Between Two Different Contexts

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Abstract

A huge factor in gender-based violence is perception and stigma, revealed by public discourse. Topic modelling is useful for discourse analysis and reveals prevalent topics and actors. This study aims to find and compare examples of collectivist and individualist conversation spaces of gendered violence by applying Principal Component Analysis, N-Gram analysis and word association in two gender violence cases which occurred in the different contexts of the Philippines and the United States. The data from the Philippines consist of 2010-2011 articles on the 1991 Vizconde Massacre and the data from the United States consist of 2016-2017 articles from the 2015 Stanford Rape Case. Results show that in both cases’ conversation space there is a focus on institutions involved in the cases that does not really change over time, and a time-dependent conversation space for victims. Even in two different contexts of gender violence, patterns in conversation space appear similar.

1 Introduction

In 2010, around 20 people in the United States were being physically abused by a partner every minute (Black, Basile, Breiding, et al, 2011). Gender-based violence is a prevalent problem, even until today: 1 in 3 women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence worldwide (World Health Organization, 2016). The emphasis on gender points to the context that this violence happens because of unequal power relations between women and men. Gendered expectations and structures of power are passed down and learned through interactions and discussions - discourse datasets are a potential source to analyze for this (Butler, 1988).

This study uses principal component analysis, word frequency counts, word associations, and N-Gram analysis to compare two different public discourses on gender violence, specifically articles written about the Stanford rape case and the Vizconde massacre. This is done between two sets of discourse that happens in an individualist society (U.S.) and a collectivist society (Philippines). It aims to analyze a conversation space to see what aspect of gender violence discourse appears to be the primary focus - victims, perpetrators, institutions or society as an initial diagnosis of how gender violence is framed in such discourses.

People v. Brock Allen Turner (the official name of the legal case of the Stanford rape) began on January 18, 2015 when a college student athlete named Brock Turner was indicted for charges of rape and sexual assault. Turner was convicted on March 30, 2016 for charges of sexual assault. On June 2, 2016, he was sentenced to 6 months of jail. This case raised controversy because of the constant defense of the Turner family, claiming their son’s reputation would be ruined, as well as the short amount of time given to Brock Turner for his crime.

On the other hand, the Vizconde massacre in June 30, 1991 was a homicide case where one of the victims was raped before being killed. Several men were involved as suspects in the case, including Hubert Webb, Joey Filart, Artemio Ventura, Michael Gatchalian, Hospicio Fernandez and Anto-
What these various literature show are different aspects at play when rape narratives are framed - for the purpose of this study, these can be summarized into four entities: victims, perpetrators, institutions, and society/culture.

3 Methodology
Two datasets are used in this study. The first is the set of articles on the Stanford rape committed by Brock Turner starting from June 2, 2016 on the day Brock Turner’s sentence was given. The second is the set of articles on the Vizconde murders starting from December 14, 2010 when the suspects of the case were acquitted by the Supreme Court. These articles were gathered from various media sources. To account for different media biases, a single source was never to exceed a fourth of the total dataset. Data for each event was divided into two sets: one dataset of articles starting from the day of acquittal or sentence for up to two weeks afterward. The second dataset would be for articles occuring six months after the event.

3.1 Pre-Processing
Stop words, filler words and punctuation are removed from articles, and documents converted to lowercase. Aside from the standard dictionary of English stopwords, profanities are also removed from the data because of the vague emotions often associated with their use. Names of individuals involved in the cases are also removed for most processing steps. These are retained for bigram frequency count to see which actors in the discourse are more mentioned than others.

3.2 Word Frequency, Bi-Gram Frequency, and Word Association

Document-term matrices are generated for both unigrams and bigrams and collapsed into a word-frequency and bi-gram-frequency tables, arranged in descending order. Word association is done for the top fifteen unigrams and top five bigrams, using a minimum correlation value of 0.5.

3.3 Principal Component Analysis on Unigrams and Bi-Grams

Using document-term matrices generated for unigrams and bi-grams, principal component analysis is
applied for each. Generated document-term matrices had sparse terms removed, allowing for 85% to 90% maximum sparsity. Topics are located using PCA results, using all words in the first and second dimensions with a correlation value of 0.5 and above.

Principal component analysis is applied three times to the Stanford Rape and Vizconde Massacre datasets. Once for the set immediately after the chosen events, once for the set six months afterward, and one for the datasets as a whole.

3.4 Comparison
Lastly, the results of the two datasets are compared by looking into similarities and differences in key topics and actors in the conversation space. First, comparisons are drawn by looking into any changes over time for both events. Secondly, comparisons are drawn by looking at any similarities and differences between the two cultures. These are contextualized and analyzed by looking at cultural differences between the Philippines and United States as collectivist and individualist states.

