The Racialisation of Rape Narratives in British Media Coverage of the Delhi Rape

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Introduction

News media plays an essential role in the creation and legitimisation of ideas and narratives in popular public opinion, and thus in the production and maintenance of the hegemony of dominant discourses in the public sphere (Cameron 2007:268, Gruely & Duvall 2012:29). News media therefore, is heavily implicated and highly influential in the promotion, or culturally sanctioned challenging, of particular ideologies and the perpetuation, or contestation, of hegemonic structures and sites of power (Johnson & Milani 2010:5, Blackledge 2010:143). Where these narratives, shaped and refracted within the sphere of news media, pertain to rape and gender-based violence, they take on a key role in informing fundamental ideas about the social world. These ideas include conceptions of gender, power, class, race and society, through which we interact with, engage with, and even arguably produce, our own social environment (Projansky 2001:7). The symbolic and emotive potential of rape narratives has, throughout colonial and post-colonial history, been powerfully employed in connection with race, in order to influence public opinion regarding the relationship between the racially divided 'Self' and 'Other' (Hansen 2006:34). Narratives which attach racial stereotypes to instances or accusations of rape in order to establish what Davis terms "the myth of the black rapist" (1981:182) have been used to legitimise the production and maintenance of racial hierarchies, discourage the integration of cultures and uphold power dynamics which favour the white male in terms of both gender and cultural sophistication (Davis 1981:185). Matua (2001) proposes that such hierarchies have been disseminated globally through Western observation of, and comment upon, the Third World[1], which generally adhere to what he terms the "Savages, Victims and Saviours" (SVS) model. This model, he argues, shapes our understanding of relations between the First and Third World by compartmentalising complex phenomena into simplified culturally designated frames; the foreign savage, the passive victim and the Western saviour. Matua, like Davis, argues that these frames act to uphold the gendered and racialised power relations which defined the colonial period into the present day.

Against this background, this paper looks to explore questions of *how* Western media in the present day reports upon issues of sexual violence and the Third World, and what narratives such reportage promotes in popular opinion. The paper will examine the intertwining of rape, race and colonial residue in news media by analysing the racialisation of discourse surrounding the 2012 'Delhi gang rape' through the lens of Matua's SVS framework. It will be argued that the emotive power of rape narratives has been used as a means to express the supposed 'savagery' of Indian – and by extension Third World – men and culture, in line with Matua's thesis. News media coverage of the gang rape will therefore be analysed in terms of its influence upon international power dynamics, where reinforcement of colonially sculpted perceptions of the foreign savage have been invoked to reify and reaffirm the superiority of the West over the Third World and its former colonies therein. This paper will demonstrate that many aspects of the coverage of the Delhi rape case adhere, with little divergence, to this racialised model of categorisation. It will be shown that in this context rape and sexual violence have been falsely attributed to cultural deficiencies inherent to the Third world, rather than to their roots in global structures of patriarchy, as will be the underlying assumption of causality presented in this paper.

Attempting to identify or define 'racism' or racialised language is, of course, an inherently contentious endeavour, with many contending accounts of what qualifies as 'racist', and with racial distinctions often being presented subtly

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and even unconsciously (Blackledge 2010:144). For the purposes of this paper therefore, discussion of racialised language will be restricted to that account offered by Shohat and Stam (1994) which does not make claims of universality, but rather focuses upon discourse of "West and Rest". Shohat and Stam note that this lens allows a clearer understanding of the "discursive residue of colonialism" (*ibid*) which runs as an undercurrent through contemporary news media. In order to understand the nature and extent of the utilisation of such racialised and colonially-distilled categories in media coverage, this paper will present a discourse analysis of a number of British news media sources. Examination of coverage of the Delhi gang rape from UK newspapers *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* pointed to a series of key themes which were used to portray India, and Indian men, as violent, misogynistic and culturally backwards in terms of treatment of women, and Indian women as therefore homogenous in their oppression and victimisation.

It is implicit within this discourse that constructions of India and the Third World have significant implications upon perceptions, knowledge and understandings of the West. In terms of identity formation, as described by Lene Hansen, the construction of one unit is only possible insofar as there occurs a simultaneous delineation of another parallel unit through the juxtaposition of contrasting subjects (2006:18). Hansen argues that the crystallisation of a national state identity is often the result only of the establishment of a radicalised "Other" in the international sphere. In the context of this paper therefore, it is proposed that constructions of Indian culture as 'backwards' and misogynistic inherently and necessarily produce at the opposite pole co-constituted narratives which present Western manifestations of culture and gender relations as 'progressive'.[2] Where Indian women are portrayed as victimised, oppressed and insecure it follows that women in the West should conceptualise their own cultures and identities in terms of security, liberation and empowerment. This construction has significant repercussions in terms of the Western relationship to global structures of domination and patriarchy, which will be explored in this paper.

The following will be divided into five chapters. The first will set out an overview of previous research surrounding the linkage of rape and race in narrative composition, and thus provide a contextual academic framework within which this paper is located. Chapter two will set out the methodological framework employed within the current study. Chapter three will go on to describe the content of racialised narratives built up around the 2012 Delhi case. Chapter four will address the narratives surrounding Western identification with foreign populations in terms of Matua's SVS model. It will consist of an analysis of these narratives in terms of their effects upon international perceptions of India (and more broadly of Shohat and Stam's "Rest", that is, the Third World) and the power dynamics this fosters in the international system. Chapter five will discuss the implications of this for feminist praxis and engagement with both domestic and international structures of patriarchal control. The central argument throughout will be that racialised accounts of the Delhi gang rape collectively promoted the 'myth of the black rapist' (Davis 1981) and have thus ingrained colonially-shaped racial hierarchies and power structures. These narratives, whilst presenting a demonised account of Indian society and culture, have co-constitutively presented the West as a beacon of morality, progressiveness and, as a result, international authority. This juxtaposition has also served to encourage widespread acceptance amongst women in Western societies of the norms of patriarchy and control that exist, not only in the Third World as is implied by news media, but also as part of the fabric of Western cultures, attitudes and power relations.

It is important to note at this point of departure that, for the purposes of this paper, race and gender will be regarded as the key units of analysis which construct identity and shape the social world. This is not to discount or discredit other signifiers of identity or social authority, such as class, religion and ethno-nationality, but rather to concentrate focus upon the most commonly invoked features of news media analysis in rape and race discourse. It must, of course, be acknowledged that identities are multi-faceted and embody many spatially and temporally connected elements, all of which offer multiple sites for the exercise of power and oppression outwith white/non-white or male/female binaries (Lewis & Mills 2003:5; Lorde 1983:25).

Chapter One: Academic and Theoretical Context

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The importance of the creation and recreation of narratives in attaching meaning to world events has, of course, been subject to much prior academic discussion. Narratives, or discourses, "promote particular categories of thought and belief" and as such organise, structure and even construct our understandings of the social world such that some forms of narrative are accepted as legitimate whilst others are silenced or widely discredited (Evans 2005:1049). Narratives surrounding rape are important in shaping the frames through which we view the world. Projansky argues that "Operating in literature, law, the courts, social activism, family life, newspapers, paintings and war, rape narratives help organise, understand and even arguably produce the social world; they help structure social understandings of complex phenomena such as gender, race, class and nation" (Projansky 2001:7). Tracing narratives surrounding rape and sexual violence is, therefore, of key importance to an appreciation of their effect on understandings of gender, race and violence.

One of the first feminist writings to undertake an in depth discussion of rape was Brownmiller's seminal *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975). The book acted as a turning point in discourse surrounding rape, not only insofar as it placed discussion of sexual violence firmly on the public agenda for the first time (Horeck 2004: 18), but also in its revolutionary assertion that rape, far from being a crime of passion committed on the individual level as was widely assumed prior, in fact embodies an inherently and necessarily political dimension which is used to maintain structures of male dominance over women (Brownmiller 1975:15,211).

