

## ABSTRACT

The Crime Heard Around the World: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis  
of Media Coverage of the New Delhi Gang Rape

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This study provides an in-depth analysis using feminist critical discourse to analyze media coverage of a horrific rape case in New Delhi, India that galvanized a country and captivated the collective conscience of a society demanding a change in the treatment of women. In the wake of the brutal gang rape that claimed the life of the victim, media from around the globe covered the case and its aftermath. This study seeks to understand and analyze the coverage presented to determine how the case was covered and what themes and frames were present in the coverage as well as make recommendations to journalists covering rape cases.

The Crime Heard Around the World:  
A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Coverage of the New Delhi Gang Rape

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Journalism, Public Relations and New Media

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## DEDICATION

To Virgie, “The Mother,” who is the wind beneath my wings; to Caleb who is my inspiration for flying; to Tanaka who is my trusted companion on the journey; to Aubrei for whom I am paving the way, I love you more than words can express.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *A 'Flame' Snuffed, a 'Torch' Lit*

Rape in India is a common occurrence, but one attack served to ignite the furor of the public because of its sheer brutality. On the night of Dec. 16, 2012, Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old physiotherapy student, and her male companion, Avnindra Pandey, 28, boarded a white charter bus around 8:30 p.m. to return home after watching “Life of Pi.” Initially, Jyoti and Avnindra were leery of getting on the sparsely occupied bus. They doubted it would take them to the correct destination, but a teenage boy beckoned them inside the bus. Unbeknownst to Avnindra and Jyoti, the bus was not an official public transportation vehicle; it was bait to lure unsuspecting victims to a premeditated attack.

Once on board the bus, five men—who had been posing as passengers—locked the doors and turned off the lights while another assailant drove the bus. The men attacked Avnindra while Jyoti tried desperately to use her cell phone to call for help. The men proceeded to rob Avnindra and Jyoti stripping them of their valuables. Then, the attackers dragged Jyoti to the back of the bus and began raping her. Avnindra attempted to thwart the attack, but the attackers repeatedly punched him until he was knocked unconscious. Jyoti fought violently as the attackers took turns brutally biting, beating, and raping her. As Avnindra slipped in and out of consciousness, he could hear Jyoti screaming as the men raped her and inserted a metal pipe in her vagina and rectum, ripping out her intestines, and destroying her uterus. The assailants bit Jyoti on “her face,

lips, jaw, ear, on the right and left breasts, left upper arm, right lower limb, right upper inner thigh (groin), right lower thigh, left thigh lateral, left lower anterior and genital” (Singh, 2013). Jyoti’s father, Badrinath Singh, later recalled his daughter’s injuries saying, ‘They literally ate my daughter. There were bite marks all over her’ (Sharma, 2013).

The heinous attack lasted 84 excruciating minutes. Afterward, the rapists grabbed Avnindra and Jyoti by the hair and dragged them to the front of the bus and threw them bruised, bleeding, and naked on the side of a busy dirt road to die. As he and Jyoti lay on the road for 20 minutes, Avnindra attempted to solicit help from passersby. Seeing his injuries, apathetic drivers ignored him and continued down the road leaving the pair in distress. Finally, New Delhi police arrived, and after disagreeing who had jurisdiction over the case for 10 minutes, they transported Avnindra and Jyoti to a local hospital for treatment.

While in the hospital and agonizing pain, Jyoti insisted on sharing details of her attack with law enforcement officials and magistrates. She was able to recall the names of her rapists after hearing them talk to each other during the attack. While in Safdurjung Hospital in New Delhi, Jyoti underwent three abdominal surgeries, and her condition began to worsen after she suffered cardiac arrest. She battled infections of the lungs and abdomen, liver damage, and a brain injury (Timmons, Gottipati, & Trivedi, 2012). As complications arose during her treatment, a medical team transferred her to Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore where doctors were forced to remove her intestines. As her condition began to deteriorate, Jyoti told officials that she wanted her rapists punished. ‘The magistrate asked her what kind of punishment she wanted. She said they

should be burnt alive,' said Asha Devi, Jyoti's mother (Bashir, 2015). After battling for 13 days, Jyoti died from organ failure on Dec. 28, 2012 (Tatlow, 2013).

Six men were arrested in connection with the attack and charged with murder, attempted murder, gang rape, kidnapping, robbery, and destruction of evidence. Ram Singh, 33, a bus driver and leader of the attack; Mukesh Singh, 26, Ram's brother who drove the bus during the attack; Vinay Sharma, 20, a gym assistant; Pawan Gupta, 19, a fruit vendor; and Akshay Thakur, 29, a bus cleaner, and an unnamed juvenile were convicted of the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh and the assault of Avnindra Pandey. Ram Singh committed suicide while in jail, and the juvenile perpetrator, who was 17 years old at the time of the attack, was sentenced to three years—the maximum penalty under Indian law for juvenile offenders. A judge sentenced the remaining four to death, a punishment typically reserved for the 'rarest of rare cases' as the capital punishment is scarcely meted out in India (Timmons, Trivedi, & Gottipati, 2012).

Four of the rapists are currently in prison awaiting appeals. The juvenile attacker will soon complete his sentence and will be released. However, Jyoti's family lobbied lawmakers for harsher sentencing laws for juvenile offenders and called for the death penalty for the juvenile defendant who was only six months shy of being old enough to stand trial as an adult for Jyoti's rape and murder. Mr. Singh said that 'full' punishment was the only way to get proper justice for Jyoti (Sharma, 2013). 'After seeing her suffering for 15 days [sic], how can as I as father not get justice for her? I, she and the public who cried for my daughter will only be at peace then,' Mr. Singh said (Sharma, 2013).

Jyoti was a beloved daughter who exhibited a love of learning at a young age. She dreamed of one day becoming a doctor. Her parents sold their ancestral land in their native village for Jyoti to attend college, much to the dismay of their neighbors, and Mr. Singh worked double shifts to support her studies. In a country where girls are deemed less desirable than boys and female infanticide is common, Mr. and Mrs. Singh valued their daughter (Haq, 2013; Hudson, 2010; Oldenburg, 1992; Ritter, 2015).

“It never entered our hearts to ever discriminate,” Mr. Singh said. “How could I be happy if my son is happy and my daughter isn’t?” he said. “And it was impossible to refuse a little girl who loved going to school” (Sharma, 2013).