4 Results and Discussion
Results are analyzed with the overall goal of finding out (a) if there are changes in the conversation space for the same gender violence event over a period of six months (b) what particular aspect of gender violence discourse appears to be the focal point of a particular set (victim, perpetrator, institution, or society), and (c) if there are similarities between two different contexts of gender violence (between the Philippines and the United States) even if the events occur in different times and societies.

4.1 Frequency Count and Associations
Frequency counts for words and bi-grams in the Stanford dataset can be found in table 1. Some things are worthy of note. First of all, words such as "victim" and "woman" disappear from the top 10 frequently mentioned words six months afterwards. "Campus", most possibly referring to the Stanford Rape, disappears as well. "Judge" appears to be a consistent entity mentioned even six months afterward.

This trend continues even with bi-gram analysis, in table 1. The closest bi-gram which could refer to
the victim in this case is “unconscious woman”, not even “Emily Doe” as she used a pseudonym. “Aaron Persky”, “Brock Turner”, and “Stanford University” appear more consistent.

Table 2: Stanford Rape: Word Associations for ‘Victim’

| Word       | Association |
|------------|-------------|
| confirmed  | 0.71        |
| crime      | 0.7         |
| actions    | 0.65        |
| serious    | 0.64        |
| caused     | 0.63        |
| remembered| 0.63        |
| county     | 0.62        |
| attempt    | 0.61        |
| lives      | 0.61        |
| meet       | 0.61        |
| conversations | 0.6   |
| lines      | 0.6         |
| remorse    | 0.6         |
| request    | 0.6         |
| genuine    | 0.59        |
| letter     | 0.59        |
| punishment | 0.59        |
| tried      | 0.59        |
| legal      | 0.58        |
| leniency   | 0.58        |

What this is presenting so far is a discourse that inconsistently talks about victims. An analysis of some words associated with “victim” that can be found in table 2 in the Stanford Rape dataset reveal that many words that are associated with “victim” are still in reference to legal institutions - words such as “legal”, “leniency”, “crime” and “punishment” which are more tied to the legal aspect of the cases. However, one set of word association results shows a break from this - when looking at associated words for “sentence” in table 3, there does appear to be a sudden association with the victim 6 months afterward with words such as “emily” and “victim” which were not present earlier.

The emerging trend of a more institution-centric discourse is consistent with findings in the Vizconde Massacre dataset, presented in table 4. Top words are “court” and “nbi”, referring to the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the Bureau of Investigations in the top words without any words that could be attributed to victims, and “Supreme Court”

Table 3: Stanford Rape: Word Associations for ‘Sentence’

| Word       | Association |
|------------|-------------|
| Immediately After |         |
| law        | 0.7         |
| county     | 0.68        |
| felony     | 0.67        |
| minutes    | 0.66        |
| hours      | 0.64        |
| clara      | 0.61        |
| leniency   | 0.61        |
| probation  | 0.61        |
| santa      | 0.61        |
| send       | 0.61        |
| viral      | 0.61        |
| urged      | 0.6         |
| dedicated  | 0.59        |
| pages      | 0.59        |
| superior   | 0.59        |
| action     | 0.58        |
| convicted  | 0.58        |
| california| 0.57        |
| class      | 0.57        |
| court      | 0.57        |
| 6 Months After |         |
| prison     | 0.89        |
| jail       | 0.82        |
| judicial   | 0.82        |
| recommended| 0.81        |
| defense    | 0.8         |
| excuse     | 0.8         |
| independent| 0.8         |
| looked     | 0.8         |
| assessment | 0.78        |
| decision   | 0.77        |
| critics    | 0.75        |
| probation  | 0.75        |
| national   | 0.74        |
| prosecutors| 0.74        |
| emily      | 0.73        |
| offender   | 0.73        |
| performance| 0.73        |
| victim     | 0.72        |
| clara      | 0.66        |
| defendant  | 0.66        |
and "de Lima" (the head of the Department of Justice) being the top bi-grams. Bi-gram analysis for the Vizconde Massacre dataset does, however, have "Lauro Vizconde" as a more consistent bi-gram immediately after the events and even 6 months afterwards. "Carmela Jennifer" appears in the case six months afterward, referring to two of the victims who were murdered in the case, Carmela and Jennifer Vizconde.

4.2 Principal Component Analysis

Principal component analysis results for the Stanford Rape case are in tables 5 and 6. The topics continue to show more of a focus towards institutional aspects of the case, with a topic on cultural discussion that emerged in the dataset six months after. A topic that would be close to the victim is the rape event itself which she herself narrated in the letter that she had written - a topic which can no longer be found in the later set’s PCA results. However, when PCA is applied to the overall dataset, the topic of the "victim" does emerge.