Brownmiller's work however, despite its success in promoting mainstream political discussion of sexual violence, has been criticised by a number of black and postcolonial feminist writers for its handling of the subject of race as it intertwines with rape narratives (Horeck 2004:19). Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class* (1981), for example, outlines what she terms "the myth of the black rapist" and how this myth is perpetuated through Brownmiller's work (1981:172). Davis suggests that Brownmiller reproduces certain colonially-structured tropes which place disproportionate emphasis upon a depiction of the non-white male as naturally prone to committing acts of violence against women (Davis 1981:178, Horeck 2004:29). Davis argues that Brownmiller's focus upon the defence of white women raped by black men, boxes her into the reproducing historical caricatures of the "black male rapist" and the "white virginal victim" (Davis 1981:198/9). These ideas feed into what Smith describes as "cultural narratives about black male animalism" (Smith 1990:161), narratives which hooks describes as being fabricated to promote structures of oppression and white dominance (1990:60).

It is important to iterate at this junction that, to the extent that such information can be garnered, data on sexual violence suggests that assumptions about the primacy of "the black rapist" are fallacies; "unfounded in any objective reality" (Hall 1983:335). Projansky argues that these fallacies have been invoked to fabricate a cultural narrative which structures racial relations and maintains racially divisive social norms (Projansky 2001:9,156). A system is thus created wherein the intersectionality of race and gender acts as a dual site of oppression (Ang 1995:197). Horeck contends, in further critique of *Against Our Will*, that Brownmiller often falls short of this recognition, presenting resistance of racism and sexism as "either or" battles (2004:30). This represents a failure to acknowledge the intertwined and inseparable histories of rape and racism (*ibid*:31), and hence how the two are held together in cultural narratives wherein "the myth of the black rapist continues to carry out the insidious work of racist ideology" (Davis 1981:199).

It should be understood however, that although Davis' analysis is in many ways highly insightful, it is also significantly influenced by her own political agenda; that is dispelling this myth of the black man as particularly prone to sexual violence. As such, wittingly or otherwise, her discussion focuses upon circumstances wherein innocent black men have been falsely accused of rape in order to justify, and thus maintain, racialised structures. Given this focus, Davis fails to provide any significant discussion, beyond a brief and cursory caveat (1981:196), of instances where black men *have* in fact been the perpetrators of rape and how this affects rape and race discourse.

Davis and hooks also primarily situate their focus upon interracial rape, resulting in a void of analysis concerning discourse when both victim and perpetrator are non-white or non-Western (Projansky 2001:158). This represents an important area for further investigation, as power dynamics reflected in coverage by Western, and thus predominantly 'white'[3], news media are inevitably shifted. This paper will therefore look to provide a wider frame of analysis than that offered in previous research, providing an analysis of rape and race discourse in terms of "West

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and Rest" relations (Shohat & Stam 1994).

This analysis will be underpinned by Makau Matua's model, which conceives of narratives as constructed through a "three dimensional prism" of "savages, victims and saviours" (2001:202). Initially born as a critique of human rights praxis, the model is premised upon the formulation of a narrative wherein Western "saviours" intervene as the defenders of non-Western – and typically female – "victims" from a tyrannical "savage", located within the cultural fabric of non-Western society. In SVS discourse, non-Western cultures are typically depicted as steeped in traditions that are harmful to women, such as female genital mutilation and culturally sanctioned murder, battery and rape (*ibid*:222), thus placing the vulnerability of non-Western women at the centre of cultural debates. In so doing, SVS discourse acts to create and recreate the narratives of victimhood which sustain the dominance of the Western saviour. Victims are presented as powerless and innocent, establishing a moral clarity between the 'good' saviour and 'evil' savage, through their attitudes towards the victim. It is in this context that the West assumes the role of redeeming Third World populations from their own traditions and beliefs. Haggis notes that such narratives contribute to the construction of Third World women as victims and argues that this has historically been used as a political tool to elevate and empower Western women at the expense of those in the Third World (1998:179). Matua argues that the SVS model colours the way in which we engage with and understand world events, acting as a continuation of colonial power relations into the modern era and a means of disseminating latent racism through supposedly progressive discourse (2001:243).

Rape and racism in news media: Reporting on "The Black Rapist"
News media narratives present an important area of exploration in terms of understanding how racialised ideas, such as those discussed above, have become accepted as part of mainstream discourse. Law discusses the importance of news media in "maintaining and reproducing values and supposed knowledge in the popular imagination" regarding the production and reproduction of racial hierarchies and inequalities (2002:11). News media, he argues, "has been a key site for representation of ideas about racialised groups, providing mass comment, information and speculation which repeats, reinvents and shapes wider sets of race-related ideas." (*ibid*:1).

In order to understand the meaning and signification of news stories, Fowler contends, one must engage with the dominant paradigms and stereotypes presented. Even those readers operating critically must first "switch on to" these ideas, hence reinforcing, and indeed increasing, their salience in the public mind (1999:232). In this sense, media reportage today tends not to broaden public horizons or challenge popular assumptions, but instead acts largely as a tool of reinforcing what we already "know", hence rigidifying and cementing the power dynamics which stem from this supposed knowledge (Lyotard 1993:143). With respect to race, employment of familiar racial categories and stereotypes in news media coverage allows elites to reify and legitimise a system of white dominance (van Dijk 1993:5,284; McNair 1998) by continually producing and reproducing racialised tropes through media discourses (van Dijk 1993:5).

As was noted above, it seems that rape is a "special kind of crime" in relation to narrative creation (Higgins 1991:307) and as such the linkage of rape and race often acts as key feature of news coverage (Law 2002:78). Hooks argues that obsessive media focus on the idea that "all black men are rapists" is inherently political (*ibid*:61), with mainstream white media sources using these narratives to disseminate the idea that black men present a threat to society, and that the means to control this threat is racial domination and control (*ibid*:60).

Law proposes that news media sources knowingly and consciously "play up the race card" when reporting on crimes of a sexual nature in order to preserve a strong link in the general consciousness between non-white race, violence and sexuality (2002:80). In exemplification of this idea, he discusses Lule's (1997) analysis of mainstream news discourse surrounding the rape of Desiree Washington by the former boxing champion, Mike Tyson. He argued from his findings that reportage was flawed by its reliance upon racist imagery and "demeaning racist archetypes" (Leonard & King 2011:194), reinforcing the idea of a hyper-sexualised, black savage. Ross (1998) presents a similar discussion arguing that, even where the race is of no relevance to the incident, it is frequently treated as a central element of news media reportage in cases where perpetrators are non-white.

It should not be overlooked however that, despite racist undertones, the news stories which formed the basis of

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Lule's analysis were remarked to have featured no *explicit* bigotry. Coverage instead relied upon covert expressions of demeaning racist stereotypes (Lule 1997). This can be taken to exemplify what May terms "New Racism" (May 2007:33, Blackledge 2010:144), which both he and Projansky argue is a prominent feature of much modern news media wherein apparently neutral language allows "culturally sanctioned racism" (Projansky 2001:7) to pervade everyday discourse. Where explicit displays of racist leanings are likely to elicit widespread public rejection, subtle permeation of racialised ideas, for example those tropes laid out in Matua's SVS model, allows racialised ideology to become normalised, and eventually entered into the realm of what Blackledge terms "common sense knowledge" (2010:143). This form of sanctioned racism, which relies upon assumed knowledge based on misrepresentation, is produced through news media highlighting particular, non-representative cases which fit the desired ideological agenda. When reinforced over a prolonged period, this becomes a self-sustaining base for racist attitudes and hierarchies (van Dijk 2002:152, Law 2002:85, Richardson 2004).