In the aftermath of Jyoti’s rape and murder, Indian men and women embraced her as well and called for the eradication of violence against women through vocal—and sometimes violent—protests and requests for the Indian government (Bresnahan, Udas, & Ramgopal, 2013). They marched in the streets. They penned critical missives about Indian politicians and the bogged down judicial system. They held candlelight vigils. Jyoti’s father remarked that her death ‘lit a torch’ for women’s equality and fair treatment, a fitting description as Jyoti means “flame” in Hindi (Dearden, 2015). The media have chronicled this changing tide of public opinion and have joined the chorus with their coverage heralding a change in India’s rape culture. The ensuing vigils and protests “became a media *cause célèbre*” for national and international media (Durham, 2015).

### *India’s Gender Gap*

Home of the world’s largest democracy, India is a country steeped in traditional gender and social roles for men and women (Haq, 2013; Kennedy, 2013; Timmons & Gottipati, 2012). For instance, women tend to hold more subservient roles and men of

affluent, privileged classes wield more power in politics and control the majority of the country's wealth and land (Kolhatkar, 2013; Williams, 2013). With the commercialization and globalization of Indian society, more women are eschewing these deeply-rooted traditional roles in favor of education and employment, while male members of this patriarchal society have clashed with women over the changes in sometimes violent ways with numerous incidents of domestic violence and general violence against women documented (Harris, 2013; Kolhatkar, 2013; Timmons & Gottipati, 2012; Timmons, Harris, & Mandhana, 2012).

Indian women have joined the movement for equality and empowerment and are challenging traditional gender roles and imbalances of power (Haq, 2013). The chronicling of Jyoti's rape led to—at the time—a scathing analysis of Indian society and brought to the forefront numerous complex issues such as “India's gender imbalance, women's roles in Indian society, and Indian human rights policy” (Durham, 2015). In a New York Times article about the occurrence of rape in India, Vijay Raghavan, chairman of the Center for Criminology and Justice at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, is quoted as saying, “Women are rising in society and fighting for equal space, and these crimes are almost like a backlash” (Timmons & Gottipati, 2012).

Barnett (2008) cites how academics have asserted that rape is rooted in “social, economic, and political systems that devalue women” as “property, often as pawns, and usually as secondary citizens in need of control by men” (O'Toole, Schiffman, & Edwards, 2007). Sela-Shayovitz (2015) noted how rapes—specifically gang rapes—may be considered as a form of punishment and degradation for women who are perceived guilty of having “violated traditional gender norms” (p. 412). One journalist wrote of

Indian women's experience of "harassment, assault and ill treatment that keeps them bound to a second-tier citizenship" although more and more are "increasingly educated and urbanized women that are advancing in the workplace" (Timmons, 2013). Indian women are consistently confronted with "systemic discrimination" and "sexual harassment and violence" (Yardley, 2013). The common practice of "eve-teasing" or sexual harassment is rampant in India with most women saying that harassment is an everyday occurrence, and girls as young as seven years old have reported men sexually harassing them in public (Bashir, 2015; Timmons & Gottipati, 2012).

For the past two decades, researchers have investigated the correlation between sex ratio, specifically the imbalance between males and females in India, and violence towards women (Hudson & Boer, 2007, 2002; Oldenburg, 1992). In "Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population," Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea den Boer noted a "strong correlation between masculinized sex ratios and higher rates of violent crimes against women" (Hudson & Boer, 2007). The gender gap has become increasingly unfavorable to women signaling a proliferation of social problems such as rape (Bolt, 2004; Kumar, 2014). Kumar (2014) cites Jyoti's case to corroborate his findings on the increase in violence against women writing, "The gruesome gang rape of Nirbhaya in 2012 and other incidents of rape in recent times stand testimony to this fact." Future predictions for India's gender gap and its ramifications are bleak. As female infanticide and abortion of female fetuses continue unabated, Hudson and den Boer calculate that by "2020 there will be 28 to 32 million surplus males in India in the 15 to 35 age group" and "the consequences for a society with high numbers of surplus,

unmarried males are elevated levels of violence and perhaps greater intersocietal conflict as well (Bolt, 2004; Hudson & Boer, 2002).

With the increase of rape, the public has clamored for justice and a shift in how women are treated and called for punishment of rapists (“Rape in the World’s Largest Democracy,” 2012). In the backdrop of these social and political changes are the media, who are documenting this change in Indian society as the public has advocated for holding abusers accountable for their crimes and the eradication of victim blaming (Timmons, Harris et al., 2012). Even media titans in India’s famed Bollywood cinema culture have chimed in on the issue in the media and social media decrying the recent string of rapes (Pagnamenta, 2013).

Though not unique to Indian society, victim blaming is also problematic. In an interview three years after her daughter’s death, Jyoti’s mother was critical of the disparities in treatment between men and women and noted India’s victim-blaming culture. “Whenever there’s a crime, the girl is blamed, ‘She should not go out. She shouldn’t roam around so late or wear such clothes.’ It’s the boys who should be accused and asked why they do this,” Mrs. Singh said (Dearden, 2015). As recently as March 2015, Mukesh, one of Jyoti’s rapists, was interviewed for a documentary and stated that ‘a girl is far more responsible for rape than a boy.’ He said that Jyoti was responsible for her rape because she fought back and was out late with a man, which was improper (Bashir, 2015; Dearden, 2015). An attorney representing one of the rapists said, “Until today I have not seen a single incident or example of rape with a respected lady” (Gottipati, 2013).

Previous research has laid the groundwork for analyzing framing and rape coverage in the media in the United States, but scholars have nominally studied rape coverage in India. Conducting a search of electronic databases for published research on rape in India yielded only a few results demonstrating an extreme dearth of this type of research—a stark contrast to the number of rapes in India.

In September 2013, a year after the New Delhi gang rape, 1,121 rape cases were reported in the first eight months of the year, “the highest in the last 13 years” (PTI, 2013). In 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau reported that a woman is raped every 20 minutes in India. Researchers have yet to study the changing societal views of rape in India extensively. This research represents one of the first preliminary assessments of prevailing media landscapes and attitudes of addressing rape and other crimes against women and adds to the growing scholarship on this subject.

This paper looks at the various themes presented in media coverage of the New Delhi gang rape case by analyzing the portrayal of the victim and perpetrators, the characterization of Indian society and culture, and how American and Indian media chose to cover the New Delhi gang rape using the framework of feminist critical discourse theory. Also, it also includes an overview of the works scholars have conducted in their extensive studies of the media’s coverage of rape. To better understand this body of work these previous studies are reviewed.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### *Painting a Picture (Frame) With Words*

This study is an in-depth textual or discourse analysis of media using the concept of framing, which describes how media use frames to create context or a lens through which to process the news. Framing presumes that media will present stories or news angles by providing them context or a framework for understanding. Entman (1993) surmised that frames can make moral judgments, diagnose problems, or suggest solutions by employing words, quotes, images, and historical context. In his landmark study, Entman (1993) writes “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient” by promoting a particular definition, interpretation, evaluation, or treatment (p.52). Framing provides significance through salience.

