Don’t tell your daughter not to go out, tell your son to behave properly

A content analysis and critical discourse analysis of rape discourse in English-language Indian newspapers before and after the Delhi Gang Rape

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Abstract

Rape reporting in the media seldom leads to an image of sexual violence that is true to reality. Rape victims are blamed for the crime, they are depicted as ‘asking for it’ and the perpetrator stays out of the picture. Also, rape is often described as happening in dark alleys, at knife-point when the majority of sex crimes happen between acquaintances. In India, this is no different. Since rape in India is a severe and increasing problem with the Delhi Gang Rape being the ultimate example, knowing how rape reporting takes place in India is of vital importance. As earlier research pointed out, the Delhi Gang Rape drove the media to publish an excessive amount of articles on rape with more attention for background information, while also publishing sensationalized content. This thesis aims to test previous research on Indian English-language dailies by performing a content analysis and to deepen the understanding of the construction of rape discourse in these newspapers by performing a critical discourse analysis. Both analyses confirm Delhi Gang Rape indeed was a decisive moment for Indian rape reporting. The depth of sensationalism increased but the amount of sensationalistic coverage remained the same. Rape coverage in both the Hindustan Times and the Times of India contains the traditional characteristics found in Western rape coverage. However, journalists also turn away from regular reporting when large cases come about. The DGR is a good illustration. Coverage on rape exploded in the direct aftermath, article genre and topic diversified and in general, the public was given more background information. This trend is largely temporary and confined to covering the DGR alone. Several discourses are present that show that Indian rape reporting is also charged with rape myths and the virgin/vamp-narrative that is so common in rape reporting. Last, the DGR has made rape become a collective problem instead of an individual one. Rape reporting is thus changed by reporting the DGR, on the short and long term. It leaves some of the old practices behind which improves the representation of rape, while there is still room for improvement in terms of sensationalism, sexualisation and attention for underlying causes for rape in society.

Keywords: rape, India, newspapers, content analysis, critical discourse analysis, narrative, discourse
Preface

In my experience and that of my fellow students, all theses are the result of putting two steps forward and one (or more) back again. As the first topic for my MA thesis did not work out, I rewrote an earlier essay into a research proposal. It was a bit impulsive, but it fit. It took quite a while to finish but I am grateful I can end my MA with this research. The topic has fascinated me until the end, which is quite impressive since it took me (with a break of six months) 1,5 years to complete. Thanks to Todd Graham for keeping me on track, having patience and providing me with everything I needed to complete it.

Special thanks to my parents. Without you, I couldn’t have done it.

Completing my MA was quite a journey. I did not only get a degree but I also found three new friends in my fellow students Sofie, Maud, and Pia, for which I am most grateful of all.
Introduction

On the 16th of December 2012, India was startled by a gang rape that took place in New Delhi. The 23-year-old medical student Jyoti Singh Pandey went to the cinema with a friend. On their return, the couple was pulled into a van by six men. During several hours, the woman was raped and molested. The man was severely beaten. The victim died from her injuries in a Singapore hospital two weeks later. The day following the incident people protested against violence against women in Delhi and other large Indian cities. The government dispersed the demonstrations with the use of tear gas and water cannons, public transport was closed down, and certain areas of Delhi were no longer accessible due to a curfew (Rao, 2014: 154). Several people died during these protests. The Delhi Gang Rape, as the incident is called, caused a never seen uproar in society. In reaction to the protests, the government adjusted the Indian Penal Code on sex crimes (Nigam 2014, Rao 2014). However, stories about excessive sexual violence still make the headlines and crime records only show an increase of sexual violence against women (Trustlaw, 2011, NCRB, 2013: 81). The issue is a recurring topic in both Indian and global media. 1,2 In the two years following the Delhi Gang Rape, it seems that not much has changed for women in this part of the world.

The DGR did not only lead to massive protest and law changes. Never before had Indian media covered a rape case as extensively as this case. In December 2012 and first months of 2013, media coverage on the Delhi Gang Rape exploded. Newspapers reported the rape on their front pages for weeks. ‘As newspapers reinvented themselves as rape-reporting vehicles many of them across the country have been devoting much space, often several pages every day, to report of rape gathered together in a way they never had been before’ (Drèze & Sen, 2013:227 in Rao 2014). Numerous sources were consulted about the rape and TV programmes analysed every last detail (Nigam 2014).

The incident had a severe impact on public discourse. As Nigam notes:

“The protest in the gang rape case has become a landmark in the fight for women’s rights in India, leading to legislative changes and moving gender to the center stage of political debates. The contest in this case helped to open up a dialogue defining rape in new perspectives. Rape became a national issue. Every newspaper carried report for weeks on rape on the first page which has not happened earlier. All the private news channels analyzed infinitesimal details of the story” (2014: 209).

The coverage of this story by Indian newspapers has been topic of research since then. As Drache and Velagic (2013) argue in their research into coverage of the DGR by Indian English language dailies, journalists did follow more storylines and tried to give more background

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information but overall, rape reporting still relied on sensationalistic reporting, giving lots of detail on victims and attackers. According to them, the bulk of articles on rape was made of incident-driven reports, with journalists writing about specific cases and the investigative process. As they note: The problem with such reactive reporting is that it often fails to provide necessary content and analysis and sees incidents disappear as quickly as they were given top coverage’ and ‘The result of such incident driven reporting is an information gap. Engaging in a reactive form of reporting, the press leaves the reader with information concerning a single incident and little about the issue of gender violence as a whole.’(Drache and Velaglic, 2013:10,8). The papers were not writing about the possible causes and prevention for India’s rape problems. Features and follow-ups on the subject of rape were rare. Therefore, the widely known issues of sexual violence were and are still not fully acknowledged and the public was poorly informed. As they state ‘... these stories are disconnected from a broader framing or larger meaning. They exist as isolated islands without connecting to larger, more extensive developed storylines. (Drache and Velagic 2013:11) They also note that ‘These cases, known as trigger events, provide an entry point for deep reflection, allowing for the health of gender justice to be evaluated.’ (Drache and Velagic, 2013:22; see also Rao, 2014). However, they do call the incident a watershed moment and trigger event in rape reporting for Indian media because it led to the largest coverage on one single case ever. Also, journalists opened up to multiple storylines, moving beyond the regular incident-driven reporting. The incident thus seems to have had a significant impact on rape reporting in Indian newspapers in the direct aftermath of the Delhi Gang Rape. Coverage moved towards more background information while also increasing sensationalistic content.

Rape is still a serious problem in India. New Delhi is called the ‘rape capital’. In 2012, only one perpetrator was convicted of raping a woman with 706 cases being reported, while much more go unreported due to the stigma that is attached to rape (Rao 2014:154). Therefore, it is interesting to see whether these presumed changes in the media have indeed occurred and to what extent the newspapers have kept up these presumed changes after the DGR. Therefore, the central research question in this thesis is:

How is rape reported before, during and after the Delhi Gang Rape incident in two Indian English-language dailies and what discourses are present in the coverage?
To answer this, the study has a twofold structure. First, it seeks to question (and confirm or dismiss) the claims made by earlier researchers, particularly by Drache and Velagic (2013). Was the DGR indeed a watershed moment for rape reporting in India? Are the papers providing more background information about rape? What developments are visible in terms of sensationalism? Secondly, the research aims to uncover deeper ideas and ideologies on sexual crimes and gender. Earlier research into rape coverage shows that journalists often (unintentionally) use certain narratives to stereotype men, women, and rape. This leads to a misrepresentation of rape. Are these also present in the coverage on the DGR and other rape cases in Indian newspapers? The research aims at discovering these developments in rape reporting on the long term in a timeframe of three years before and after the DGR by utilizing a mixed methods approach: content analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Another incentive for researching this topic is the role the media play in constructing and maintaining gender perceptions. Images of rape are closely intertwined with ideas on gender, which also are constructed through media texts. Furthermore, the main source of information about rape and sexual violence, in general, are the media. Therefore, the picture the media paint about these themes is of vital importance (Walby, et al., 1983). When rape is misrepresented, an untrue image of sexual violence is presented to the public, which can have negative effects on the public discourse on rape. Since India is a country in which women are not equal to men and sex is a heavy taboo, the way the media portray women, women’s rights, and sexual violence, is crucial for the construction of a (helpful) discourse on gender rights and sexual violence.