A number of the above scholars observe the importance of the relative silence surrounding sexual abuse committed by white men, against both white and non-white women (hooks 1990:61, Law 2002:80, Matua 2001:222, Projansky 2001:6). This silence, suggests hooks, implicitly communicates a message that crimes committed by black men pose a more significant threat than those of white men who are, in the majority, implicitly protected by their position as the most powerful agents of Western hegemony (Ang 1995:194, hooks 1990:61). Matua observes that lack of reportage of rape by supposedly 'civilised' white men serves to cloak the prevalence of sexual violence in the West (2001:222), thus constructing rape as a problem which occurs "over there [in non-Western cultures]" committed by people who we perceive as fundamentally "not like us" (Matua 2001:222; Rorty 1993:113) and designate as culturally subordinate.

Oloka-Onyango and Temple discuss this invocation of culture as a means of furthering certain ideological, political and social agendas; these cultural narratives, equating to Matua's "savage" culture, are then used to justify structures of dominance and control of West over rest (1995:706-9). Many scholars note that the use of rape as a basis for such culture-focused narratives has thus founded itself on women's bodies as the 'physical battleground' for wider political struggles and agendas (Bunch 1990:491, Kabir 2010:150, Katrak 2006: xi, Orloff 1993:303). Kabir examines how stories of rape have been used to empower certain factions of society and advance their political ideologies (2010:151). She notes that the ways in which rape is narrated in the public sphere and in political rhetoric can be violating and disempowering to women who have suffered such abuse. Further, Kabir asserts that academics have hitherto shied away from thorough discussion of rape and that this void is what has left space for popular rhetoric and polemical (mis)uses of discourse surrounding rape (*ibid*:152). This paper intends to offer an exploration of narratives of rape and race, thus aiming to begin to fill the academic gap articulated in Kabir's work.

Law argues that the majority of current academic discussion on rape and race has lacked specific focus and empirical depth (2002:2) and has primarily discussed rape only as an interracial crime, committed by black males against white females, or falsely levelled by white females against black males, at the domestic level. This discussion has thus failed to explore discourse surrounding rape of non-Western women by non-Western men within foreign contexts. Motivated thus, this paper will conduct an in-depth discourse analysis on British media coverage of the gang rape of an Indian women by Indian men in Delhi on the 16th of December 2012 ('the Delhi gang rape'), examining the racialised, neocolonial representations proffered therein and the power-dynamics this promotes in terms of West-Rest relations. The colonial history connecting India and Britain renders this analysis of particularly interest.

It is intended that this study will increase the breadth and depth of understanding of internationalised rape narratives in news media and their affect on global power structures and international relations. Through this analysis, it will look to reformulate a number of the ideas outlined in previous research in the hope of coming to a clearer understanding of the intersection of gender, race, power and violence in the current global order. Building on the work of the scholars discussed above, this paper will examine a number of common themes relating to the myth of the black rapist, the SVS model and subsequent cultural subordination of India and the Third World. The following chapter will further outline the rationale and methodology employed in so doing.

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Chapter Two: Methodology

Discourse Analysis

Hansen argues that discourse constructs ideas and materiality in such a way that particular meanings can be ascribed to facts and events and, as such, influence how these events are interpreted and understood in particular socio-historical settings (2006:23,32). In light of this discursive power, it is important to examine the ways in which discourse is disseminated; with particular focus on how facts (in this instance real news events) are coupled with certain representations in order to build up a supposed 'knowledge' of the world, of one's identity and crucially of how these constructs interact with and inform one another. Through an analysis of news media discourse, this paper looks to understand how discursive agency has been employed by the media to document and distribute news in such a way that it elicits particular understandings of, and reactions to, world events.

Data Collection and Analysis

Discourse analysis of the 2012 Delhi Gang rape has been undertaken in order to build up an accurate picture of the nature of the dominant themes and narratives which have permeated news media reportage. Data was collected from articles pertaining to the 2012 Delhi bus gang rape from British newspapers:*The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*. These papers were selected as they are reputable news sources within the UK and together span the moderate poles of the British political spectrum. Articles were taken from a month-long period from the 16th of December 2012, the date of the attack, until the 16th of January 2013. Coverage of the incident has, of course, exceeded this interval. However, given the limited scope of the current study, a critical period was selected as it encompasses initial responses to the breaking story; the death and cremation of the woman killed in the attack; the preliminary setting of charges against the accused; the commencement of the trial and the beginnings of the unfolding story of political unrest in India which escalated as a result of the case.

Using the LexisNexis Academic Database ®, articles from these papers and their online publications which carried the terms 'Delhi' (and/or 'India') and 'Gang Rape' in the heading or leading paragraphs, and/or used the term 3 or more times in the body of the article were located and used for data analysis. Between the three newspapers and their respective websites this identified 267 articles. Articles which matched the search criteria but which did not directly pertain to the incident in question or its ramifications were excluded from results. Search results which yielded letters *to* the newspaper rather than their direct publications were also excluded, as were duplicate copies of the same article. After exclusion, 193 articles remained for analysis.

Data analysis from these articles focused on the identification and evaluation of key themes and frames, to be discussed in chapter 3, which were repeated between articles and newspapers and across the time period specified above. In order to maintain focus on macro-level narratives, formal operational procedures have been rejected in favour of a non-formalised interpretation of characteristic features of the discourse promoted by Western media (Waever 2003). Whilst acknowledging that procedures which place emphasis on 'counting' and the study of word-clusters can aid some forms of analysis, the purpose of this paper is to examine *meaning* and *understanding* which can be obscured by a formal operational approach. A number of quotations, representative of the general news media, have been selected for discussion in order to provide a fuller and more in-depth textual analysis of media discourse and its influence on public opinion.

Gruely and Duvall note that analysis of frames or narratives built up by the media is an important device for understanding the formation of public opinion through repeated use of certain rhetorical tools (2012:31/2). These constructed narratives "encourage intended readers to think about events in particular ways" (*ibid*:32) by increasing the salience and acceptance of certain ideas which, over time, become organising principles through which news events are understood and interpreted in popular opinion. The research carried out as part of the current study found that, as described by Gruely and Duvall, certain themes, frames and categories of thought were repeatedly employed in ways that encouraged specific understandings of the cultural context in which the Delhi gang rape took place. It should also be noted here that the themes identified by this study as central to the "organising principles" (*ibid*:32) which structured coverage of the Delhi case, showed very little variance between the papers selected for analysis, in spite of their markedly different political leanings. Gruely and Duvall argue that this repetition is central in generating what becomes a 'common sense' form of knowledge which is able to permeate into general consciousness and

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consensus (*ibid:31).*

The identified themes will be discussed in the following chapter. A number of quotes which illustrate these themes in context and are representative of the bulk of media coverage have been extracted for demonstrative purposes[4].

Chapter Three: The Delhi Gang Rape in British Media- Themes, Frames and Narratives

Analysis of British media coverage of the Delhi case brought to light a number of key themes, which were repeated with significant frequency both throughout the specified time period and between the news sources selected for the current study. These themes included the portrayal of Indian men and culture as abnormally savage and violent towards women; the suggestion that India is both outdated and misogynistic in terms of placing blame for rape and sexual assault upon the 'victims'[5] of such attacks; discussion of Indian women in terms of their innocence, passivity and homogenised 'victimhood'; portrayal of Indian police, courts and government as both inept and unwilling to addrerss issues of sexual violence; and finally, the tactical utilisation of statistical data to bolster and affirm media narratives without presentation of comparable data pertaining to the UK, or indeed any area of the Western world. The nature and content of these repeated themes will be outlined in this chapter, before being evaluated in terms of international and political effects in chapters 4 and 5.