Framing can include “using certain words or phrases,” portraying certain examples or scenarios as emblematic, or using specific sources (Entman, 1993; McQuail, 2010). Framing can be problematic as it contradicts journalists’ effort at maintaining objectivity in reporting. In “McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory,” McQuail unequivocally states the inherent bias of framing as it provides interpretation of facts. McQuail writes, “When information is supplied to news media by sources (as much often is), then it arrives with a built-in frame that suits the purpose of the source and is unlikely to be purely objective” (McQuail, 2010). Scholars have noted how frames emphasize “some features of reality over others,” and how the media’s use of frames has the power to influence public opinion (Kuypers, 2002; Richardson, 2013).

### *Virgin, Vamp, and Victim Blaming*

Historically, media coverage of rape victims has consisted of the “virgin or vamp” dichotomy (Benedict, 1992). Victims tend to be portrayed as either innocent, pure or virginal, or as an enticing “vamp” or seductress that provoked her attacker (Benedict, 1992). Benedict contends that media coverage depends greatly on the victim’s socioeconomic status, race and gender, and the details of the case (1992, p. 19). Women who are considered a “worthy victim” are those who took the necessary and proper “precautions” in an attempt to prevent rape (Laura Hengehold, 2000). A worthy victim is seen as a virginal or “real” victim. According to additional studies on rape, the public perception persists that ‘real rape’ is defined as a violent act committed by a stranger in a public place (Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008; O’Hara, 2012). The New Delhi gang rape case meets those criteria, and thus may be the cause of the public’s outrage.

### *Rape Myths*

O’Hara (2012) asserts in her study on rape myths in news media coverage that stereotypes about “rape, rapists, and rape victims” are prevalent. Those stereotypes or frames range from portraying rapists as “beasts” and victims as “bad girls” (O’Hara, 2012). Either frame, according to researchers, can be problematic as the media have the power to shape public opinion about such topics (Cuklanz, 1996; O’Hara, 2012).

In rape coverage today, there has been evidence of rape myths such as victim blaming (Barnett, 2008; Benedict, 1992; Durham, 2013, 2013; O’Hara, 2012). The media also perpetuates the belief that rape and gender violence is perpetrated by strangers and not acquaintances of the victim, which minimizes the fact that domestic violence occurs (Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008). In some cases, crimes and violence against women

become “ordinary,” thus decreasing the chances that media will cover the crimes (Carter, Branston, & Allan, 2002a). In a review of six British tabloids, Carter (2002a) finds that more than two-thirds of stories on sex crimes were less than 300 words of length, demonstrating the “normalization of sexual violence” in news stories (Durham, 2013, p. 2). Carter (2002b) demonstrates how media stories of rape attempts to normalize sexual violence giving it a “seemingly inevitable feature in the daily lives of women and girls” (p.231).

Numerous research studies have focused on the media’s coverage of rape and how female rape victims are portrayed (Bonnes, 2013). As Bonnes (Bonnes, 2013) contends, “Media portrayals of rape are therefore important because they have the potential to shape societal perceptions of rape” (p. 210). When covering rape cases, there have been discussions in the scholarly community as to what are the best practices such as whether or not to name victims and to what degree the details of the crime should be shared (Johnson, 1999). Indian laws prohibit the public identification of sexual assault victims in the media (McGrath, 2013; Roberts, 2014). By law, the New Delhi gang rape was initially referred to as the “Nirbhaya” case, which means “fearless one” in Hindi (Bresnahan et al., 2013). Media and Indians often refer to Jyoti as “Jagruti (“awareness”) and Amanat (“treasure”)” (Dearden, 2015). However, breaking with law and tradition, Jyoti’s father insisted on giving her name to the media. In an interview with British media, Mr. Singh is quoted as saying:

“My daughter didn’t do anything wrong, she died while protecting herself. I am proud of her. Revealing her name will give courage to other women who have survived these attacks. They will find strength from my daughter” (Farhoud & Andrabi, 2013).

### *Sensationalized Crimes*

In cases where women are murdered, there is a higher degree of ‘newsworthiness’ for journalists because women tend to be victims of murder less often than men (Carter et al., 2002a; Sela-Shayovitz, 2015). Mason & Mockton-Smith (2008) note that often that there is a consistent linking of sex crimes and death in media coverage. The rape and murder of Jyoti ignited a firestorm of coverage and protests for the brutality of the crime (Yardley, 2013). Researchers have asserted that the news media tend to report “the most extraordinary forms of sexual violence” and “titillating sexual details” such as “murder, attempted murder and rape by a male stranger” (Barnett, 2008; Carter et al., 2002a). Durham (2013) noted that previous landmark studies on feminist research, documented “an inexorable focus on lurid and extraordinary cases” of sexual violence against women (p.2). Hengehold (2014) contends that “North American and British cultural media remain obsessed with stranger rape and murder” (p. 105). In a study of rapes committed by individual perpetrators versus those with multiple attackers in Israel, researchers found media were wont to “over-emphasize instances of gang rape in relation to individual occurrences of rape by means of sensational headlines and ‘yellow’ journalism” (Sela-Shayovitz, 2015).

The New Delhi gang rape case seems to corroborate these findings as the media reported the gruesome details from the case. Six men stripped Jyoti naked and raped her—biting her face, chest, and legs. They then removed her internal organs with their hands and a rusty metal rod (Singh, 2013). The crime even shocked the city known as “India’s rape capital” (Narayan, 2012). In the Times of India article from Sept. 15, 2013, Judge Yogesh Khanna was quoted about the ‘depravity’ of the perpetrators.

“The facts show that the entire intestine of the victim was perforated, splayed and cut open due to repeated insertion of rods and hands. The convicts, in the most barbaric manner, pulled out her internal organs with their bare hands as well as with rods and caused her irreparable injuries, thus exhibiting extreme mental perversion not worthy of human condonation,” the judge said.