As research has pointed out, rape reporting is an interesting field in any society since discourses on women; sexuality and power are present in the news about (sexual) violence against women. In this light, India is a special case. It is the world’s largest democracy with a wide and varied media landscape in which television and film industry are booming, and the newspaper market is still growing with 330 million copies sold every day (Sonwalkar, 2002; Rao, 2014). Also, there has not been a lot of scholarly interest in the Indian media (Rao, 2014). This study thus contributes to the understanding and effects of rape reporting in India and Indian newspapers, especially in a time period of gender change in India, being the world’s largest non-Western media landscape.

In the first chapters, the most important academic ideas and theories on rape reporting such as the use of rape myths and other often occurring narratives and textual practices are outlined. After a general overview, the focus shifts towards rape reporting in India and background information on Indian society. This is followed by and outline of the used methods and discourse theory. The last three chapters present the results. Analysis of the data is done in the last three chapters with the use of the theories outlined in the first chapters.
In short, the results of this research underline earlier research on rape reporting in general and rape reporting in India in particular. It becomes clear that both newspapers were part of the media outcry over the DGR, changed their tactics after the DGR but kept writing in sensational form and tone. Furthermore, close analysis of the articles shows that rape myths are indeed used over the total time period. These myths serve to create a form of ‘otherness’ around victims and perpetrators in rape cases and to convey blame and responsibility for rape from men to women. Last, it was possible to discern a variety of discourses in the sample. Both newspapers use a battle- and heroine narrative that shows the different power alliances at play in the DGR case. They also make use of discourses on shame, the virgin- and vamp narrative as described by Benedict (1992) and a nationalism discourse. Clear presence of these discourses proves that the commonly used theories on rape reporting are also applicable in this recent research into non-Western rape coverage while offering new perspectives on rape reporting in English-language Indian newspapers.
Chapter 1: Characteristics of rape reporting

Before the 1950s, the word ‘rape’ would not even be mentioned in newspaper reports about sexual violence. In the case of a rape, it would be called simply an ‘assault’ or ‘serious offense’. Well into the 1970s, the first feminist scholars started to study rape and violence against women in the (Anglo-Saxon) media. This accompanied a growing interest from the media in rape reporting. As a result, journalists began to cover rape more explicitly. More rapes were reported and the focus shifted from the depiction of the perpetrator to the experiences of the raped woman. This meant that the acts and fate of the perpetrator became less important and journalists focused on the conditions of the victim. Also, the press started to give more background information on the subject (Walby et al., 1983). However, by the 1990’s rape reporting returned to its pre1970s quality, again constructing it as an individual problem for women instead of a larger societal issue, focusing on individual cases while showing less sympathy for victims (Benedict, 1992).

1.1 The misrepresentation of rape

According to the bulk of scholars that studied rape reporting, rape is systematically depicted wrong. Scholars consistently have found rape reporting to be misrepresenting women, rape, victims of rape and attackers. Most newspapers report only the most outstanding rape cases while most rapes happen between men and women known to each other. So-called acquaintance rape or marital rape receives far less attention (Heath et al., 1981; Walby et al., 1983; Schwengels and Lemert 1986; Benedict 1992; Meyers, 1997; Carll, 2003; Alat, 2009). This leads to misrepresentation of rape. The press gives the public the idea that a rape is an event in which a stranger assaults a woman in an alley, in the dark, while holding a knife to her throat. This idea of ‘real rape’, introduced by Susan Estrich, wrongly informs the public about the reality of rape (Heath et al 1981; Walby et al., 1983; Estrich, 1987). Related to this, Schwengels and Lemert were particularly concerned with the lack of ‘fair warning’. According to their analysis of news reports compared to police reports of rape, this meant that women were not warned against the real dangers of rape they were likely to encounter in their lives (1986: 35). Last, women are very often depicted as weak and in need of a savior, who is nearly always a man (Cuklanz, 2000).

The press only reporting about extraordinary rape cases is partly due to their reliance on police reports. Women raped by their husband or some other acquaintance do not always report this to the police. This and the lesser newsworthy of these incidents leads to omitting these rapes in reporting. Instead, rape occurring in violent circumstances or involving drama or celebrities are considered most newsworthy (Meyers, 1997:4). Above all, a sensational rape gives an editor the
chance to write a titillating story. A rape has all the ingredients that are often present in what are called sensational reports. As Grabe, Zhou and Barett state, ‘[...] sensationalism is characterized as content that amuses, titillated and entertains [...]’, often ‘dealing with celebrities, crime, sex, disasters, accidents and public fears’ (2001: 637). Arousal is another important pointer for sensationalism, as Tannenbaum and Lynch argue (1960). Walby et al. (1983) argue that stories about rape carry a sexualizing aspect. Rape reports sometimes mention and stress the sexual history of a victim and give details about what happened during the rape. This is a way of sensationalizing and sexualizing the report. In some papers, rape reports are placed next to other sexually explicit content, creating a ‘soft pornography package’. In several ways, rape is able to serve as a selling tool for newspapers (Walby et al., 1983: 86). As sexualisation connected to rape coverage lacks a standard definition, it is defined as ‘any unnecessary use of sexual detail in reporting rape, which serves to transform the report into a titillating story’ here. Reporting rape altogether is sometimes seen as sensationalism but this research refutes that idea since rape is a real problem in all societies and needs to be addressed by the press in a constructive manner. As is explained below, there are enough ways to misrepresent rape but there are also ways to portray rape constructively, adding to awareness about sexual violence in and through the media.

1.2 Playing the blame game: rape myths

One of the clearest aspects of a biased rape report and one of the most studied aspects of rape coverage is the portrayal of the victim and attacker, and consequently the allotment of blame. In her book Virgin or Vamp, Helen Benedict describes how women are portrayed in four major rape cases and trials in American newspapers. She concludes that women are either seen as virgins or vamps in these reports. A ‘virgin’ is perceived as innocent; she could not help being raped by a ‘beast’ or ‘fiend’. A vamp is seen as ‘asking for it’ (Benedict 1992: 18-19, 23). Benedict specifically attributes this misrepresentation of rape in rape reporting to the widespread use of rape myths. First introduced by Martha R. Burt, rape myths are ‘prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists’ (Burt, 1980). Examples of those myths are: ‘women cry rape for revenge’, ‘women provoke rape by dressing indecent’, ‘rapists are usually from low class’ or ‘rapists are sex-deprived men driven by lust’ (Burt, 1980 and Benedict, 1992). According to Benedict, the rape myths used in the media’s rape coverage serve to protect the public from feeling vulnerable. By alienating the perpetrator and above all, the victim, the public can safely assume that such a thing will never happen to them (Benedict 1992:18). This is underlined by the study of Los and Chamard, who state that women in rape reports are seen as ‘others’ because they are women, and above all, raped women. Men, on the other hand, are not only depicted as beasts but also as mentally unsound. This
serves the same goal, to give the public the idea that ‘normal’ people don’t rape or get raped (Walby and Soothill, 1991). According to Benedict, the dichotomy of the virgin and the vamp is ‘destructive to victims of rape and to public understanding of the subject [of rape]’ (Benedict, 1992:24). As she notes, ‘The virgin version is destructive because it perpetuates the idea that women can only be Madonna’s or whores, paints women dishonestly and relies on portraying the suspects as inhuman monsters’(Benedict, 1992:24). The press also dichotomizes the attacker. Men who are opposed to the ‘virgin’ they raped are called ‘sleazy’, described as low class, foreign, unmarried and depicted as animals. Often are they seen as ‘sex beasts’, or ‘fiends’, not capable of restricting their sexual needs and urges, safeguarding them of responsibility of raping women (Benedict 1992:99-100). With the use of these practices, the responsibility and blame for being raped are placed on women who are asking for it, whereas men are depicted as unable to restrain themselves.