Indian Savagery
The narrative of Indian men and Indian culture as violent and oppressive, particularly in terms of the systematic subjugation of women, was the primary frame which structured news media coverage during the period of the present study. It was consistently reported that India was home to a 'rape culture'[6] or 'rape problem' of a magnitude unparalleled in the West[7]. This "endemic of sexual violence and harassment"[8] was reported by many to stem directly from the inherent "savagery"[9] of Indian society and the propensity towards sexual violence posited as a common characteristic of Indian men. India was presented as a "hospitable terrain for backward ideas to flourish", with these "backwards ideas" supposedly serving as the catalyst behind those instances of gang rape reported as "common place in India"[10], where violence against women was taken to be "embedded in India's families".[11]

Discourse of India's savagery tended to revolve around a focal point of 'lower class' Indian men – the poor; the jobless; those residing in slums or areas of urban degradation –who were assumed, by and large, to be the perpetrators of sexual assault and as such the "fearless predators"[12] at the heart of the nation's "rape problem".[13] These men were portrayed as uneducated, drunken, "loutish" and of disreputable social backgrounds.[14],[15],[16] The Telegraph contrasted this "underclass" of Indian men against their "middle-class, Westernised" counterparts, suggesting that "these [more Western] men would never dream of touching a woman without her consent, but the reality is that many Indian men dream of doing just that."[17]

These narratives, depicting typical Indian men and culture as behind, or "backwards"[18] and suffering from "entrenched misogyny"[19] regarding the treatment of women, were consistently and frequently repeated throughout all three news sources analysed for this study. As previously noted, this repetition allows for the creation and legitimisation of a relatively stable narrative, wherein particular categories of thought and language can be promoted, encouraging the dissemination and popular acceptance of certain beliefs and ideologies.

Victim-blaming in India
Cumulatively, publications analysed as part of the current study formed a narrative wherein instances of victim-blaming[20] said to be taking place in the context of the Delhi gang rape were posited as the outcome of a cultural phenomena particular to India's "draconian"[21] attitudes towards women and "endemic preferential treatment of men"[22]. The Guardian proposed that in India specifically, "women are often blamed for attacks"[23]; and that "the response of authorities… is frequently to blame the victims"[24]. The Telegraph situated this victim-blaming response in the cultural fabric of Indian society; "a culture where many rapes go unreported and where police officers frequently fail to pursue cases, often placing blame on the victim"[25]. The Times consistently described victim-blaming as a phenomenon particular to India and the non-Western world, throughout the period of study. "Police and

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politicians [in India] alike," were reported to "still discuss rape in terms of a woman's clothes, behaviour and habits, or of a "Westernised" popular culture inflaming passions that men, being only human, cannot be expected to control. Too often, they are to be found openly suggesting that sexual history, or drunkenness, or merely being unmarried are factors that make any rape somehow less of one".[26]

The quotations documented above are indicative of the overall response of all three papers analysed. All papers adhered to the same general model, wherein the blame, supposedly placed upon female targets of rape and sexual assault in India, was highlighted and treated as a backward practice, now obsolete in Western media and public discourse.

Hypervictimisation of Indian Women
In contrast, depictions of Indian women for the Western audience were found to place predominant focus, not on personal responsibility, but upon vulnerability and victimisation. The papers analysed for the present study encouraged understandings of Indian women which centered around their embodiment of virtuous – and typically feminine – traits. These included respectability, purity, kindness and honor, as well as being hardworking, innocent and dutiful to their families[27],[28]. The media augmented an image of victimhood by consistently emphasising the youth of the 23 year old killed in the attack. From here, the juvenility of all Indian women, or "India's Daughters", as they tellingly came to be called in media coverage, was inferred.

This narrative however was, by necessity, juxtaposed against coverage of the protests which spread across India in the wake of the December attack, forcing a stark dichotomy between two opposing narratives of the Indian female. In some instances this contradiction necessitated the acknowledgement of less passive visions of Indian women. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. In the majority of cases however, the fact that protests in India were largely woman-led was glossed over, or else used as an avenue through which to reiterate their vulnerability by further detailing the oppressive context of their struggle for change.

Indian Police, Courts and Government
Closely linked to narratives of the savagery and misogyny of Indian culture, ran a parallel criticism of Indian police, courts and government by British media. These systems were described as being unable and/or unwilling to effectively respond to or combat incidents of rape, sexual assault and violence against women. The reality of "a police and justice system that routinely fails victims of sexual assault"[29] and justice procedures which are "unresponsive and insensitive" to the needs of survivors of sexual violence[30] were discussed as if uniquely Indian problems. These were understood to be born largely of a culture of "political apathy"[31],[32] wherein a leadership, bolstered by a culture of female oppression, had "allowed the country to lag far behind much of the world on women's rights"[33].

Statistical Data
It is also worth noting here that the majority of media articles analysed in the context of this study utilised statistical data about the frequency of rape and sexual violence in India, the inefficiency of the Indian legal system, the misogyny of Indian men, or a combination of some or all of the above. These statistics, in the vast majority of cases, were presented as disturbing comment on the prevalence of sexual violence and/or political ineptitude in India. *No* articles provided comparable statistics for the UK or elsewhere in the world.

Counter Narratives
Narratives which aimed to challenge or disrupt the hegemony of the themes discussed above were presented at various points during the coverage of the Delhi gang rape. All three news sources included in this analysis published material, at some point over the period of study, which posed a direct challenge to the discourse being produced as a culmination of the above themes.[34],[35],[36] These pieces all made claims, in various ways and to varying extents, to the racialisation of coverage of the Delhi rape and the demonisation of Indian men in so doing. They further commented that many of the criticisms of Indian men, culture and justice systems (above) are equally applicable across much of the world, including the West; a sentiment which is expounded upon in this paper.

Despite the presence of such counter-narratives however, this paper argues that there was an overall failure to pose

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a significant challenge to the hegemonic discourse. Be this due to their lack of prominence, limited volume – at least in comparison to daily reinforcement of dominant themes – or incongruence with general preconceptions of the Third World is unclear, and impossible to fully establish within the limited confines of this paper. It is worth observing however, that despite having printed arguments which countered and critiqued their general reportage, all three news sources resumed normal coverage immediately, or very shortly, thereafter. This failure to fully engage with, or adjust in light of counter-narratives, is likely to have contributed to their failure to significantly disrupt the dominant discourse.

The lack of prominence given to counter-narratives, alongside the culmination and repetition of the above themes, demonstrates a systematic reinforcement of a narrative within media discourse which intertwines discussion of rape and race. This is enacted in such a way that propensity to commit, encourage or permissively ignore sexual assault are posited, not as consequences of a global problem of gender inequality, but as facets of a flawed Indian culture. The following chapter will discuss how each of these identifiable themes contributes to an accepted narrative which is consistent with Matua's SVS model, and what the implications of this might be for international perceptions and understandings of 'the Other'.

Chapter Four: Delhi Gang Rape Narratives and Matua's SVS Model

To now return to the "Savages, Victims and Saviours" model (Matua 2001), it is here proposed that the key themes apparent in coverage of the 2012 Delhi gang rape, identified above, amalgamate in such a way that they inscribe and reinforce the 'savage', 'victim' and 'saviour' categories outlined in Matua's work. "New Racism" (May 2007:33) is manifest in this process of narrative-construction, insofar as the repetition and interlinking of these themes promotes their acceptance as "commonsense knowledge" (Blackledge 2010:143). This in turn allows "culturally sanctioned racism" (Projansky 2001:7) to pervade everyday discourse. By presenting news coverage repeatedly and thematically, such that the reader must engage with the dominant paradigms and stereotypes presented therein (Fowler 1999), this latent form of racial prejudice is able to mask a heavily racialised "grand narrative" (Matua 2001:206). In the case of the 2012 Delhi gang rape, this grand narrative can be understood as that of Indian and Third World inferiority to the West, which is normalised and legitimated by the interplay, intersection and mutual constitution of the key themes outlined herein. This chapter will further elucidate this understanding; discussing how each of the categories in Matua's three-dimensional SVS prism has been instantiated through discourse of the Delhi rape case and how these feed into a grand narrative of racial hierarchy and Western superiority. Discussion will also focus upon disproving, or at least contextualising, a number of news media claims about Indian society. The following will first address the construction of 'the savage', arguing that the combination of a number of the themes outlined above has enabled the dissemination of culturally sanctioned racism. Following this will be a discussion discourse surrounding 'the victim', which will propose that narratives of the Delhi gang rape have aided and augmented cultural stereotypes of the hypervictimised Third World woman. Finally this chapter will address narratives of 'the saviour', wherein it will be argued that narratives which promote the idea of a Western saviour act to obscure colonial histories and thus perpetuate neo-colonial systems of domination.