Cuklanz (1996) posited that the media’s coverage of rape “helped transform public opinion of rape from a crime that hurt men’s reputations to a crime that hurt women’s bodies, minds, and souls’ in the United States” (Barnett, 2008). On the other hand, sensational journalism coverage has been shown to “spur short-sighted governmental actions that are less likely to protect communities in the long-term,” which could be the impending fate of India (O’Hara, 2012). For example, a 2013 report commissioned by the Indian government—prepared in just 29 days—noted the high occurrences of violence against women, and the retired Supreme Court justice that led the investigation urged Parliament to enact the report’s recommendations without haste ((Yardley, 2013). One of the report’s recommendations included the creation of “fast-track courts” to handle the backlog of sexual assault cases. However, such courts were criticized for their glacial pace (Gallo, 2013). The gang rape in New Delhi has called for a city, a country, and its government to assess itself and identify how it can help decrease violence against women and prosecute offenders instead of having cases languish for years in the Indian court system.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Research Questions

Due to the lack of scholarly research on rape coverage in the mass media in India, this paper poses research questions to gather data to understand the complexities surrounding sexual violence in the news. In some cultures, women are penalized for being rape victims, resulting in shame and dishonor for the woman and even her family (“Gender Violence and Identity Intersection Online,” 2011). Women do not speak of the crime for fear of isolation and ostracism, which historically may have led to a lack of litigation and media coverage of such crimes (Timmons, 2013). The Nirbhaya case bucks this trend and has received substantial national and international media coverage in accordance with previous studies that posit that the masses cover only the most “extraordinary” rape cases (Carter et al., 2002b).

The purpose of the study is to determine the predominant frames and themes presented in American and Indian media coverage of the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh and to determine if biases in coverage are prevalent using the framework of feminist critical discourse analysis.

Based on a review of the literature and the nature of the case, two primary research questions emerged:

RQ1: What frames are present in American and Indian news coverage?

RQ2: Did American and Indian media differ in their coverage of the case? If so, in what ways did they differ?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Methods

For this research project, both a pilot and final study were conducted. As part of the pilot study, the researcher analyzed and coded nine news articles from The New York Times and the Times of India and online posts from The Guardian (London) to determine what types of frames and themes were present in the coverage. Initially, American, British, and Indian publications were considered for the final study. British media were included in the pilot study because India was previously a Commonwealth of the United Kingdom. However, after further consideration, British media were excluded from the study due to the lack of relevant articles. The researcher concluded the vastly unequal sample size had the potential to skew the research findings.

The preliminary or pilot study helped familiarize the researcher with the subject matter, guided the extension of the study, aided in the development of the codebook, and resulted in the selection of the final sample. For the final study, nearly 100 articles were analyzed. They ranged in time from the date of the attack, Dec. 16, 2012, to the one-year anniversary of Jyoti's death on Dec. 28, 2013.

#### *Publications: New York Times and Times of India*

The New York Times has a circulation of total 2.6 million for print and digital subscriptions. To date, the newspaper has been awarded “117 Pulitzer Prizes— more than any other news organization”(“Pulitzer Prizes | The New York Times Company,” n.d.). Due to the New York Times' long-standing reputation as an elite, respectable

publication, it was included in the study. The Times of India's proximity to the attack and the number of articles written about the case led to the publication's inclusion in the study. The publication is a daily English-language publication with a circulation of more than 7 million and is considered one of the leading English publications in India.

The researcher searched the LexisNexis Academic database for the phrase "Delhi rape," and "Delhi gang rape," which resulted in 81 New York Times articles and 89 Times of India articles. The New York Times and Times of India websites were also searched to ensure that all articles fitting into the date range were included in the study. Duplicate articles, those that provided only a cursory mention of the case, or those erroneously included in the search results were excluded, resulting in a sample size of 44 articles for the New York Times and 49 articles for the Times of India.

The researcher conducted a textual or discourse analysis of the articles to analyze the articles for various frames and themes. This method of analysis provides researchers with the opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis of "how specific texts create meaning" based on the author's sentence structure and word choice (Tyree, 2009). McKee (2003) asserts that a textual analysis helps researchers understand how people "make sense of the world around them" (p. 2). Tonkiss (2004) adds that certain techniques such as identifying key words and themes and searching for emphasis and details can be useful in conducting a textual analysis. Using Tonkiss' approach of textual analysis, the researcher analyzed each of the articles based on keywords and themes. Using the feminist discourse analysis framework, the use and frequency of specific words, terms, descriptions, and phrases were noted and analyzed (Durham, 2015).



To develop a codebook, the researcher adopted a model from a previous study used in the analysis of user-generated content stemming from the Steubenville, Ohio rape case (Moody-Ramirez, Lewis, & Murray, 2015). A total of 93 articles were coded by hand, and the data recorded in the Qualtrics database and analyzed. Another researcher coded ten articles or approximately 10 percent of the total sample. The coders reached an intercoder reliability of 95 percent. Each article was reviewed and analyzed for tone, frames of the victim and perpetrators, rape terminology, length, date range, and types of sources. Representations of the victim and perpetrators, and how both New York Times and Times of India recorded the event were analyzed. The analysis consisted of qualitative and quantitative data where the frequency of words, identifying terms, and frames were recorded.

Based on previous research studies of framing and rape, several frames were developed for the perpetrators and the victim as reflected in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, respectively.

While reading the articles, the researcher updated the codebook to include additional frames that were not reflected on the existing code sheet.

In the pilot study, three themes were prominent, including the sensational factor, Indian culture/patriarchal society, and law enforcement/judicial system. Each article was categorized based on these three themes to foster a greater understanding of the coverage from American and Indian as a whole.

Table 4.1

*Frames Coded in the New York Times and Times of India for the Perpetrators*

Frames	Operational Definition
Alien others	The perpetrators are foreign and not native to India, the city, or province in which the attack occurred.
Brutes	The perpetrators are savages or beasts who behaved in a barbaric way that is unacceptable to society as a whole.
Hyper-masculinity	The perpetrators' hormones and male-dominated environment made them do it.
Misplaced blame	It was not their fault. The victim tempted them.
Mob mentality	The perpetrators were caught up in the moment and peer influence.
Poor moral compass	The perpetrators have no morals or values.

Table 4.2

*Frames Coded in the New York Times and Times of India for the Victim*

Frames	Operational Definition
Jezebel	The victim was promiscuous and looking for a good time and made poor choices.
Nobel woman and student	The victim was a hard-working student and courageous woman.
Poor moral compass	The victim has no morals or values.
True victim	The victim was without blame; she was a good girl who did not deserve her fate.
Victim blaming	The victim got what she deserved because of her behavior (out in the evening with an unrelated male).

### *Sensational Factor*

The sensational factor is a common journalistic news value and is common in American coverage of sexual assault. In keeping with researchers' previous studies on the nature of rape coverage in the media, a pattern emerged in the coverage concerning covering "sensational" stories and providing scintillating details of sexual assault. American and British media focused on the brutality of the crimes and provided extensive details of the victim's attack and her injuries. In contrast, Indian media avoided specific details about the rape, instead choosing to use terms such as "brutal rape," "brutally assaulted," "barbaric gang rape" and "brutal gang rape and death." For instance, The New York Times reported in an article in the days following the rape that Jyoti "suffered a major brain injury, cardiac arrest and infections of the lungs and abdomen" (The New York Times, Dec. 29, 2012, p. 11, paragraph 2).