1.3 The construction of bias in rape reports

Several textual practices lead to the blaming of victims in rape coverage. Clark, in her naming and textual analysis of newspaper reports of rape, shows that the construction of headlines and sentences point to the way blame is conveyed on the people involved in the rape (Clark, 1992). In line with the virgin and vamp narrative, Clark finds that women who are described as ‘virgin’ are called differently from ‘vamps’. If a woman is seen as a vamp, she is often called ‘blonde’, ‘unmarried mom’, ‘blonde divorcee’, or in the case of a very young woman with a disputable sexual morale, a ‘Lolita’. Again, opposed to a vamp stands a relatively innocent perpetrator that is made invisible while the ‘virgin’, named ‘bride’, ‘wife’, ‘young girl’, ‘mother, or other innocent names, stands next to a ‘fiend’, ‘monster’ or ‘maniac’ (Clark, 1992: 209-210). Verbs are used to describe him as an animal, emphasizing his non-human nature. Clark argues that the names relate to the sexual availability of the women. Unavailable women, such as married women and mothers, are attacked by violent monsters, whereas women, who are available and might have behaved themselves promiscuously, are seen as vamps. Looking at this, one can see the ideological structures underneath the words (Clark, 1992).

The act of rape itself can be framed by the use of quotation marks, such as Meyers and Halim found. They observe that ‘the placement of quotation marks around “raped” suggests that sex may have been consensual.’ Victims are either ‘allegedly raped’, or ‘raped’ (Meyers and Halim, 2010: 94). Contrary to coverage of non-sexual violence, victims of rape or sexual assault are often depicted as partly enjoying their experience or accepting the violence. In reports on non-sexual violence, the victims’ horror of the violence is out of the question (Malamuth and Briere, 1986: 77). Last, women in rape reports are seldom the actor, but merely the bystander in their own story (Los
and Chamard 1997:318). If they are depicted as actors, they are doing something that enhances their chances of being assaulted by dress, behaviour or background (Meyers and Halim, 2010; Meyers 1994; Meyers, 1997; Carll, 2003; Los and Chamard, 1997). With these newspaper practices, the blame again gets conveyed from attacker to victim.

According to Benedict, journalists are poorly informed about rape and are therefore unable to do a good job to inform the public optimally about rape. Because of time pressure, they are prone to using rape myths and clichés about gender relations (Benedict, 1992: 7). Meyers agrees that journalists have to weigh what they include in a story and what they leave out, but argues that individual journalists are not the most important problem. Instead, according to her, ‘engendering blame’, is due to the patriarchal opinions that are prevalent in societies (Meyers, 1997 p ix, x). As she notes:

‘The predominant problems with news about violent crime against women – such as blaming the victim and reinforcing harmful cultural stereotypes and myths – lie not in individual journalists but with the social structures and values that deny male violence against women in a serious, systemic problem rooted in misogyny and patriarchy. By reflecting this cultural blindness, the news reinforces it – and thereby contributes to the perpetuation of violence against women’ (Meyers, 1991, ix).

Other scholars who empirically studied rape coverage link biased rape reporting to perpetuating unequal gender relations in society as well. They stress the relation between biased rape reporting and the ongoing misogynic attitudes towards women in society (Meyers and Halim, 2010; Alat, 2006; Korn and Efrat, 2004). This especially comes forth from studies into non-Western rape reporting, such as studied by Alat (2006). In her analysis of rape coverage in Turkish newspapers, she claims Turkish newspapers to be insensitive and not interested in violence against women. A lack of coverage on violence against women results in reinforcing misogyny and perpetuating unequal gender relations. Here, inadequate coverage on violence against women is directly related to hegemonic structures in (Turkish) society.

1.4 The importance of context

The early studies into rape depiction were focused on American and British media, but cases from Turkey, Israel, Saudia Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, New Zealand, Kenya and India have been studied as well (Drache and Velagic, 2013; Meyers and Halim, 2010; Alat 2006; Rao and Johal, 2006; Korn and Efrat, 2004; Bathla, 1998 and Hirsch, 1994). Where general studies into rape coverage stress the blaming of victims, the discrepancies between coverage and reality and the representation of victims and perpetrators and the effects on society’s way of thinking about rape, studies in non-Western
media take cultural specifics far more into account. In these studies into rape reporting, the same form of biased reporting can be found as is present in Western media, but the findings need to be interpreted in line with cultural specifics. The research done by Korn and Efrat proves a good example. They found that in Israeli popular newspapers, rape is used as a titillating, dramatic and sensational item to sell the news. Using the framework of virgins and vamps from Benedict (1992), they argue that victims are mostly portrayed as vamps. Although the raped Israeli girls were quite young, the media described the sexual history and behaviour of the victims, depicting them as not respectable and not credible. With the use of these rape myths, the suspects (Israeli boys) were protected from getting the blame. Interestingly, the girls were portrayed as using sex to seek attention and approval from boys, a social given that is linked to Israeli culture that promulgates the collective and adhering to it. This shows that the link to cultural practices in analysing rape is vitally important since otherwise the outcomes can easily be missed or misinterpreted (Korn and Efrat, 2004). This could also be applied to research into Western media, where researchers might overlook ‘known’ Western cultural practices.
Chapter 2: Rape reporting in Indian media

Both the Indian print press itself and rape coverage in Indian newspapers has not been studied a lot by academics. Compared to the television or film industry, the Indian print press is a lot less often researched (Sonwalkar, 2002). Rao adds that India’s ‘mediascape’, the largest known to the world, might be the least studied by media scholars (2014: 153-154). However, there are some examples of studies that looked into the Indian print press or looked at the position of women in Indian (print) media. Together, they form a small picture of the workings of the Indian print press and the space that is reserved for women’s issues, women’s rights, and sexual violence.

Bathla (1998) studied the way women’s issues were covered in Indian newspapers and concluded that overall there is little space for addressing women’s issues. Most stories on women are crime-related, very factual and miss background information. In four years of coverage on women, she found few features that provide more information about ongoing social problems regarding violence against women. Journalists working at the Hindustan Times explained to her that in their view there is no point in writing about these issues since the public already knows women are being raped. Since the press remains silent on these issues, Bathla argues, they contribute to the age old ‘Brahmanical hegemony’, which she defines as ‘a higher caste patriarchal culture that still defines women’s roles and positions at both societal and state levels within India’s traditional social order’ (Bathla, 1998: 183).

Similar to Bathla, Rao found that journalists working in India’s TV industry admit sexual violence is a problem in India, but they do not feel the public cares about these topics and as a result do not see a way to put rape on the agenda. Rape is generally not seen as a newsworthy topic, even when sex and crime are seen as selling stories. Also, since newspapers are increasingly competing with each other and journalists have to deliver content fast, journalists fall back on old clichés. Generally, rape cases are not reported with a lot of back-up or context, except for very rare, extraordinary cases. Rao concludes that rape cases in which the victim is of high caste and class receive attention, but lower caste and class victims and their fate do not get access to coverage. The practices of Indian television producers lead to a perpetuation of ‘shame culture’, the idea that women do not belong in the public, male-dominated spaces in Indian society. As he notes: ‘The prevalence of shame culture, which views the presence of women in the public space with hostility, is both countered and perpetuated by the television media’ (Rao 2014: 153). By not addressing sexual violence against women of lower strata, the media do not operate against these anti-feminine opinions in society. Rao observes: ‘Except in rare instances, such as the December 2012 rape, the Indian media have rarely sought to address the pervasiveness and complicated matrix of rape in
Indian society.’ (Rao, 2014: 155). Also, The PCI (Press Council of India) code makes no direct reference to covering or reporting on rape or sexual violence and provides no guidelines for discussing such topics (Rao, 2014).