Savages
The previous chapter discussed the language used in British news media to describe Indian men and Indian culture. With repeated invocation of terms such as "savage", "barbaric" and "backwards",[37].[38] the construction of Indian men in line with Matua's savage is hardly to be considered a subtle, nor particularly nuanced, reading of news media coverage. As outlined in previous academic comment, such representations of the Third World male are not a new phenomenon. These representations have acted as a common feature of Western commentary on the Third World since they were used to justify colonial rule and, subsequently, the continued subjugation of non-white populations in the immediately post-colonial era (Davis 1981). Dogra observes that in such representations, "[non-Western] men are shown to lack all the good male values, but have all the bad values and dangers associated with the male in general" (2012:46). In instances where "ordinary", that is lower or working-class, non-Western males are shown, they are, by and large, associated with violence; reported exclusively and non-contextually as perpetrators thereof (*ibid*:81). By inference, and in this historical context, discussion of India can be taken, in many cases, as a reflection

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of the Third World as a whole. This assumption will underpin the following analysis.

Contrary to the social context of colonial rule, in modern Britain – a nation which, at least in rhetoric, founds its identity on 'progressive' attitudes – an explicit expression of racially discriminatory ideation may well elicit widespread public rejection (Leddy-Owen 2014). Such refutation would have the potential to counter dominant narratives and disrupt the hegemonic discourse surrounding Indian, and non-Western, male animalism. The interplay and intersubjectivity of a number of the key themes discussed above however, present ideas in such a way that they bolster and augment the construction of the savage. This enables the media to present this 'barbaric' foreign realm, positioned at the intersect of culture and masculinity, as an objective reality; a statement of fact rather than of racial distinction and discrimination.

Communication of statistical and numerical data in news media frames can be identified as an important element of news media coverage which allowed racialised narratives and identity constructions to be cloaked by the language of 'neutral' observations. It is not, it should be noted, supposed here that the statistical analysis reported by the news sources under discussion was directly falsified per se – although significant variation between articles does suggest some level of guesswork, if not exaggeration – but rather that legitimate material facts have been produced and inserted into discourse in such a way as to have a particular effect upon social meaning (Hansen 2006:32). Indeed, reliably asserting empirical and statistical truth can, perhaps counter-intuitively, facilitate the convincing fabrication of factually dubious narratives. By presenting data accurately, information-providing bodies become able to "claim that they are objective, non-partisan and a trustworthy source of information" (Baker 2012:348). Sources, however, are simultaneously able to carefully select which facts are included in, and which excluded from, their analysis, as well as intervene in the space *around* facts to skew perceptions of reality and thus reflect the desired social interpretation.

As described in the previous chapter, the majority of articles and publications covering the Delhi rape case used decontextualised statistical data to bolster or 'confirm' narratives, thus augmenting and legitimising dominant discourse and subsequent modes of understanding. By looking at the same data in comparative context however, its use as a means of legitimising dubious narratives of race and inferiority can be more clearly understood. A pertinent example in the context of this study is the frequent reference across papers to India's 26% conviction rate for reported crimes of rape and sexual assault. This figure was posited as sub-standard and was thus repeatedly invoked to 'confirm' the legitimacy of narratives and themes identified above. It is worth noting however, that figures released by The Office for National Statistics (2013) suggest that the comparable percentage for England and Wales was approximately 10.35% for reported sex offenses and less than 6% for reported incidents of rape – less than a quarter of India's figure. Irrespective of comparative context, of course, a 26% conviction rate for crimes of a sexual nature is by no means satisfactory and, although perhaps it goes without saying, every attempt should be made to see increases to rape-conviction rates worldwide. Rather than arguing the laudability of India's justice systems, this paper looks to demonstrate that statistical claims inciting their damnation have been employed to augment discourse of a backwards, male-driven Indian society geared towards systematic discrimination against women.

Without sufficient context, statistical and numerical information has been inserted into text in order that it instantiates and constitutes a particular social meaning such that, in the words of Said, "Truth… becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist" (Said 1978:67). Manipulation of statistical data by Western media has thus fed into discourse of the savage, presenting, 'rape culture' and sexual violence as something that happens 'over there', enacted as a result of violent men and a savage culture. As a consequence, an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction of racial hierarchy can be instantiated within, and justified through, media discourse.

A second theme which has contributed to the acceptance of a narrative of India as culturally backward and inherently savage is the positing of 'victim blaming' as an Indian cultural practice. The key assertion evident in the news sources analysed was that assumptions about rape that place responsibility on the part of the woman represent archaic and backward viewpoints. Such viewpoints were deemed to be outmoded in Western society and "in much of the world… not even the language of fifty years ago"[39]. Inherent within statements such as this is comment upon the cultural inferiority of India and, co-constitutively, of the progressiveness and superiority the West. Tellingly however, a report by *Amnesty International* on 'Attitudes to Sexual Assault in the UK' (Amnesty International 2005) found that

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upwards of 30% of people in Britain believed a woman to be fully or partially responsible for sexual abuse enacted against her.[40] This evidences that, contrary to media narratives, victim-blaming remains a relatively widely accepted facet of British public opinion, thus rendering narratives which presented victim blaming as a facet of backwards Indian culture void of empirical basis.

The inaccurate depiction of patriarchy and subordination of women as "a thing of the past, 'here'" (Dogra 2012:55) is a common feature of Western representation; constructing female oppression as a 'Third World problem' and conjuring "images of natives eager to inflict pain on women" (Matua 2001:222), hence essentialising notions about Third World men and reinforcing visions of the foreign savage. This narrative further encourages and reinforces a particular view of India; a view which again discredits Indian culture and situates it in a moral hierarchy in which its status is reduced to an inferiority of the West.

The invocation and repetition of subsidiary themes and tropes about Indian society and culture then, has allowed the construction of Indian men as savage to appear neutral and driven by 'objectivity' rather than ideology. Contrary to appearance however, obsessive media focus on the black rapist is inherently political, disseminating an understanding of non-Western men as a threat to society as a whole (hooks 1990:61). This has promoted acceptance of a latent form of racism which is consistent with the construction of Matua's "savage" stereotype (*ibid*:60).

Victims
As noted prior, the Delhi rape case differs from similar studies and academic considerations insofar as, not only were the perpetrators black/non-Western, but so too was the victim of the attack. This denotes a substantial shift in power dynamics from cases of inter-racial rape, especially where the case has been reported upon by Western media. This notably sets the case apart from those discussed in Davis' "Myth of the Black Rapist". Not only is Davis' archetypical victim of sexual violence often assumed to be manipulating the truth in order to maintain the dominant power structure – evidently not the case in the Delhi attack – but her victim is also assumed to be white, and thus hold the socially endowed authority that is inherently attached therein. In the Delhi case therefore, the power dynamics attached to the reportage of sexual assault are substantially shifted. Here it is proposed that a synthesis of Davis and Matua's frameworks provides a helpful lens through which to understand this shift.