In another article, specific injuries and cause of death of the victim were detailed such as her dying from "organ failure" after being "tortured with an iron rod inserted into her vagina and rectum." American media noted that "blood and semen" covered the attackers' clothing, the victim, and the bus. The Times of India coverage had limited details of the attack. However, a Times of India reporter provided specific, graphic details from the judge's ruling that mentioned the extent of Jyoti's injuries.

### *Indian Culture/Patriarchal Society*

The other themes identified addressed the social and political issues and structures in India and were clearly identified in the samples analyzed. All media framed stories in such a way as to cast blame or to put forth that Indian culture and its patriarchal society was to blame for the attacks. The news stories mentioned a climate of sexual harassment

that included groping and verbally accosting women known as “eve-teasing.” Due to the frequency of the harassment, many failed to report the crimes because it became an accepted, albeit an unwanted practice. All the media outlets analyzed—American, British and Indian—placed blame on Indian society for fostering a rape culture and one that is inhospitable to the “fairer sex” and fails to safeguard the rights and safety of women. The Times of India mentioned how global media attention was drawing attention to “the plight of women in India.” The New York Times noted that “more than a third of the women questioned in New Delhi said they had been physically sexually harassed in the previous year, but less than 1 percent reported the assault to the police.” The Times of India noted that “women face daily harassment across India, ranging from catcalls on the streets, groping and touching in public transport to rape.”

#### *Law Enforcement/Judicial System*

In about half of the articles, all three news outlets mentioned the public’s perception and issues with law enforcement and the judicial system. All three media organizations analyzed—American, British, and Indian—mentioned the complaints about the police failing to investigate crimes properly, harassing complainants, or “pressur(ing) the victims to reach a compromise with their attackers” such as marrying. Activists have asserted that “the police are insensitive when dealing with crimes against women.”

The country’s legal system was the cause of much ire as media noted that thousands of cases have languished for years in legal limbo without prosecutors appearing in court. The New York Times reported:

Even though the police are often reluctant to investigate rape and sexual assault allegations, the courts are badly backed up. More than 95,000 cases were awaiting

trial in India at the beginning of 2011. (The New York Times, Jan. 24, 2013, p. 6, paragraph 9)

The three themes identified: sensational/oddity factor, Indian culture/patriarchal society, and law enforcement/judicial system were evident in the final sample of 93 articles. In the final study, specific words and phrases are analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of the articles.

In a recent study that analyzed two weeks of U.S. news coverage of the incident, Durham (2015) used the lens of feminist critical discourse analysis and observed American media's prevalence for portraying India as a Third World country that subjugates women and makes them "vulnerable to sexual assault" (p. 175). This paper draws on Durham's approach to analyzing discourse coupled with Lazar's landmark study that fused critical discourse analysis and feminist research. The main purpose of feminist discourse analysis is to deconstruct language and texts that can often favor males and exclude women or can categorize women of other geographic locations as "others" (Lazar, 2007). Additionally, the intersectionality of race/class/gender is explored and was evident in the samples analyzed for this study. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who is credited with coining the term "intersectionality" in her article, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," noted that rape is largely recognized as vehicle of domination that affects women as a whole (Collins, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991). In exploring the portrayal of the victim, feminist critical discourse analysis and intersectionality are intertwined.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Findings and Discussion

#### *Article Tone, Length, and Date of Publication*

In the New York Times coverage, 38 articles, or 86 percent, were written in a neutral tone (Table 5.1). Nine percent, or four of the articles, were positive and were hopeful about a change in Indian society or espoused the numerous virtues of Jyoti and her academic accomplishments. Only two, or five percent of the articles, were negative in tone and mentioned the perpetrators' actions.

Table 5.1

#### *Article Tone in the New York Times*

Paragraphs	Number of articles	%
Positive	4	9%
Negative	2	5%
Neutral	38	86%
<i>Total</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>100%</i>

In the Times of India coverage, 92 percent (45) of the articles were neutral in tone. Two articles, or four percent, were slanted as positive, and two were negative, as depicted in Table 5.2.

Thirty percent of the New York Times articles ranged in length from six to 11 paragraphs as shown in Table 5.3 with the majority of the articles, 17 or 39 percent, being longer than 18 paragraphs. Carter (2002a) noted the importance of sizing or article length in British tabloid media. Story length can equate with or denote importance. In the case

of Jyoti, a considerable number of stories were longer in length, with 27 articles, or 69 percent, ranging in length from 12 to more than 18 paragraphs.

Table 5.2

*Article Tone in the Times of India*

Paragraphs	Number of articles	%
Positive	2	4%
Negative	2	4%
Neutral	45	92%
<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 5.3

*Article Length in the New York Times*

Paragraphs	Number of occurrences	%
1 to 5 paragraphs	3	7%
6 to 11 paragraphs	13	30%
12 to 16 paragraphs	10	22%
17 paragraphs	1	2%
Longer than 18 paragraphs	17	39%
<i>Total</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>100%</i>

Comparatively, the Times of India reporters wrote shorter stories. The majority of the stories, approximately 53 percent, were six to 11 paragraphs, with another 10 percent ranging in length from one to five paragraphs (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4

*Article Length in the Times of India*

Paragraphs	Number of occurrences	%
1 to 5 paragraphs	5	10%
6 to 11 paragraphs	26	53%
12 to 16 paragraphs	13	27%
17 paragraphs	1	2%
Longer than 18 paragraphs	4	8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>

Only four percent of the articles were longer than 18 paragraphs, and those stories typically focused on legal proceedings, protests, and government actions.

As shown in Table 5.5, the majority of the articles written about Jyoti’s and Avnindra’s attack were published immediately following the assault. Thirty-nine of 44 articles were written between Dec. 16, 2012, and March 16, 2013. Three articles, or seven percent, were written between June 17, 2013, and Sept. 16, 2013, which corresponded with the conviction of the rapists. One article was written between Sept. 17, 2013, and Dec. 28, 2013, about the one-year anniversary of Jyoti’s death and how her parents and family have coped with her loss.