The press’s reluctance to address women’s issues can also be linked to the ongoing development of newspapers towards sensationalism. As Sonwalkar describes, during the 1990’s part of the Indian media industry was taken over by large media groups. This led to the introduction of a ‘corporate perspective’ in newsrooms, which made marketing more important than content, especially in the English-language press. In the increasingly modernizing Indian society, market-driven models became the norm. Newspapers adopted a policy in which editors warned journalists not to disturb the elite readers, to make the paper ‘light and friendly’ (Bidwai, 1996: 6-7 in Sonwalkar, 2002: 827). The English-language press thus altered its direction and turned its attention to sensationalism and gave less space to informing the public about societal problems, such as rape.

Drache and Velagic (2013: 3-4) argue that the sensationalistic trend in reporting has not been beneficial to rape reporting. Partly, they found the same structures as Bathla did in 1998, such as lack of background information in covering rape. In a more recent analysis of 8-month rape reporting in four Indian English-language newspapers, the researchers found the Delhi Gang Rape to be a ‘trigger event that evoked Indians to engage with the issue of gender justice’. The events surrounding the Delhi Gang Rape led to a 30% increase of rape reports in the months after the incident. On the one hand, they found the Indian newspapers to follow multiple story lines that gave a more in-depth view of the rape problems in India. On the other hand, most of the articles still were sensational, giving a lot of detail about the victim and attackers, focusing on incidents, the ‘crime cycle’ (the police report, court proceedings). A lack of features also leads here to a shortage of background information. Therefore, they conclude that the Indian press has made ‘small but important progress with respect to gender justice’, although they also state that ‘the Indian press needs to take a hard look at its coverage of sexual violence if it intends to have a higher standard of journalism with a modern view of sexual crimes and violence’ (2013: 3-4).

While the Indian English language print press does not reserve a place for women’s issues and is increasingly turning into a sensationalist institution, at the same time, the Delhi Gang Rape seems to have made Indian media more sensitive to rape stories. Journalists, on the one hand, spurred to action by the events, on the other hand, drawn to the sensationalist story of rape, increased their coverage of rape dramatically. Though there was more attention for rape, it is unclear whether the Delhi Gang Rape actually initiated a bigger change in Indian newspapers and lead journalists to report more accurately on rape and women’s issues. Literature suggests some journalists tried to give more background, but leave out marginalized groups of women or go back to
their old practices. This overview of earlier research shows again that the developments around rape reporting surrounding the Delhi Gangrape and increasing sensationalism validate the current research.
Chapter 3: Rape and gender inequality in India

The introduction provided the first necessary background information on rape in the (Indian) media. To grasp the extent of rape issues in India, this chapter aims to offer some more background information about India and the position of men and women, since gender inequality lies at the root of rape issues that are so prevalent in the country. Several points in this chapter are also used to interpret the findings of this study, especially with regard to the results of the discourse analysis.

3.1 India and gender inequality

Population wise, India is the second largest country in the world. With over 1,2 billion citizens, the population makes up 17,5% of the world's total amount of inhabitants. Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1954 it has been the largest democracy in the world. Historically, its society consists of an intricate caste system which defines what status and profession one has from birth. Climbing up the ladder is nearly impossible, dividing India into an unequal social system. This inequality is also visible in the positions of men and women. Indian law states that all men and women are equal, but this is certainly not the case in everyday life (Drèze and Sen, 2013). As Bathla notes:

‘Yet despite favorable reforms and legislation, the position of women in India remains one of powerlessness and subordination, and the disparity of status between men and women, both in the private and public spheres, negates the ideals enshrined in India’s constitution’ (Bathla, 1998: 186)

The existing gender roles in India are derived from age-old traditions, in which a woman is either a daughter or wife and should obey her father, husband or another male relative. Women rely on men for their means of living and for their mobility. Compared to men, women have less access to education and their illiteracy is higher. Since public transportation is a dangerous place for women, they are dependent on men to accompany them out of the house. If they do go out and they are victim to violence, they themselves are to blame. Therefore, women are expected to watch where they go and dress accordingly (Drèze and Sen, 2013, Verma Report, 2013) Furthermore, women are more than men malnourished and experience all sorts of violence in their lives, varying from psychological abuse to battering and domestic violence, acid attacks, sexual abuse and rape, dowry-related violence, killing and forced suicide (Rao, 1997; Sharma, 2004; Ackerson and Subramanian, 2008; Ragavan, 2014; Chibber, 2012; Bhattacharrya, 2013; Drèze and Sen, 2013). Both men and

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3 http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2013/Table05.pdf (accessed 8-12-2014)
women tend to think that a man is allowed to beat his wife or other female family members if they are not obedient (Rao, 1997; Bhattacharrya, 2013).

The problem of rape in India should be understood in this wider context of disturbed gender relations and a society dominated by men. Boys are welcomed as the heir of the family, whereas girls are seen as a burden and need to be protected constantly as they are ‘carriers of “perceived honor’” (Verma Report, 2013: 15-16). A girl behaving immorally can ruin her whole family.

Rape was only set on the political agenda at the end of the 1970’s, with the trial following the Mathura rape case⁴ and the amendment of the Indian Penal Code. After this, many rape cases have followed but sporadically led to protests or political action. As Nigam (2014:199) notes: ‘Locally protests were made against these incidences but these cases never received a wide coverage by the Indian media. Masses were excluded from these discourses and rape was not considered as an issue that can be discussed publicly.’

Not much has changed since these events. There has been a steady increase in the amount of (reported) rapes and sexual violence offenses. The National Record Crime Bureau⁵ crime report states that in 2013, 33,707 rapes were reported. In 19.4% of these cases, the victims were minors. In 94.4% of the cases, the victim knew her attacker (NRCB 2013: 83). However, these numbers are very difficult to interpret, since the number of real rapes is probably larger. The overwhelming part of rapes is probably not being reported because of the stigma that is attached to sexual violence.

Finally, rape is not seen as a personal problem. Instead, the honor of a woman, her father, and other male family members are at stake when a rape occurs. The personal tragedy of a raped woman is undervalued or simply denied and rape is surrounded by notions of retribution and revenge (Verma Report, 2013: 95; Rao, 2014:155). According to Rao, this attitude towards rape is perpetuated in the media, as it is ‘evident in journalistic practice and in the coded language of journalism ethics’ (Rao, 2014:154). The increase in violence sometimes is seen to be caused by the modernization of society. Women are working more, encountering men in the workplace who subject them to harassment or abuse. While this modernization brings advantages for women, it also subjects them to more dangers. It may be clear that an Indian woman is very likely to encounter sexual violence in her life, both in private and public spaces.

⁴ The Mathura rape case led to nationwide protests after the policemen who raped a minor were acquitted from charges in 1972. The protests led to amendments in Indian rape law. See also Appendix C.
⁵ The most important governmental organisation that deals with crime statistics in India
Chapter 4: Discourse theory

4.1. Effects of biased rape coverage

It may be clear from chapter 2 that rape reporting happens seldom without bias and misrepresentation. But why is this problematic? Several scholars who studied rape coverage link the biased rape coverage with the perpetuation of gender inequality and patriarchy in a given society, even supporting oppression of women (Walby, et al., 1983; Meyers, 1997; Meyers and Halim, 2010; Drache and Velagic, 2013). Benedict notes that “sex crimes have a unique ability to touch upon the public’s deep-seated beliefs about gender roles” (Benedict 1992:3). In turn, Meyers argues that male supremacy is framed, supported and sustained by the news. Rape coverage is larded with myths and stereotypes about gender, sexuality, and violence, and thereby perpetuating ‘male supremacist ideology and the myths’ it is, according to her, even responsible for generating more violence against women (Meyers, 1997: 8-9). Linsky states that next to its influence on the public perception of rape, news stories on violence against women directly influence legal and governmental policy on these issues (Linsky, 1986 in Meyers and Halim, 2010). These scholars thus argue that distorted rape coverage has a direct effect on ideas of rape and subsequently, governmental actions and the lives of individual men and women in societies.