The victim presented in Matua's SVS framework has a number of defining characteristics. *She,* first and foremost, is generally female, and is presented, almost invariably, as innocent, powerless and sympathetic. The victim is thus opportunely situated to mobilise public outrage and instil a sense of moral clarity between 'good' and 'evil' (2001:230). SVS victims are also typically non-white, thus ascribing a colonial texture to the relationship between 'foreign' victim and 'Western' saviour (*ibid*:231).

As illustrated in the previous chapter, these traits of SVS victimhood have been clearly instantiated in the publications analysed as part of this study. Indian women in general, and the victim of the Delhi rape in particular, were presented as virtuous, modest and sympathetic, with the youth of "India's daughters"[41] being consistently emphasised, highlighting vulnerability and powerlessness. By nature of the case study, of course, the victim of the incident – and by inference the multiple victims identified in media narratives, that is Indian women – were non-Western, with the historic relationship between Britain and India augmenting still further the colonial nature of victim-saviour interactions. As with discourse relating to the portrayal of the savage male, subsidiary themes colluded to reinforce the legitimacy of the representation of the victim. Reportage of the supposedly unique victim blaming taking place in India highlighted women's oppression within their 'misogynistic' culture. Discussion of the shortcomings of Indian justice systems reinscribed their vulnerability in a structure which can neither protect them, nor punish their attackers. Statistical data regarding the supposedly inordinate prevalence of rape in India – although, as discussed, figures varied significantly between sources and lacked comparative context – was used to legitimise narratives of their victimhood.

The image of the "hypervictimised" Third World woman latently denotes the passivity and lack of agency of Third World women as an essentialised category (Projansky 2001:169). News media narratives thus portrayed a stark and contrasting gender binary, with the savage portrayal of Indian men and culture serving to highlight the role of women,

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not as active cultural participants, but as passive bystanders, whose connection to culture is though victimisation only. Dogra argues that "the vulnerability of MW [majority world] women is enhanced either by delinking them from men… who are not shown at all, or by attributing their vulnerability to MW men who, in such cases, are demonised as 'bad'" (2012:46). These portrayals "essentialise and naturalise notions about MW men and women" (*ibid*:46), where the portrayal of Davis' 'black rapist' and Matua's sympathetic foreign victim emphasise, reinforce and mutually constitute one another.

It should not be overlooked, of course, that some aspects of Indian culture *are* damaging to women and *do* render them disproportionately vulnerable in comparison to their male or Western counterparts. Practices including dowry-deaths, Sati and forced marriage present forms of existential threat to women in India which are uncommon, although not unheard of, in Western society (Ammu & Sharma 1991:75; Matua 2002:24). The purpose of this paper is neither to justify nor trivialise such threats. This paper does, however, seek to demonstrate that subjugation and oppression of women is not the India-specific phenomenon presented in news media coverage of the Delhi rape – nor the Third World-specific phenomenon implied therein – and that sexual and gender-based violence is not borne of a backwards culture nor the passivity, naivety or incapability of Indian and Third World women. This is an important area for clarity as where violence against women is posited as "a problem supposedly endemic only to the MW [majority world]", and the solution to such violence presented as adherence to a Western model, the long history of feminism and female political activism *within* the Third World is ignored (Dogra 2012:50). Matua argues that this is typical of an SVS narrative, wherein the West is presented as the "cradle of feminism", and 'Third World woman' becomes synonymous with vulnerability and lack of agency: the "passive dupes" of patriarchal control (Matua 2001:222, Dogra 2012:51, Kabeer 2000:40).

Returning to an earlier point, it must be acknowledged that narratives of victimisation were necessarily juxtaposed against coverage of many women in India, mobilised by the Delhi attack, actively protesting for advancement of women's rights. This coverage perhaps represents a positive step towards a more three-dimensional vision of Third World women, wherein their agency can be acknowledged and discourse of victimisation disrupted (Dogra 2012:58). In many cases however, this reportage was not altogether divergent from colonially influenced expectations (*ibid*:56). Melhuus and Stolen note that Third World women are commonly viewed as "both backward *and* potential sites of radical change" within the same timeframe (1996:26). In this vein, protests were generally not attributed to a cohesive and active feminist movement in India, but to female sensitisation against male violence, and participation in what was posited as a Western civilising agenda. The protesting women's demands for change were presented as a mantra for Westernisation, thus reinforcing tropes of the saviour and further delegitimising the savage men of their own society against whom their dissent was targeted.

The image of the hypervictimised Indian woman has dominated reportage of the Delhi rape; reinforcing Davis' demonised black rapist, and lionising the West in line with Matua's Western saviour, to be analysed below. It should be noted that portrayal of 'the foreign woman' has important ramifications for the global feminist movement, which will be elucidated upon in chapter five.

Saviours

Matua argues that the Western 'saviour response' stems from a combination of ideas concerning the centrality and universalism of Europe, stemming from the enlightenment era, and Christianity's missionary zeal and desire to remodel the 'Other' in the image of the self (2001:233). The result is an ardent desire to proliferate a single set of culturally-based norms and practices, in pursuit of the goal of 'saving' Third World societies from their own traditions and beliefs (*ibid*:204,235). News media narratives analysed for the current study certainly tended towards the promotion of patterns of thought and belief which encouraged the spread of Western cultural norms and values and presented the Western status-quo as an aspirational model in overcoming rape and sexual violence.

Inherent within this discourse are power dynamics and relations which are able to instantiate, construct and reconstruct a particular social order. Narratives about gender violence and women's rights serve, in this instance, to infer the superiority of Western norms in terms of the treatment of women. Western cultural and systemic practices are elevated, and those of India and the Third World delegitimised, raising the authority and legitimacy of the West above 'the Rest'. This informs a racial and cultural hierarchy which, legitimated by narratives positing Western

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superiority, is not markedly divergent from colonial relations.

This narrative, which places the West at the apex of morality and as the pinnacle of the social order, positions Western culture and attitudes on a moral pedestal of such height that they are assumed to be above the reach of criticism and reproach (Matua 2001:241). Within the West news media narratives promote a comparative understanding of our own cultural norms and systemic procedures which discourage any substantial critique or inquiry (*ibid*:222), whilst criticisms emanating from the Third World can be delegitimised as coming from the mouths of savages. Not only then do narratives of the savage and the victim misrepresent the Third World, they also act to misrepresent the West itself, "obscuring in their flattering vision of European superiority the tensions along the lines of gender, class and ethnicity that ruptured the domestic scene." (Lewis & Mills 1996:16). In so doing, this "flattering vision" of the West serves to protect the power relations and patriarchal structures which currently define the Western social order, a discussion which will be revisited in chapter five.

The positioning of the West outwith the bounds of criticism or debate, furthermore overlooks the significance of the residual impact of the colonial experience for former colonies. To return to the above supposition that there may exist some threats to Indian women which do render them of disproportionate vulnerability, it should be noted that a three-dimensional analysis must incorporate social, political, economic and historical factors to which this threat is attributable. Current narratives fail to acknowledge colonial practices and infrastructure as prominent factors in entrenching the long-term poverty, social issues and gender divides which are likely to contribute to elevated levels of female insecurity (Dogra 2012:81). Where instances of sexual violence are attributed to factors presented as 'internal' to the Third World (i.e. cultural or infrastructural ineptitude), Western colonial and imperial histories are ignored (*ibid*:81), and are thus open to latent perpetuation and dissemination.