Table 5.5

*Article Publication Dates for the New York Times*

Date Range	Number of occurrences	%
Dec. 16, 2012—March 16, 2013	39	89%
March 17, 2013—June 16, 2013	1	2%
June 17, 2013—Sept. 16, 2013	3	7%
Sept. 17, 2013—Dec. 28, 2013	1	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>100%</i>

The Times of India reporters wrote 39 out of 49 articles sampled, or 80 percent, in the first few months after Jyoti’s attack on Dec. 16, 2012, and March 16, 2013, (Table 5.6). Another 10 articles, or 20 percent, were written between June 17, 2013, and Sept. 16, 2013. The rapists were found guilty on Sept. 10, 2013, and sentenced to death by hanging on Sept. 14, 2013, which accounts for the sizable number of articles written during that period.



Table 5.6

*Article Publication Dates for the Times of India*

Date Range	Number of occurrences	%
Dec. 16, 2012—March 16, 2013	39	80%
June 17, 2013—Sept. 16, 2013	10	20%
<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>

The terminology used most often was “gang rape,” followed by “rape,” which is illustrated in Table 5.7. Typically, gang rape and rape were associated with “murder” and “death,” which scholars have previously noted in media coverage (Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008). At the time the earliest articles were published, Jyoti was still alive. Thus, murder and death were mentioned less often. The frequency of “rape” and “gang rape,” is contributed to the use of those words in the search terms, “Delhi rape” and “Delhi gang rape,” which were used to find pertinent articles.

Table 5.7

*Terminology Used in New York Times Articles*

Term	Number of occurrences	%
Gang rape	34	44%
Rape	22	28%
Sexual assault	3	4%
Murder	12	15%
Death	7	9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>100%</i>

*Assault Terminology*

Media in India tended to favor the use of the term “gang rape” and early on characterized the assault as the “Delhi gang rape,” so much in fact that each headline about the rape included the phrase before each specific story title. Fifty-nine percent of the articles, as shown in Table 5.8, included “gang rape” followed by “rape” at 14

percent, “sexual assault” at seven percent, and “murder” and “death” at 14 percent and five percent, respectively. Again, the frequent use of “rape” and “gang rape” is contributable to their usage in the search terms for selecting the final sample. One article focused solely on the perpetrator’s legal battles and did not mention Jyoti’s rape and murder, which was a glaring omission.

Table 5.8

*Terminology Used in Times of India Articles*

Term	Number of occurrences	%
Gang rape	43	59%
Rape	10	14%
Sexual assault	5	7%
Murder	10	14%
Death	4	5%
None	1	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>100%</i>

*Representation of the New Delhi Gang Rapists*

RQ1: What frames are present in American and Indian news coverage?

Concerning the framing of the perpetrators, only a few frames were identified such as “brutes,” “regular men,” “misplaced blame,” “poor moral compass,” “mob mentality” and an “other” category, which included frames of “poor, simple countrymen, and dropout.” New York Times’ reporters kept their descriptions of the perpetrators to a minimum only writing a few articles focusing on details about the perpetrators, as shown in Table 5.9. Journalists framed the perpetrators as brutes, regular men, with a poor moral compass in four percent of the articles sampled. Misplaced blame and mob mentality frames were present in two percent of the articles. In three articles or six percent, the assailants were portrayed as poor, simple, countrymen and dropouts. The vast majority of

articles or 78 percent did not contain a frame of the perpetrators and simply reported the facts in the case.

In one article where reporters framed the perpetrators as brutes, they were referred to as ‘beasts’ who were not worthy of legal representation by private lawyers. In an article about the ringleader of the attack, Ram Singh, a reporter likened him to fictional Bollywood boogeyman, Gabbar Singh, which parents use to threaten unwieldy children into behaving. Ram was described as ‘bad,’ ‘shameless,’ with an “infamous reputation.” Ram’s brother, Mukesh, was portrayed as “a simple country man” who was abused and interrogated by police and “coerced to sign a confession.” Vinay Sharma was framed as a ‘quiet and simple boy’ who received ‘top marks in school’ and ‘liked studying English.’

Table 5.9

*Framing of the Perpetrators in the New York Times Coverage*

Frames	Number of occurrences	%
Brutes	2	4%
Regular men	2	4%
Misplaced blame	1	2%
Poor moral compass	2	4%
Mob mentality	1	2%
Other (poor, countrymen, dropout)	3	6%
None	37	78%
<i>Total</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>100%</i>

In seven instances or 14 percent, of articles surveyed in the Times of India, the brute frame was used to describe the perpetrators (Table 5.10). In an article in the Times of India reporting that the judge sentenced the perpetrators to death, the judge enumerated Jyoti’s horrific injuries and stated that the convicts “unprovoked crime demonstrated exceptional depravity of mind of the convicts.” In news coverage, Ram was described as

‘mental’ for being quick tempered. His affair with a married woman with three children whom he later married was mentioned—an example of the poor moral compass frame. Akshay Thakur and the 17-year-old offender and “had no regrets” after committing the crime as they drank tea and “spent the rest of the night watching music channels on television.” In 86 percent of stories analyzed, no frame was present for the perpetrators signifying objectivity in reporting.

Table 5.10

*Framing of the Perpetrators in the Times of India Coverage*

Frames	Number of occurrences	%
Brutes	7	14%
None	42	86%
<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>

*Representation of Victim Jyoti Singh*

RQ2: Did American and Indian media differ in their coverage of the case? If so, in what ways did they differ?

Jyoti Singh was rarely framed in the New York Times coverage. In 77 percent of the articles, the facts of the case and generic identifiers were used to describe her, as denoted in Table 5.11. In four instances or 9 percent of the articles reviewed, Jyoti was blamed. In all four cases, the attorney for Mukesh Singh insinuated that the attack was Jyoti’s fault because she was out late at night and that she was not a respectable lady. The attorney also blamed Avnindra for taking Jyoti out at night and not protecting her from the attackers. In six articles or 14 percent, Jyoti was framed as a noble woman and good student. Her high marks in school were mentioned as well as her kind nature.

Table 5.11

*Framing of the Victim in the New York Times*

Frames	Number of occurrences	%
Victim blaming	4	9%
Noblewoman and student	6	14%
None	34	77%
<i>Total</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>100%</i>

The Times of India reporters, in 88 percent or 45 articles out of 49 analyzed, did not frame Jyoti (Table 5.12). The true victim and noble woman and student frame were each noted twice or in 4 percent of the sample articles. The Times of India portrayed Jyoti more positively than the New York Times, which portrayed her with a negative frame in 9 percent of the articles analyzed.