However, assuming that media texts have a direct influence on the public is dangerous, because it is unclear to which extent the workings of the media really affect the public. The scope of this research is too small to discuss this, but there are generally two ways of looking at this. Theodor Adorno states that the mass media have a profound influence on the public, even a damaging effect. According to him, the audience is given entertainment that does not allow the public to form their own ideas and resist the status quo (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979; Adorno, 1991 in Gauntlett, 2008). On the other side of the spectrum, John Fiske argues not the media, but the public is most powerful in this equation. Opposing the idea of a passive audience, Fiske argues that the public is able to choose which media products they consume and gives meaning to the content they encounter, building forth on Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model. Thereby it is possible to resist mainstream opinions and form one’s own. According to Fiske, it is possible for media to stimulate social change by presenting different ideas to the audience (Fiske, 1989 in Gauntlett, 2008; Alat, 2006). So roughly there are two stances in this field. Although there are empirical studies that prove that sexual violence in media indeed does have an effect on ideas and behaviour on rape (Malamuth and Briere, 1986), it is unsure whether it is possible to extend the findings of such studies onto newspaper reports on rape, especially in a non-western society. Therefore, I leave this debate. To be able to understand how Indian newspapers portray rape and report it, the concept of discourse will
be used. Discourse theory allows this research to focus on the characteristics of rape reporting and reserves a spot for the connection between language and power when studying underlying assumptions on rape and gender relations in the media.

4.2 The importance of discourse

Assuming that rape reporting perpetuates and reinforces patriarchy as a form of hegemony leads to the assumption that power relations in society are reinforced through media coverage. As described above, discourse theory allows one to look at the power that is transmitted by words. This idea has been studied thoroughly, forming the foundation of the ideas of scholars like Michael Foucault. To find out how power is transmitted through language it is necessary to look at the workings of discourse. Hall defines discourse as:

“Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society. These discursive formations, as they are known, define what is and is not appropriate in our formulation of, and our practices in relation to, a particular site or object or site of social activity; what knowledge is considered useful, relevant and ‘true’ in that context; and what sorts of persons or ‘subjects’ embody its characteristics (Hall, 1997:6).”


“We define a discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being.... In other words, social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning. As discourse analysts, then, our task is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality.’ (508)

In short, discourse is the way people talk (or write) about things and give meaning to them, shaping social reality. At the same time, discourse is able to show which opinions are dominant in a given field or society, what is perceived as ‘normal’ and acceptable. In this light, discourse is very suitable to look at opinions about sex, gender roles, and violence.

Building on the ideas of Michael Foucault, Norman Fairclough argues that language produces, maintains and changes social relations of power. According to him, language contains unattested common sense assumptions, forming the dominant view of a certain group of people. He calls these assumptions ‘ideologies’ and states: ‘Ideological power, the power to project one’s practices as universal and “common sense” ... is exercised in discourse’ (Fairclough 1989:33). These ideologies are
important because they have the power to structure and legitimize social practices and relations of power. The meanings constructed and conveyed in newspapers and media, in general, are essential in shaping cultural practices or organizational power and legislation. They “organize our conduct and practices – they help to set up rules, norms, and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed” (Hall 1997:1). Therefore, power is constructed through language and transmitted through all kinds of (media) texts, making newspapers an ideal research object because they are a platform on which power struggles are present and become visible.

4.3 Newspapers as sites of power struggle

Taking the connection between language and power into account, it is safe to say that ideological notions of gender and rape held by journalists are passed onto the public via media texts. Social conditions shape the production and interpretation of texts, and in turn, this shapes the production and interpretation of new texts (Fairclough 1989: 25). As Fairclough notes: ‘Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations’ (Fairclough 1989: 33). If this is linked to the practice of rape reporting journalists in general and to those in India in particular, something interesting emerges. The traditional, biased way of rape reporting is often not questioned at all. These are habits, with underlying ideas about what is acceptable in society being formed into discourses. These ideas point towards a deeper ideology about journalism on the one hand and ideas about women and the way they are treated on the other hand. Taking this further, one can argue that these journalistic practices are indeed used to maintain dominant ideologies. As Fairclough argues:

’Practices which appear to be universal and common-sensical can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become naturalized. Where types of practice and in many cases types of discourse function in this way to sustain unequal power relations, they are functioning ideologically’ (Fairclough 1989: 33).

The way the Indian media talk about rape and women is, therefore, an important source for identifying the deeper ideologies on rape and women in Indian society.

As Hall states, the media, in particular, make up the field where power relations are constructed and maintained through discourse (1997:6). He argues that all texts are vehicles of cultural values and meanings, transmitted by language, forming ‘systems of representation’. Newspapers can be seen as a special part of the media in which power struggles are defined through language. Newspaper texts reflect these common sense assumptions, ideologies that shape acceptable forms of conduct in societies. This taken into account, it is clear that the media are
important sites for studying ideologies on rape. As Hirsch in her study of rape reports states, the media can be seen as ‘sites where cultural understandings about women are reflected, created, transformed and publicized’ (1994:1027).
Chapter 5 Methodology

5.1 Research design
To analyse the coverage of rape before, during and after the DGR and to identify the present discourses, the DGR is the central point in this research. It is the case around which the research is built up, making this research initially a case study. Since content over three years is analysed, it also carries elements of a longitudinal design. Last, there is a comparative factor since the different time periods are compared to each other to discover the developments in the way rape is covered.

Although at first, the two papers were selected to be compared to each other, the size of the research did not permit this. Also, the nature of both papers proved to be too alike to be able to deliver a comparison that is valuable. Comparing both newspapers in this respect is thus not an aim in this study. However, when evident and important differences are present, these are of course mentioned. Method wise, the research consists of two parts: a Content Analysis (CA) and a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The CA was used to arrive at a broad and factual overview of the sample while also enabling to verify earlier claims about rape coverage (in Indian media). Also, the CA served to create a second, smaller sample for the CDA.

5.2 History and overview of Indian newspapers
The Indian media have been relatively free of state control. Besides a code of ethics set up by the government, the press is not restricted, being listed 140th out of 179 countries in the Press Freedom Index 2013.⁶ Over 99% of Indian newspapers are independent media organizations. Before gaining independence, the media were actively engaged in the debate about India’s future. After independence, this resulted in a fairly pro-governmental media. This gradually changed in the 1960’s, when the media gained a more critical perspective. From 1975 till 1977, the press endured a two-year censure imposed from the MP. When this ended, the media became more critical than ever. In this sense, the press in India’s democracy is now functioning quite well (Jeffrey, 1993, Rao and Johal 2006).

In the last two decennia, India has witnessed a privatization of media companies (Mukherjee, 2004; Murthy et al., 2010; Rao, 2014). This privatization changed the content from public service oriented towards more sensational and focused on entertainment (Rao and Johal 2006). As Drèze and Sen write, Indian media have shifted their attention to cricket and celebrities (Drèze and Sen, 2013). Politicians, historically highly valued, are now written about in celebrity fashion, sometimes

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referred to as ‘Murdochization of the Indian press’ (Sonwalkar, 2002 and Jeffrey, 1993). Although foreign businesses were stopped from investing till 2005, the print press already was in the process of commercialization and the entrée of investors only turbo-charged these developments. The two years following the opening up of the market to international investment saw a record of emerging new newspapers (Kohli, 2010: 7). This trend of commercialization is also mentioned in empirical studies into newspaper content which shows that English-language newspapers are turning away from traditional journalistic values of objectivity. Newspapers are increasingly printing large colour pictures and shifted their content towards crime-related news and celebrity politics, while social issues receive far less attention, thus moving towards tabloidization (Murthy et al., 2010). In this competing market, newspaper agencies tried to win over readers by reducing prices, and printing larger newspapers in colour, with bolder headlines and special supplements. These supplements also serve to the need for increasing advertising space (Sonwalkar, 2002; Mishra, 2002; Menon, 2004; Kumar, 2004 in Murthy, 2010).