In this context of repeated reinforcement of discourse pertaining to the 'Other', these narratives frequently come to be accepted and internalised by the groups represented therein. These signified groups come to see themselves through the rhetoric of Western narratives, eventually establishing a self-referential process of legitimation which asserts the power of the West to know and speak for the 'Other' better than the 'Other' itself (Reina & Lewis 1996:16). Within the context of India, this self-referential process of identity construction has clearly impacted the way in which many people and groups within the country come to conceive of their own identity and cultural experience. Prominent Bollywood actor, Shahrukh Khan, for example, posted on Twitter, "Rape embodies sexuality as our culture and society has defined it. I am so sorry that I am part of this society and culture.".[42] 'New Delhi Television Limited' (NDTV), a prominent broadcasting network across India, publicised the need to "hang our heads in shame because of the rapes, crimes that are committed against women in the country"[43]. With assumptions about the savage nature of the Indian culture, and conversely about the comparative superiority of Western culture, permeating the psyche and being internalized into everyday understandings, a self-sustaining hierarchy is instantiated in the international sphere.

This chapter has demonstrated that interactions of the Western saviour with the foreign savage and victim shape understandings of world events and colour engagements within the international system (Matua 2001:243). This narrational framework acts as a means of disseminating latent racism through supposedly progressive discourse and extending colonial relations into the modern era.

Chapter Five: The SVS Framework and Feminist Responses to the Delhi Gang Rape

By nature of the topic at hand, feminism and the women's rights movement have been widely invoked in treatments of the Delhi rape case. To recall Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, which secured the position of rape as a key political issue on the feminist agenda, it is clear that sexual violence, and representations thereof, have profoundly informed feminist discourse. In the intervening years, there has been a proliferation of feminist discussion surrounding rape and violence against women which situate such acts not only as symptomatic of patriarchal systems, but also a tool of these systems' reinforcement and perpetuation (Bunch 1990:491, Kabir 2010:150, Katrak 2006:xi). The Delhi case, as a widely publicised incident of violent rape and abuse, can therefore

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be seen as an important avenue for discussion of feminist responses, not only to rape in general (which, as noted above, has been widely debated elsewhere), but in particular to how discourse that treats race and rape as irredeemably linked impacts on feminist scholarship. Such impact will be the focus of this chapter.

As noted previously, the discourse of the Delhi gang rape has, drawing upon colonial preconceptions, constructed a narrative which understands rape and violence against women to be an Indian-specific crime, rooted in cultural deficiencies rather than in the kind of patriarchal structures which are in place across much of the world. Also suggested above was that this narrative promotes a "flattering vision" (Lewis & Mills 1996:16) of the West; concealing the pervasiveness of rape, sexual violence, and a 'rape culture' which validates these crimes within supposedly civilised Western society.

Sustained repetition of discourse which places the cause of rape in Indian and non-Western cultural and social fabric, is thus able to minimise critique of Western patriarch and encourage internalisation of the idea that rape is primarily a crime situated in the Third World, and should be responded to as such. This encourages a pacification of feminist, or more broadly anti-violence-against-women, movements in the West, hence promoting a culture of complacency, which aims to leave patriarchal structures, and the power relations exercised therein, intact and unchallenged. Coverage which emphasises the need for a women's revolt or feminist change in India, and indeed suggests, implicitly or explicitly, that this change should steer India towards a more Western approach, is thus simultaneously articulating the laudability of Western male-female relations and power dynamics. It further iterates the redundancy of self-critique and feminist change within the Western 'self' towards whom news media commentary is, in this case, directed. The construction of rape in terms of an SVS understanding has already been identified as being complicit in the creation and recreation of colonial hierarchies. In terms of the promotion of women's rights, it is proposed here that SVS narratives of the Delhi case are also implicated in perpetuating racial divisions, hierarchies and misinterpretations of the Other within feminist responses themselves, and thus fracturing the feminist movement along some of its most fundamental lines of struggle.

To return to the representation of non-Western women, that is the 'victim', many postcolonial feminist scholars argue that this construction of a homogenised group of Third World victims is typical of the Western feminist response to Third World women as a 'category' (Mohanty 1988, 2003; Haggis 1998; Dogra 2012). Mohanty argues that Western-centric feminist discourse pertaining to women in the Third World is generally appropriated by European and American experiences, creating a narrative of the Third World woman as a single monolithic subject; uniformly victimised and oppressed by cultural setting (1988: 49, 2003:48). As was laid out in the previous chapter, this representation was evident in discourse of the Delhi case, promoting an essentialised view of the Third World in which non-Western women are portrayed as void of agency (1988:53).

Co-constituted by this portrayal, is a perception of Western women which uses those in the Third World as a political tool of Western female empowerment (Haggis 1998:179), allowing self-representation to be framed in terms of progression, rationality and comparative liberation (Mohanty 1988:53/68; Projansky 2001:169). The binary opposition of 'West' and 'non-West' thus places Western women in a strengthened position of power "vis a vis all the cultural others" (Dogra 2012:51). The construction of Western society as progressive – beyond the cultural inadequacies that supposedly lead to rape – augments this distinction between superior, active Western women, and passive, dependent Third World victims.

The overall effect of these factors is the creation of a narrative within the feminist movement wherein the role of the Western feminist is the 'saving' of non-Western women; the 'civilised' coming to the rescue of the 'uncivilised' (Kapur 2002:213), thus granting Western women access to "the eminciative position of a white superiority that is implicitly male" (Lewis 1996:18). This power-dynamic creates a patronising relationship between Western and Third World women (Abu-Lughod 2002:789) which, Rey Chow argues, is textured akin to relationships of the colonial era (Chow 1994:324/5, Borren 2012:199).

The presentation of rape as a cultural outcome of Indian and Third World society thus contributes to the fracturing of the global feminist movement along national lines, obscuring and bolstering the transnational and transterritorial elements of patriarchy and preventing a collective, unified response thereto (Patil 2013). Patil argues that there is an

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urgent need to challenge the state as *the* meaningful unit of analysis (2013:850) in order to shift focus away from 'saving' narratives and towards an inclusive vision which can effectively challenge outcomes of patriarchal regimes, such as sexual violence, which are common to both Western and non-Western peoples. Whilst the extent of "fissures and frictions" (Cornwall & Molyneux 2006:1187) existing along lines of class, race and ethnicity (Cho et al 2013:792) mean that female solidarity can, of course, never be presupposed, with regards to sexual violence this paper proposes that recognition of shared experience, as opposed to language of cultural inferiority and hierarchy, would enact a positive step in countering this type of gender-based violence.

To this end it is necessary to move beyond notions of 'victims' and 'saviours' (Matua 2001; Mohanty 1988:70) and engage in self-reflection and critique, starting not with colonially informed ideas about 'what causes rape in India', but with a close examination of our own society and the narratives promoted and disseminated therein. This will involve a close examination of 'saving' narratives which invoke racial and cultural discourses (Abu-Lughod 2002:787), an area which this paper hopes to have begun to elucidate, as well as engagement in both anti-racist and anti-sexist work, and a concerted attempt to learn about the connections with exist between the two (hooks 1990:63). A new approach will need chiefly to confront inequities and contradictions and seek to avoid the domination of a single ideology or perspective.

Concluding Remarks

News media is deeply implicated in the construction and reconstruction of discourses which shape and inform public opinion (Cameron 2007:268, Gruely & Duvall 2012:29). Where this media forms a stable narrative between sources over a sustained period, a particular understanding of the social order can be created, justified and instantiated. Returning again to Brownmiller's work, it is important to note that the inclusion of rape and sexual violence against women on the agenda for public discussion represents a significant shift away from the silence that tacitly sanctioned these crimes for many years, and has the potential to facilitate important conversations about our social world. This study has demonstrated however, that close adherence of news media to Matua's SVS model; invocation of 'the myth of the black rapist'; and reliance upon belittling assumptions about the victimisation of Third World women, has allowed coverage of the Delhi gang rape to obscure social reality in such a way that this potential progressiveness of reportage is supplanted by colonially-formed cultural stereotypes of the Third World.