Table 5.12

*Framing of the Victim in the Times of India*

Frames	Number of occurrences	%
True victim	2	4%
Noblewoman and student	2	4%
Other (Braveheart)	2	4%
None	45	88%
<i>Total</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>100%</i>

When it came to terms or identifiers for Jyoti, New York Times’ reporters chose to describe her most often as a “woman” and “physiotherapy student,” which constituted 70 percent of the articles. She was also identified as a medical and college student five percent and 7 percent of the time, respectively. She was only referred to as “victim” in 16 percent of the articles, as illustrated in Table 5.13. Additionally, Jyoti’s age also accompanied many of the terms used to describe her (Table 5.14). At first glance, this

seems like a simple description that adheres to the journalistic practice of providing the age of subjects. But using a feminist critical discourse analysis lens or framework, the mentioning of the victim’s age and gender seems to illustrate the media’s use of intersectionality when describing victims. The perpetrators’ name and age were rarely, if at all, reported together. However, in the case of the victim, her gender, title or class (student), and age were used to identify her. Although, intersectionality was first used to describe the experience of black women, it has been often applied to women of color in general and seeks to create meaning out of the juncture of race/class/gender (Collins, 2015). By mentioning her age in 73 percent of the articles coded, the New York Times has seemingly given importance to her age as well as her status as a student possibly as a way of illustrating the loss of her potential and the loss to her community.

Table 5.13

*Terms Used to Describe the Victim in the New York Times*

Description	Number of occurrences	%
Woman	25	45%
Physiotherapy student	14	25%
Victim	9	16%
Medical student	3	5%
College student	4	7%
None	1	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 5.14

*Mentions of the Victim’s Age in the New York Times*

Age mentioned	Number of articles	%
Yes	32	73%
No	12	27%
<i>Total</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>100%</i>

Indian women are subjected to deeply ingrained traditional roles in society where they occupy positions as wives, mothers, and daughters, and society rarely views them as individual women. India has been described as a “collectivist” society where women are viewed as belonging to a man—first her father, then husband, and her son, if she were to become a widow (Haq, 2013). In newspapers, it was rumored that Jyoti and Avnindra Pandey were engaged to be married, and even one scholarly article refers to her using Avnindra’s last name. Her family, as well as Avnindra and his family, were quick to debunk those rumors in the press. It seemed as if by providing her the status of a future wife gave her life more value. Her family chided the media for not allowing her to rest in peace by giving fuel to rumors.

The concept of a collectivist society may shed light on the Times of India’s use of specific terms to describe Jyoti. In the media coverage, she was viewed as belonging to the nation-state as their “dear girl” and “braveheart” Nirbhaya. Coincidentally, a 2015 documentary about Jyoti’s rape and murder was titled “India’s Daughter.” While American media chose to identify Jyoti heavily as a student, Indian media, specifically the Times of India, were quick to coin a moniker—Nirbhaya, or the fearless one. Even though her parents consented to make her name public, many scholars, writers, and journalists still refer to Jyoti Singh as Nirbhaya, three years after the attack.

In 34 percent of articles, the Times of India writers referred to Jyoti as Nirbhaya. Although, Jyoti was an adult and her age of 23 was mentioned in 27 articles (Table 5.16), she was described as a “girl” 25 percent of the time in the articles analyzed (Table 5.15). Some might argue that “girl” is simply a term of endearment. However, it can be seen as degrading to refer to an adult woman as a girl. It also underscores the fact as an

unmarried woman she still belonged to her family. The Times of India placed less significance on her role or status as a student and chose to identify her 20 percent of the time as a victim. She was mostly known as Nirbhaya, a girl, and a victim (79 percent collectively)—all seem to underscore her “place” in society. Researchers have documented women’s traditional roles in India. Haq (2013) writes how Indian girls are taught the doctrine of ‘Pita, Pati, Putra’ or “Father, Husband, Son” where they must follow the command of each as they transition into womanhood and old age (p. 173).

Table 5.15

*Terms Used to Describe the Victim in the Times of India*

Description	Number of occurrences	%
Nirbhaya	26	34%
Girl	19	25%
Victim	16	20%
Physiotherapy student	4	5%
Medical student	3	4%
College student	2	3%
Woman	2	3%
None	5	6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 5.16

*Mentions of the Victim’s Age in the Times of India*

Age mentioned	Number of articles	%
Yes	27	55%
No	22	45%
<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>100%</i>

*Article Sources*

In the majority of news articles or 24 percent, New York Times’ journalists quoted an attorney (Table 5.17). In 11 or 14 percent of the articles, a government official



or politician was quoted. Often, politicians released statements about the attack, called for the cessation of protests, or pledged to address violence against women with more stringent laws and a streamlined judicial process. Police, jailers, and law enforcement sources were quoted 8 percent of the time about the investigation, police misconduct, and the condition of the perpetrators' in jail. Students who were most often protestors were interviewed in 11 percent of the articles. Both Jyoti's and Avnindra's family were quoted in 9 percent of the articles about the victims' suffering, the punishment of the perpetrators, and specific details of the attack.

The Times of India had a more consistent distribution of sources and did not rely heavily on one type of source as the New York Times reporters (Table 5.18). This even distribution sources could be explained by the proximity of Indian journalists to the crime, their knowledge of the language and customs, and access to sources and information. Interestingly, three articles included quotes from Jyoti and Avnindra. Two articles mentioned Jyoti writing two letters to her family while she was in the hospital in New Delhi and Singapore. The quotes were in her native language and translated into English for the paper. Avnindra's entire account of the attack was the subject of one Times of India story. Indian media quoted medical personnel 11 percent of the time and provided detailed information about Jyoti's treatment and cause of death. They also released the full statement from medical personnel announcing Jyoti's death at the hospital in Singapore. Such in-depth reporting about Jyoti's medical trials, legal interviews, and notes from her deathbed were not present in the New York Times coverage.

Table 5.17

*Articles Sources in the New York Times*

Description	Number of articles	%
Attorney	18	24%
Government official	11	14%
Protestor	8	11%
Victim's family	7	9%
Law enforcement	6	8%
Neighbor/community member	5	7%
Rape victim/women's advocate	5	7%
Professor/teacher	4	6%
Perpetrators' family	3	4%
Medical personnel	3	4%
Judge	1	1%
Counselor	1	1%
Religious leader	1	1%
Other (Author)	1	1%
None	2	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 5.18

*Articles Sources in the Times of India*

Description	Number of articles	%
Victims' family	8	12%
Law enforcement	8	12%
Medical personnel	7	11%
Attorney	6	9%
Judge	6	9%
Government official	5	8%
Victim	3	5%
Perpetrator(s)	3	5%
Protestor	3	5%
Rape victim advocate	3	5%
Neighbor/community member	2	3%
Perpetrators' family	2	3%
Professor/teacher	1	2%
Religious leader	1	2%
None	6	9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>100%</i>