With regard to social media, India has lifted on the rise of the Internet and especially mobile phones. 900 Million people in India use a mobile phone and 65 million people have access to Facebook, whereas Twitter has 35 million Indian users. Next to newspapers and social media, India has a booming television and film industry. These strands of the media also reach the large illiterate part of India, in cities and rural areas. With the introduction of satellite TV and foreign media agencies permeating the country, Indian TV viewers now have access to numerous channels from all over the world (Rao, 2013:155).

India’s newspaper market is only surpassed by China’s, and is still growing (Kohli, 2010). Every day, 330 million newspaper copies are sold in India with an estimated 38% of Indians getting a paper every day (Kohli, 2010; Rao, 2013). Newspapers are published in over thirty languages. In total, around 5000 different newspapers are sold daily (Ravindranath, 2005 in Rao, 2014). Newspapers in vernacular languages such as Hindi are most prevalent, but English-language newspapers have a higher status. Of these, the Times of India, The Hindustan Times, the Hindu and The Indian Express are seen as the four leading newspapers (Murthy et al., 2010; Drache and Velagic, 2013). These papers are primarily read by the Indian elite and as Billett notes, they are ‘the reading material of those in agenda-setting positions’ (Hanson, 1995; Billett, 2010:4).The English-language press predominantly reports on foreign issues, business and national politics (Peterson, 1993, 130-131).

5.3 Overview of important rape cases

Unfortunately, India has seen more notable rape cases apart from the DGR. Since they are mentioned further on in the study and to get an idea of these cases, the most notable ones are listed
March 1972 - Mathura rape case
A minor is raped by two policemen in Marahastra, West-India. At first, the victim was said to have been ‘habituated to sexual intercourse’, which would imply she consented, leading to acquittal of charges against the perpetrators. This led to protests and change of laws regarding consent in rape. Gained extensive media coverage.

January 1996 - Priyadarshini Mattoo murder
A 25-year-old woman is raped and murdered in New Delhi. The perpetrator is directly related to a high police officer and, therefore, acquittal. Extensive media coverage led to extended trial and sentence.

June 2005 - Imrana rape case
A Muslim woman is raped by her father-in-law. The Sharia court in the region states that the woman is now married to her father in law, making her husband her son. This sparks national protests and media coverage.

2005/2006 - Nithari/Noida serial murders
Serial rape and murder of 15 to 20 minors and one adult woman.

November 2010 - Dhaula Kuan Rape
Female call centre employee is abducted and raped by 5 men in New Delhi.

February 2012 - Kolkata Park Street Rape
Gang rape of an anti-rape activist by five men in Kolkata.

December 2012 - Delhi Gang Rape
Gang rape of a 23-year-old student by six men in a van. This sparks national outrage and extensive media coverage. Also leads to alterations in the Indian Penal Code to broaden the definition of sexual violence and rape.

April 2013 - Gandhi Nagar/Gudiya Rape
A 5-year-old girl is abducted and raped by two men in New Delhi.

August 2013 - Shakti Mills Gang Rape/Mumbai Gang Rape
A photojournalist is raped at a deserted compound in Mumbai by five men.

November 2013 – Tehelka journalist raped
A journalist of Tehelka, an Indian English-language weekly is raped by a supervisor.

May 2014 - Badaun Rape Case
Two low caste girls are raped and hung in Badaun, in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Two police offers were suspects. The investigation led to contradictory conclusions about the event, in turn leading to extensive media coverage.
March 2015 - Kandhamal Gang Rape Case

Gang rape of a 71-year old Christian nun in West-Bengal.

5.4 HT and TOI: a profile

In general, four English language newspapers are recognized as the most important national dailies. These are *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* and *The Hindustan Times*. For this study, two out of these four papers are subject to research. *The Times of India* (TOI) and *The Hindustan Times* were chosen because these have the highest circulation of all and the content is easily accessible through LexisNexis. The choice to take two and not four leads to a sample that is better manageable than a sample including all the four papers. As these papers are often taken together in most studies regarding Indian (English language) newspapers, it was assumed that the findings in the TOI and HT are to some extent also applicable on other similar newspapers (Billett, 2006; Drache and Velagic, 2013).

*The Times of India* ranks sixth of all newspapers in the world circulation-wise, with a circulation hovering around 3,000,000 papers (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2013; Kohli, 2008). It is perceived as the country’s most read and qualitative best newspaper. It produces six editions throughout India (Sonwalkar 2002: 827). The paper was founded in 1838, then called *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*. The paper received its current name in 1861. Until 1950, it was in hands of the British, who controlled the paper. Newspapers such as the Times of India played a large role in the gaining of independence from the British Empire. As a result, the companies who owned the newspapers (often family based) thought of themselves as ‘freedom fighters’, not as profitable media outlets. This only changed several decades after India reached independence in the 1950s. In 1986, the paper became part of the BBCL media group under the supervision of Samir Jain. By experimenting with different prizes, advertisement strategies and supplements in colour they turned it into a very profitable paper up till this day (Kohli 2010 xxiv). Several other newspapers replicated the changes that the Times of India successfully implemented. The TOI is seen as one of the examples of successful journalistic entrepreneurship under Indian newspapers. Today, numerous editions of the paper are published throughout cities in India. The TOI is also the most profitable newspaper in India. It is ‘the flagship’ of Bennett, Coleman & Company Limited (BBCL), the largest media company in India (Kohli 201:xxiv).

*The Hindustan Times* was founded in 1924 and in the second half of 2013 was the second largest English language newspaper in India.\(^8\) It counts nearly 3.7 million readers with a circulation of 1.32 million papers (IRS 2012, Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2013). The paper is produced in several editions, each suited for different cities in India such as New Delhi, Bombay, Lucknow, and Chandigarh. Its home base is New Delhi (Sonwalkar 2002:827). The *Hindustan Times* is published by HT Media. Since 1933 it is owned by the Birla family. The paper was founded when the Indian independence movement gained strength in the 1920s and served as a nationalist newspaper. With regard to the struggle for independence, it has fulfilled the same role as the *TOI*, which also acted as a vehicle for Indian nationalist ideas.

Sonwalkar divides the Indian press into several historical categories in which the *Hindustan Times* is a ‘nationalist newspaper’ whereas the *Times of India* is an ‘establishment newspaper’. Although both newspapers participated in the struggle for independence the HT has its roots in this movement and the *TOI* was born from British initiative. Today, the *Times of India* is seen as the national brand in India, comparable to *USA Today* in the United States of America (Kohli 2010: 8).

English language newspapers derive only 5-15% of their income from readers. The rest of the necessary income comes from advertisements. Papers in other national languages are less dependent on selling advertising space. This is partly due to the interest in English newspapers. Readers of English newspapers are deemed much more interesting for advertising partner. This leads to higher prices for advertisement spaces and more sold adverts (Kohli 2010 27). This leads to a higher susceptibility for ‘selling the news’, making English newspapers more dependent on the wishes of advertisers and readers.

With regard to the target audience of both newspapers, Billett notes: “All four of the major English-language papers [...] are widely acknowledged as the reading material of those in agenda-setting positions.” The English language press have increasingly been focusing on elite audiences, especially since the Indian print press turned towards commercialization and turned away from its social obligations (Sonwalkar 2002: 827).

However, it is important to note that over 50% of the Indian population is illiterate (Kohli 2010). Since being literate means being able to write one’s own name, only a relatively small part of the population is able to read the newspapers. Thereof an even smaller part of the people is able to afford and read an English language newspaper. But off the people who can read English Jeffrey found 1 in 4 to actually buy and read an English language newspaper (Jeffrey 1987 in Sonwalkar

Sonwalkar suspects these numbers to have grown since (English) literacy has improved since Jeffrey did this research (Sonwalkar 2002: 827).