Meanwhile, in the case of the Vizconde Massacre in tables 7 and 8, the victims of the case, the Vizconde Family, emerge as a topic only six months afterwards. It is possible that this is a response to their family announcing things such as their remembrance masses and 20th anniversary of the deaths of the victims. The institution of the Supreme Court appears prominent throughout time, as "failure of prosecution" is still being talked about six months afterwards. Running PCA for the overall dataset reveals the topic "perceived injustice".

5 Conclusion

In both datasets from the United States and the Philippines, discourse appears to be primarily institution-centric, though it could possibly be argued that there is a very prominent space for the perpetrator as well. This is based on the consistency of their prominence even across a change of 6 months - with topics such and words such as 'court', 'judge', 'nbi' and topics such as 'court decision', 'judge persky' and the like. Victims, however, do not appear to have a very consistent space in the conversation as conversations seem likelier to change focus over time. Instead, victims are promi-

| Table 4: Vizconde Massacre Frequency Words and Bi-Grams |
|--------------------------------------------------------|
| **After Acquittal**                                    |
| court 306                                              |
| justice 129                                            |
| accused 110                                            |
| decision 108                                           |
| supreme 94                                             |
| crime 92                                               |
| family 82                                              |
| witness 81                                             |
| evidence 72                                            |
| nbi 72                                                 |
| **After 6 Months**                                     |
| nbi 54                                                 |
| investigation 41                                       |
| evidence 40                                            |
| witnesses 40                                           |
| crime 38                                               |
| court 36                                               |
| justice 33                                             |
| time 29                                                |
| country 22                                             |
| doj 22                                                 |
| **After Acquittal**                                    |
| supreme court 92                                       |
| hubert webb 55                                         |
| jessica alfaro 39                                      |
| lauro vizconde 37                                      |
| trial court 31                                          |
| court appeals 30                                       |
| reasonable doubt 30                                    |
| beyond reasonable 28                                   |
| co accused 28                                           |
| associate justices 24                                   |
| **After 6 Months**                                     |
| de lima 45                                              |
| hubert webb 24                                         |
| supreme court 22                                       |
| lauro vizconde 15                                      |
| bureau investigation 11                                 |
| carmelia jennifer 10                                   |
| national bureau 10                                     |
| leila de 9                                              |
| crime scene 8                                          |
| double jeopardy 8                                      |
Table 5: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions Immediately After Rape as Crime

| Category            | Value     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| santa clara         | 0.8620547 |
| clara county        | 0.8562122 |
| minutes action      | 0.6171062 |
| intent commit       | 0.5957213 |
| intoxicated person  | 0.5732411 |
| former stanford     | 0.5321426 |
| county jail         | 0.5047081 |

Table 6: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions 6 Months After Cultural Discussion

| Category            | Value     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| discipline          | 0.893028  |
| social              | 0.883636  |
| bias                | 0.862573  |
| conclude            | 0.855627  |
| convincing          | 0.855627  |
| warranting          | 0.855627  |
| published           | 0.855477  |
| thousands           | 0.825842  |
| party               | 0.813465  |
| online              | 0.790534  |
| authority           | 0.784198  |
| california          | 0.776017  |
| prosecutors         | 0.772755  |
| media               | 0.769583  |
| engaged             | 0.725875  |
| received            | 0.715041  |
| misconduct          | 0.703931  |
| passed              | 0.697357  |
| ignited             | 0.695873  |
| concluded           | 0.666578  |
| system              | 0.665496  |

Table 5: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions Immediately After Rape as Crime

| Category            | Value     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| night               | 0.9308822 |
| time                | 0.9091522 |
| body                | 0.9084846 |
| life                | 0.8999215 |
| family              | 0.8937538 |
| told                | 0.8856298 |
| drinking            | 0.8837296 |
| party               | 0.8835866 |
| happened            | 0.8788474 |
| consent             | 0.8695934 |
| attorney            | 0.8629541 |
| dumpster            | 0.851985  |
| unconscious          | 0.8511993 |
| naked               | 0.8508088 |

Table 6: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions 6 Months After Cultural Discussion

| Category            | Value     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| discipline          | 0.893028  |
| social              | 0.883636  |
| bias                | 0.862573  |
| conclude            | 0.855627  |
| convincing          | 0.855627  |
| warranting          | 0.855627  |
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| misconduct          | 0.703931  |
| passed              | 0.697357  |
| ignited             | 0.695873  |
| concluded           | 0.666578  |
| system              | 0.665496  |