### *Summary*

The New York Times and the Times of India seemed to adhere to the basic tenets of journalism and for the vast majority of their coverage omitted frames and biased slants of the victim and perpetrators. Cultural and societal issues were apparent. For instance, the New York Times overwhelmingly listed Jyoti's age and status as a student. The Times of India used her age, but most often described her as a girl and Nirbhaya, the name they choose to illustrate her. The New York Times tended to write longer stories as compared to the Times of India. However, the Times of India spread out their coverage and wrote more stories about the conviction and sentencing of the perpetrators. The quality of their reporting was not in question. Each served a valuable role in making the facts of the case know to public—a role that had far-reaching and positive consequences.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Limitations

This study addressed how international and national media covered the Delhi rape case, but a small sample size and purposive sampling method were limitations. Although, the researcher analyzed 93 articles, it was a small number as compared to the total number of stories journalists from around the world wrote. Further research should include additional analysis of news articles from various outlets—national and international media. Other studies have looked at social media surrounding the case. The various images that ran with the news articles were not analyzed as part of this study. Conducting a study to analyze both images and social media could help add to the scholarship on the subject.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion

#### *Implications for India's Future*

Rape is common in India. However, the rape of Jyoti Singh served as a national wake-up call that left Indian men and women, the judicial system, and Indian Parliament demanding the eradication of sexual violence against women. In the wake of Jyoti's rape and murder, thousands of protestors—men and women—took to the street—in sometimes violent ways—demanding justice for the victim, the death of India's rape culture, and the swift apprehension and prosecution of offenders.

Violence against women is not just India's problem. Rape is not exclusive to Third World or developing countries. According to the World Health Organization, incidents of rape, domestic abuse, and violence plague every nation (“WHO | Violence against women,” n.d.). No country is immune to this social problem. In India, the occurrences of rape are widespread with little to no justice for victims or punishment for perpetrators. What are additionally concerning are projections for increasing gender gaps in which men will outnumber women by tens of millions within the next decade (Hudson, 2010; Hudson & Boer, 2007, 2002; Oldenburg, 1992). It is estimated that “300,000 more young girls die than young boys”—a “direct result of gender discrimination” and of “15 million baby girls born each year, nearly 25 percent will not live to see their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday (Haq, 2013).

Indian women are pressured not only to conceive children, but to conceive sons to ensure the father's progeny, to care for parents in their old age, and to eliminate the need

for providing a dowry to marry off daughters (Haq, 2013). As a result, female infanticide and sex-selective abortions are common in India leading to the sex-ratio imbalance that leads to surplus males in society. Currently, the sex ratio is 111 males to every 100 females in India and by 2060, there could be as many as 191 men for every 100 women (“Bare branches, redundant males; The marriage squeeze in India and China,” 2015). Researchers have documented the effects of surplus males on a society—more violence against women (Bolt, 2004; Kumar, 2014). Surplus males tend to be unmarried, uneducated, unemployed or underemployed, and they congregate together and commit crimes (Hudson & Boer, 2002). This signals grave implications for women in countries with a disproportionate number of men.

With India leading the world in the number of unmarried men, this could have negative and devastating consequences for women. Scholars predict an increase in violence and rape of women in India. But, there is hope—the power of the media. Media have been effective in raising awareness of rape and portraying the crime as an affront to society’s moral standards.

Media have the power to impact change. In New Delhi, this is already evident. By chronicling and documenting the aftermath of Jyoti’s rape, the media helped usher in systematic changes in the Indian judicial system. The media writing about the attack informed the citizens of New Delhi, India, and the world. No one—not law enforcement, government officials, or politicians, could ignore Jyoti’s brutal attack and murder. The public demanded it. An informed citizenry is an active one. After reading about the “braveheart” Nirbhaya, the public clamored for justice. Her death would not be in vain. It served as a clarion call to politicians that existing laws needed to be enforced and that

women were no longer going to be silent about their mistreatment or abuse. This study illustrates the media's ability to bring about awareness of violence against women and to help hold public officials accountable. Studies of this nature prove that media need to continue to cover violent crimes against women to bring about awareness and demonstrate the collective disapproval of this type of treat of women. There needs to additional studies of media coverage on violence against women and rape in India. Jyoti's case and the immense media coverage underscore the power of media messages in society.

In a country where electricity is limited to a few hours a day in many towns and 70 percent of the country lives in rural areas, there is limited access to the Internet. The Fourth Estate or the press plays a pivotal role in India where the population relies heavily on print journalism for news and information. Newspapers still wield influence as they help enact a system of checks and balances. The media has, should, and hopefully, will continue playing a major role in writing on violence against women and serving to help hold politicians accountable for the legal changes that were enacted following Jyoti's death.

Without the media, Jyoti would have been just another anonymous victim of rape. She would have been one of the thousands of women raped in India. No one would have known her story—her zeal for life, her love of school, and her desire to uplift her family. They would not have known her courageous fight for her life and her determination to bring her rapists to justice. While in the hospital and unable to speak because of her injuries, Jyoti wrote a simple note to her family: "Save me. I want to live." Although she perished, her memory and her legacy lives on and her death has not been in vain. The

New York Times noted that the Indian government was reviewing existing laws for violent crimes and rapes to enhance safety for women. In March 2015, Indian officials announced the opening of 20 additional fast-track courts in New Delhi to handle rape crimes. Women are reporting their attackers instead of allowing them to go unpunished. The media played an important role in this systematic change.

### *Recommendations for Journalists*

Journalists in India and around the world should continue to report on violence against women—domestic abuse, rape, and interpersonal violence. Not every case has the brutal violence and depravity of Jyoti’s case, and hers should not be the barometer by which rape coverage is measured. While extreme stories of rape meet the newsworthy journalistic value, reporters should guard against solely covering those types of stories. Reporting only sensational stories of violence is common practice as identified by a growing field of scholars. This type of coverage comes at the expense of the victims. It portrays the message that only the most brutal rapes are legitimate forms of violence worth reporting. As an alternative, journalists should report on trends concerning violence against women to avoid minimizing or trivializing domestic abuse and rapes with one perpetrator. Sensational stories can be used as case studies to illustrate a larger issue or phenomenon. In contrast, stories of rape cannot saturate media coverage because of the risk of normalizing violence against women. There is a precarious balance between avoiding sensational stories and writing a superfluous number of stories that make rape appears as mundane, everyday occurrences.

This study’s findings determined that the media remained fairly objective and did not use many frames to categorize the victim or the perpetrators. However, the media



must remain vigilant in their coverage of rape by observing best practices such as not naming the victim without expressed permission from the victim's family, minimizing bias, and striving for objectivity. They must adhere to the highest forms of ethics while not choosing to be overly sympathetic to victims and omitting numerous subjects or the narrative of the perpetrators in the story.

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