## 5.6 Method section: CA and CDA

### 5.6.1. Mixed methods approach

Mixed methods approach seeks to include both qualitative and quantitative research methods in one research design, as is the case in this study in which both CA (a quantitative method) and CDA (a qualitative method) are combined. As Creswell notes, mixed methods approach has gained popularity in the social sciences since it combines the merits of multiple research methods from both qualitative and quantitative research strands (Creswell, 2014).

Generally, the advantages of mixed methods approach lie either in the possibility of triangulation, facilitation or complementarity (Hammersley, 1996 in Bryman, 2008). Triangulation refers to the use of both a qualitative and quantitative method to check the findings and add to validity. A facilitating mixed methods approach refers to one of the approaches facilitating the use of the second, and complementarity points to the use of a qualitative and quantitative method to strengthen a weakness in one method with characteristics of the other.

Both facilitation and complementarity are at work in this study. The CA facilitates sampling for the CDA. Furthermore, both methods complement each other. CA provides a systematic and valid approach to getting an overview of the sample. The lack of depth this offers is made up with the use of CDA. As CDA lacks a systematic approach, the CA is helpful to lay a valid fundament for assumptions made in CDA. A downside of this approach is the time intensity that is connected with it since the researcher has to collect a large amount of quantitative and qualitative data and analyse it. In this study, the quantitative and qualitative portions of research are both given the same amount of weight. While the first two results chapters draw on CA results and the third on CDA, both methods yielded an equal portion of the results.

### 5.6.2. Content Analysis

A content analysis is a form of quantitative analysis for different types of (textual) communication. Performing a content analysis enables a researcher to quantify (manifest) content systematically and objective by dividing elements of texts into predetermined categories. This enables the researcher to count variables and to quantify textual elements, e.g. article topic, genre, word count and other statistically relevant categories. The method has been intensively applied in media studies and has proven a very valuable tool for the analysis of newspaper articles and other media forms, such as
Content analysis is indigenous to communication research and is potentially one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences. It seeks to analyse data within a specific context in the view of meanings someone – a group or a culture – attributes to them. Communications, messages, and symbols differ from observable events, things, properties, or people in that they inform about something other than themselves; they reveal some properties of their producers or carriers, and they have cognitive consequences for their senders, their receivers, and the institutions in which their exchange is embedded.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) distinguish three approaches in CA: conventional, directive and summative. Conventional CA derives codes directly from the text, directive CA starts with a theory on which codes are built and summative CA starts with counting certain variables and thereafter explaining the context. The current CA draws mostly from directive CA, with several theoretical notions about rape reporting forming the starting point of the coding book, while also making use of inductive coding. In this respect, there is also a touch of conventional CA present here.

To get a general overview of a large amount of newspaper articles, CA is an ideal method. For this research 22 categories were used. For a full overview of the used codes and application see Appendix A. A short overview and explanation of all used codes is also offered in paragraph 5.4.1.

5.6.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

A Critical Discourse Analysis is one of the most used and most suitable ways to analyse discourses. It is not possible to discern a single form of this kind of research since there are many ways of performing one, but the most important characteristic of (C)DA is that it tries to construct a view of a discourse by looking at spoken or written forms of language. Since the second part of this research aims at unravelling the discourses in the sample a form of Discourse Analysis was chosen as the most suitable method.

To be precise, a Critical Discourse Analysis was employed. Essential to CDA as a form of DA is the importance of power in analysing language. This is in line with the ideas of Michael Foucault. As Bryman states about this, ‘It seeks to link language and its modes of use to the significance of power and social difference in society’ (2008: 500). CDA is critical in the sense that it tries to uncover ‘social wrongs’ that are produced by certain texts (Fairclough, 2010:7). It looks at the wrongs in a given
society or institution and suggests ways to repair any distortions. This also includes a normative idea on how things should be, on ‘good society’ as Fairclough calls it (2010:7). In this way, it is possible to identify the gaps between what exist in a given society, what does not and what should. This is the distinguishing aspect of CDA, as opposed to DA in general. This form of DA was deemed suitable because the research presumes that the public should be correctly informed about sexual violence and rape, e.g. by covering rape as balanced as possible, without using rape myths and by giving sufficient background information on the topic.

Using CDA opens up the possibility of looking deeper into small text fragments and filtering statements that point to a way of viewing rape issues in Indian media. As Bryman points out, CDA “involves exploring why some meanings become privileged or taken for granted and others become marginalized.” (2008: 509). The purpose here is thus to filter the meanings that are dominant and see which ones are marginalized or left out. By doing this, it is possible to construct an image of the discourse on rape.

5.7 Sampling

CA Sample

The sample for CA (and CDA) was gathered through online newspaper database LexisNexis. The search word that was used was ‘rape’. Articles that mentioned the word ‘rape’ were selected, but only from the ‘New Delhi’ editions since the Delhi Gang Rape occurred in New Delhi and the sample would be unmanageable for a single researcher if all sections were included. This resulted in the first sample of articles over three years, which was further paired down by choosing three time periods for analysis. The total amount of all rape-related articles in three years surrounding the DGR went from 3907 to a final amount of 822 articles. Using these time periods thus significantly minimized the number of articles while keeping the possibility of comparing different moments in the total time period. Since the DGR occurred on December 16, December 16- January 16 was chosen as a first time period. The second time period consists of coverage between June 16 and July 16, exactly six months later each year. Generating a systematic sample (in which over three years, random dates are selected) was not an option since that would bring the risk of missing important coverage moments in the time frame.⁹

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⁹ For a timeline of events that are related to the Delhi Gang Rape, see http://news.trust.org/item/20130909143244-h09lu/ (accessed 30-3-2016)
Table 1 Time periods used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>16th of December 2011 – 16th of January 2012</td>
<td>16th of June 2012 – 16th of July 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th of December 2012 – 16th of January 2013</td>
<td>16th of June 2013 – 16th of July 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selecting the New Delhi sections was done in LexisNexis. In the case of the Hindustan Times, this was done by setting the Geographical Location search terms to ‘New Delhi’. The Times of India offers a section wise division by which it was easy to select the ‘New Delhi’ section. A tool LexisNexis offers to select articles between certain time periods was used to make samples from the set time periods. Articles with moderate similarity were filtered out to prevent doubles and the articles were ranked in order from oldest to newest. Almost all of the articles in the sample are digitalized paper print articles. Sometimes an online article was found in the sample, which was deleted since these do not belong to the scope of this research. An overview of the total sample is given in Chapter 6.

The articles were downloaded, numbered and placed in a Word Document for easy access and editing. LexisNexis only allows the sample to be downloaded in batches of 200 articles so the whole sample consisted of multiple Word Documents. Setting up the coding scheme and the coding itself were done in Word Excel. Important words and phrases or parts of the texts that contained sensationalism, sexualisation or were expected to belong to a certain discourse colour coded in the original Word Document. The coding book and the original Word Document (appendix A and B) show how the data were managed with these (colour) codes.

**CDA Sample**

Selecting the sample for CDA was done by coding the total sample with CA codes and selecting all articles that proved promising for further analysis. Selection for the CDA sample was based on the presence of interesting cues that were fit for further examination, such as:

- any normative ideas about rape or sexual abuse/men/women/relations in relation to society
- an indication of downplaying sexual violence by using certain words or quotation marks
- an indication of use of rape myths or the virgin or vamp narrative
- sensationalism, e.g. use of subjective wording, emotional or judging language
- sexualisation, e.g. use of detailed accounts of an incident or the sexual history of a victim and/or perpetrator\(^{10}\)

Or, if other wordings or subjects turned up that could lead to insight into a (new) rape discourse this would also make an article fit for the CDA sample. This was accompanied by colour-coding all interesting wordings and phrases. Also, notes were made on the importance of the highlighted sections and a priority was given to the article. If it was expected that a certain phrase, sentence or fragment would prove useful for argumentation it was prioritized. Also, when the rape myth and/or virgin or vamp code was present in an article, it was automatically selected for the CDA sample since rape myths and/or the virgin or vamp narrative almost always carry latent or manifest normative ideas on behaviour of men and women or rapists and raped women. These ideological pointers were expected to be able to show the construction of the discourses in the sample.