The limited scope of the current study has prevented the comparative analysis of news media coverage of 'Western' rape cases – an area in which further study would be apt – and thus has been unable to situate cultural narratives as fully as would perhaps be ideal. It has become clear simply through analysis of the Delhi coverage however, that representations which rest upon racially and culturally divisive assumptions inform, at the opposite pole, a narrative which places the West atop a racial and cultural hierarchy. This media-informed hierarchy is constitutive of both Western and non-Western assumptions about the social order, and thus is able to promote international power-dynamics which privilege 'West' over 'rest' in global structures, and thus further legitimise and reinscribe a self-perpetuating cycle of neo-colonial domination.

It should be evident therefore, that news media discourse is inherently political in its nature, and as such it is important to bear in mind its wider context and implications beyond this study. Situated in a unique position regarding the construction and framing of the public mind, news media narratives, such as those presented in this paper, "allow[s] the substitution of tropes for actual political, economic or historical context" (Gruely & Duvall 2012:42), and thus allow narratives to be removed from broader frames of analysis (Dogra 2012:50, Lyon 2005:147). In this way, news media is able to colour perceptions of international events in order to manipulate understandings in such a way as to promote particular understandings and interpretations of the social order.

If the media is to overcome the ideological bias which allows racialised and gendered tropes to pervade discourse, narratives must be situated in political, historical and cultural settings (Matua 2001: 207), rather than allowing events and populations to be reduced to colonially inspired caricatures. How this can be achieved within not only the limited space and time available to news media, but also alongside the colonial preconceptions which have, in many areas,

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permeated society, presents an avenue for further research and discussion.

It remains clear in light of the Delhi gang rape coverage that there is a need for ongoing investigation into the ways in which factual information and reportage of real world events are coupled with particular representations of identity and social reality, and what effect this has on public response and popular opinion (Katrak 2006:32). This paper remains hopeful that, in spite of the deep ingrainment of colonial ideology, should narratives which invoke racialised language to promote divisive ideology be widely recognised, they can also be widely challenged and eventually overcome.

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Endnotes

[1] For the purposes of this paper, the term 'Third World' will be used to designate "geographical location and sociohistorical conjunctures" (Mohanty 2003: 44). It will therefore be broadly interpreted to incorporate minority groups and peoples of colour. Similarly, 'black' will be used to denote not only people of African descent, but the wide

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spectrum of races which fall outwith the category of 'white' and which comprise the majority of the broadly interpreted Third World.

[2] The term progressive is used to denote populist understandings of moral betterment. It is not assumed to imply the historical linearity nor civilizing connotations with which it is oft conflated. Indeed such sentiments would stand at odds with many of the key assumptions and arguments put forward herein.

[3] It should be noted that over the course of this paper the terms 'Western' and 'white' will be assumed to correspond closely. The use of one will generally imply the other. It is, of course, acknowledged that nuances exist between these terms, and that it is possible to embody Westernness without whiteness and visa versa. The conflation of the terms is, however, a recognition of the fact that they often co-exist as two sides of the same coin – with whiteness historically operating as a visual signifier of Western hegemony – and as such the two are inextricably linked in current political and social understandings (Ang 1995:197).

[4] In order to facilitate coherent presentation of data, news media articles quoted or referred to in this paper will be referenced in footnotes rather than in text, such that all data can be communicated accurately whilst maintaining a flow of narrative.
Due to inavailability of the names of specific authors through the LexisNexis database, as well as commitment to discussing cumulative media narratives rather than shaming specific journalists, authors names will not be presented in footnote references.

 [5] It is worth noting here that "victim" is widely considered to be a contentious term in the description of women who have been subjected to rape or sexual abuse. As will be discussed later, many scholars argue that this term acts to define women only in terms of their 'victimhood', ascribing them passivity and resulting in a perpetuated lack of agency. I use the term in the context of this paper therefore, only insofar as I wish to reflect the language and tone of the news outlets analysed in this study.

[6] It should also be noted at this juncture that in discussing the idea of a "rape culture", this paper refers to the term introduced by feminists as a descriptor of a culture wherein masculine environments encourage violence against, and objectification of, women and thus contribute to the normalisation and acceptance of rape and sexual violence (Projansky 2001:9).

[7] "All About Eve" *The Times,* December 21, 2012.

[8] "Delhi bus gang rape prompts women to rush for guns" *The Guardian*, January 2, 2013.

[9] "Delhi gang rape victim's friend recalls savage attack" *The Telegraph,* January 4 2013.

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[12] "Delhi bus gang rape prompts women to rush for guns", *The Guardian,* January 2, 2013.

[13] "All About Eve", *op. cit.*

[14] "'Hang them' call by mob as gang rape accused are charged" *The Times*, January 4, 2013.

[15] "Angry families disown gang rape accused" *The Times*, January 12, 2013.

[16] "The Agony of India's Daughters", *op. cit.*

[17] "Torment at the hands of Indian men" *The Telegraph,* January 12, 2013.

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[18] "India's Daughters", *op. cit.*

[19] "India Threatens to Castrate Rapists; More protests as victim of gang attack is cremated" *The Times,* December 31, 2012.

[20] Victim-blaming is widely acknowledged as a phenomenon, involving the invocation of "rape myths", which takes place across much of the globe (Suarez & Gadalla 2010). Blame tends to be assigned (or renounced) along the lines of age, race, clothing, sexual reputation and level of intoxication, amongst others, with these categories being employed to build up a supposed 'knowledge' of the victim, which is used to make cognitive distinctions between what is deemed 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' rape.

[21] "India Threatens to Castrate Rapists; More protests as victim of gang attack is cremated" *op. cit.*

[22] "India's Daughters" *op. cit.*

[23] "Five men charged over Delhi rape and murder" *The Guardian,* January 4, 2013.

[24] "Delhi bus gang rape: 'What is wrong with our society?'" *The Guardian,* December 19, 2012.

[25] "'I carried her bleeding body, the police would not touch her' says boyfriend of Delhi gang rape victim"*The Telegraph,* January 5th, 2013.

[26] All About Eve", *op. cit.*

[27] "Delhi 'rapists' say police beat them to confess" *The Telegraph,* January 11, 2013,

[28] "Mother of 'India's Daughter' calls for rape gang to be hanged" *The Telegraph,* January 12, 2013.

[29]"'I carried her bleeding body, the police would not touch her' says boyfriend of Delhi gang rape victim" *op. cit.*

[30]"Gang rape row grows after 2 hour ordeal of second woman" *The Times*, December 27, 2012.

[31]"Rape victim near death as she is moved out of country" *The Times,* December 29, 2012.

[32]"Bus rape victim dies in hospital" *The Times*, December 29, 2012.

[33]"'Hang the men who raped our girl'" *The Times*, January 1, 2013.

[34] "The Delhi gang rape is being used to demonise Indian men" *The Telegraph*, January 2, 2013.

[35] "India Observed" *The Guardian*, January 7, 2013.

[36] "We must all counter the mood music of rape culture" *The Times,* January 7, 2013.

[37] "Delhi gang rape victim's friend recalls savage attack" *The Telegraph*, January 4, 2013.

[38] "India's Daughters" *op. cit.*

[39] "All About Eve", *op. cit.*

[41] "India's Daughters" *op. cit.*

[42] "India gang-rape victim cremated as UN chief calls for action to protect women" *The Guardian,* December 30,

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[43] "Our heads hang in shame over crimes against women" *NDTV*, March 8, 2013, Accessed online at [Accessed online on 25/03/2014 at http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/our-heads-hang-in-shame-over-crimes-against-women-sonia-gandhi-339912]

Written by: Scarlett Cockerill
Written at: University of St Andrews
Written for: Sibylle Scheipers
Date written: April 2014