Table 5: Stanford Rape: PCA Dimensions Immediately After Rape as Crime

| Category            | Value     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Turner’s Sentence   |           |
| clara               | 0.7986594 |
| santa               | 0.7986594 |
| county              | 0.6862388 |
| sentence            | 0.6565878 |
| law                 | 0.6543873 |
| california          | 0.6096214 |
| sentencing           | 0.5948697 |
| media               | 0.5923465 |
| report              | 0.5858502 |
| felony              | 0.5478694 |
| prison              | 0.5177417 |
| court               | 0.5151062 |
| national            | 0.5084797 |
| judge               | 0.5053399 |
Table 7: Vizconde Massacre: PCA Dimensions Immediately After Court Decision

| Court Decision          | Value  |
|-------------------------|--------|
| court                   | 0.868481 |
| prosecution             | 0.808735 |
| accused                 | 0.777947 |
| evidence                | 0.76032 |
| associate               | 0.758914 |
| testimony               | 0.736475 |
| trial                   | 0.716811 |
| crime                   | 0.697268 |
| justices                | 0.69006 |
| paranaque               | 0.680054 |
| inconsistencies         | 0.643145 |
| appeals                 | 0.607427 |
| sister                  | 0.599042 |
| ruling                  | 0.591526 |
| dna                     | 0.581791 |
| midas                   | 0.560098 |
| released                | 0.551964 |
| decision                | 0.547805 |
| prove                   | 0.54019 |
| witness                 | 0.53984 |

Hubert Webb

| Hubert Webb            | Value  |
|------------------------|--------|
| senator                | 0.744941 |
| father                 | 0.652629 |
| son                    | 0.615067 |
| home                   | 0.602323 |
| prison                 | 0.582448 |
| family                 | 0.546761 |
| day                    | 0.531314 |
| former                 | 0.50988 |

Jessica Alfaro

| Jessica Alfaro         | Value  |
|------------------------|--------|
| positive identification| 0.786539 |
| credible witness       | 0.726663 |
| court court            | 0.709272 |
| court appeals          | 0.678953 |
| substitute witness     | 0.648001 |
| lower court            | 0.589628 |
| defense alibi          | 0.587118 |
| witness nbi            | 0.559133 |
| nbi asset              | 0.557574 |
| trial court            | 0.548972 |
| alfarcos testimony     | 0.506208 |
| physical evidence      | 0.503106 |

Table 8: Vizconde Massacre: 6 Months After Crime Investigation

| Crime Investigation       | Value  |
|---------------------------|--------|
| national                  | 0.768269 |
| investigation             | 0.725393 |
| secretary                 | 0.676848 |
| bureau                    | 0.668087 |
| period                    | 0.651219 |
| suspects                  | 0.610525 |
| country                   | 0.589908 |
| crime                     | 0.577354 |
| reinvestigation           | 0.565068 |
| nbi                       | 0.544061 |
| evidence                  | 0.512984 |
| file                      | 0.502901 |

Vizconde Family

| Vizconde Family          | Value  |
|--------------------------|--------|
| friends                  | 0.750561 |
| people                   | 0.746146 |
| family                   | 0.66433 |
| wife                     | 0.660527 |
| paraaque                 | 0.630516 |
| involved                 | 0.621915 |
| homes                    | 0.618088 |
| told                     | 0.607636 |
| supposed                 | 0.596577 |
| murders                  | 0.525381 |
| witness                  | 0.511999 |
| daughters                | 0.502754 |

Failure of Prosecution

| Failure of Prosecution    | Value  |
|---------------------------|--------|
| co accused                | 0.715868 |
| corroborated testimony    | 0.697234 |
| period apply              | 0.697234 |
| testimony witness         | 0.697234 |
| national police           | 0.6949 |
| defense alibi             | 0.66142 |
| time crime                | 0.66142 |
| charges filed             | 0.630004 |
| crime happened            | 0.630004 |
| failed establish          | 0.630004 |
| police pnp                | 0.630004 |
| prescriptive period       | 0.615335 |
| prove guilt               | 0.592484 |
| based testimony           | 0.53435 |
| acquitted supreme          | 0.520877 |
| crime evidence            | 0.520877 |
| file charges              | 0.520877 |
when there is a particularly striking occurrence within the case events - such as Emily Doe’s letter in the Stanford rape case leading to the topic “rape event” and the words “victim”, “woman” and “unconscious woman” being more prominent in the discourse; while the Vizconde Family’s remembrance mass in the Vizconde massacre case lead to people discussing the topic “Vizconde family”. Thus, it can be said that victims have a time-dependent role in the conversation space. Societal discussions, on the other hand, appear inconsistent as well - with topics such as “cultural discussion” or “perceived injustice” not being as prominent.

Even in two different contexts- in two different cultures and two different times - patterns in gender violence discourse appear to be similar - both focusing on institutions and perpetrators more than on victims and society. This opens up further questions still in terms of how much more understanding or progress still needs to be made in terms of how cases such as these are discussed, and if these kinds of attitudes towards discussions on gender violence exist across various cultures. In any case, for both events that were studied for this research, it appears that media discourse remains somewhat silent when it comes to analyzing societal culture; as a result, victims may still find themselves in the background of their own injustice.

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