Selecting via this process made up the final CDA sample of 80 articles, which is around 10% of the original sample of 822 articles.

### 5.8 Operationalization and coding

#### 5.8.1 Operationalizing CA

The first objective of the CA was to provide an overview of the data and to check earlier claims on rape coverage in Indian newspapers and other media. Each code corresponds to a small research question. Below, the categories are explained shortly, as are all codes used.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Use of code (as described in manual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case number</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the number the article is given while coding, which simply goes from 1 to 822</td>
<td>Articles are numbered from 1 to 822, the first case being no 1, starting from December 16th to July 16th, 2014. Counting starts with time-period dec-jan and articles from TOI, then HT, then June 16th – July 16th from TOI, then HT again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper</strong></td>
<td>Refers either to TOI or HT as appointed by LexisNexis.</td>
<td>Self-explanatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the date of publication, which is later used to discern between different time periods</td>
<td>Put the date of publication appointed by LexisNexis here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) For explanations of these codes and all others, see next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Article length</strong></th>
<th>Describes the word length of the article, enabling measurement of the space that is given to certain genres and topics of articles</th>
<th>Put amount of words per article as appointed by LexisNexis here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article subject</strong></td>
<td>Refers to subject of article, e.g. a rape incident, protests, the role of the police in handling a case or rape as a societal issue (16 non-mutually exclusive codes in total)</td>
<td>Code one or more of the following article subjects: 1. incident relates to an article first making notice of an occurred rape incident 2. arrest/charge with rape focuses on the arrest/charge of rape of a perpetrator 3. statistics on rape offer numbers and/or figures on rape in society 4. investigation incident focuses on the investigation by police of a rape incident and reports what progress is made 5. legislation/measures taken: reports on measures taken against rape issues in society or law changes 6. court/verdict: reports on progress/problems/outcomes of court cases that deal with rape 7. government related: deals with statements and/or decisions made by the Indian government that are related to rape 8. false rape charge: focuses on a case in which rape was/seems to be reported falsely 9. rape as side issue: rape is not the main concern of the article but is mentioned 10. medical follow up victim: deals with mostly medical information about a rape victim 11. rape as societal issue: discusses and/or focuses on rape issues in society 12. role police: discusses/criticizes the role of police in handling rape cases 13. protests: focus of the article is the protests following the DGR or any other rape 14. (health) care for rape victims: focuses specifically on (health)care for rape victims after an incident 15. public transport: focuses on public transport issues related to rape and vice versa 16. other: none of the above categories applies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article genre</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the genre of an article, defined as the type of article, e.g. a news article, follow up, analysis or commentary (7 non-</td>
<td>Code one or more of the following article genres: 1. news articles can be about anything rape related, such as about an incident/rape case/legal proceedings or measures against rape and sexual violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutually exclusive codes in total</td>
<td>2. follow-ups are considered so if they are building forth on an older news fact. 3. an analysis is an article with clear analytical views on rape and society. 4. a background article deals with underlying issues such as women's rights but lacks analytical insights/opinions. 5. commentary refers to an article with one strong opinionated voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case subject</strong></td>
<td>Distinguishes the DGR-articles from other cases</td>
<td>Code one or more case subjects. In case a particular case is related to the article, code either 'DGR' or 'other case'. When there is no case in particular involved, 'n/a' is coded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kind of rape</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the kind of incident the article refers to, such as rape of minors, gang rape or 'real rape' or stranger rape (9 non-mutually exclusive codes in total)</td>
<td>Type of rape that is related to the topic of article/that is reported: 1. gang rape: rape by multiple perpetrators in one incident 2. acquaintance rape: rape by a family member/friend/colleague 3. real rape: rape at knifepoint/dangerous situations, as defined by Estrich (1987) 4. rape by police officer/government official: rape by a representative of Indian police, military force or government 5. rape by high/low caste member: perpetrator is mentioned to be of low or high caste 6. rape of a minor: rape of a boy or girl aged below 18 7. rape of a foreigner: rape of a tourist/migrant 8. general rape: rape case without any specific circumstances that apply to codes above 9. false rape charge: deals with suspicion, mention or proof of a false rape charge in which a man is falsely charged with rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensationalism 1</strong></td>
<td>Defines if there is any form of sensationalism present, by looking at either topic or style: 1. Topic: is there information that serves (solely) to entertain and not to inform? 2. Style: does a journalist write</td>
<td>Whenever sensationalism is present, this category is coded 'yes', otherwise 'no'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

11 This division is derived from Tannenbaum PH and Lynch MD (1960)
| Sensationalism 2 | Defines which form of sensationalism is present by using four non-mutually exclusive categories. | Code one or more of the following categories if sensationalism is present:
1. use of excessive detail on case/victim/perpetrator: applied when unnecessary details are given that contribute to crafting a titillating story but not to information about rape issues, such as personal information on living situation, background, family or circumstances during the incident
2. use of sensationalist language/tone: applied when any judgemental, opinionated or dramatic language or tone is used to describe events or developments surrounding a rape case
3. use of excessive detail on medical condition: applied when article mentions detailed information on medical condition such as operations, blood pressure information etcetera
4. use of sensationalist topic: applied when journalist uses sensational approach such as interview with relatives of victim, shedding light on old rape cases, choosing dramatic cases to report, using celebrities opinions etc. |
| Sensationalism 3 | Relevant excerpt of sensationalism in article, making it possible to illustrate sensationalism and/or find relevant passage back easily | Copy relevant part of the article here. |
| Sexualisation 1 | Defines if any form of sexualisation is present | Whenever one of the two types of sexualisation is present, this category is coded 'yes', otherwise 'no'. |
| Sexualisation 2 | Defines which form of sensationalism is present by using two non-mutually exclusive categories  
- Rape (experience) described with | Code either one or more of the following categories if sexualisation is present:
1. rape (experience) described in with sexual detail: applied when rape incident is reported with more detail than necessary, such as mentioning what sexual acts were conducted, mentioning bite marks and other injuries that |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sexualisation 3</strong></th>
<th>Relevant excerpt of sexualisation in article, making it possible to illustrate sexualisation and/or find relevant passage back easily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Virgin/vamp 1</strong></td>
<td>Defines if there are traces of the virgin/vamp narrative (Benedict, 1992) and if so, which one (virgin, vamp or fiend/beast).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                     | 1. the virgin narrative deals with the woman being seen as innocent, not responsible for rape, with pointers such as motherhood, virginity, youth, school-age, being called 'girl' despite age etc.  
|                     | 2. the vamp narrative corresponds with the notion that a woman is somehow responsible for rape, 'asked for it', behaves promiscuous, is sexually active. Both virgin and vamp narratives can also be applied to men. The virgin narrative is often accompanied by the 'fiend/beast' narrative.  
|                     | 3. the fiend/beast narrative describes men as violent, inhuman, drunks/addicts, low class and not in control of their (sexual) urges. Pointers for this narrative are literal adjectives in this trend or more subtle portraits of violent rapists. |
| **Virgin/vamp 2**  | Relevant excerpt of virgin/vamp narrative in article, making it possible to illustrate and/or find relevant passage back easily |
| **Rape myths 1**   | Defines if there are traces of rape myths present, 'prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists' (Burt 1980) |
|                     | If rape myths are present, code 'yes', if not, code 'no'. |
The codes were set up by reviewing the literature on rape reporting and distinguishing interesting and occurring topics, which lead to the aforementioned directive CA. Some prefixed codes (e.g. the virgin/vamp narrative, rape myths) were derived from the secondary literature and the pilot study were used for giving direction in looking for potential wordings and phrase fit for analysis, but anytime something new and possibly interesting emerged a new code was added so none was left out. This way of inductive coding led to the inclusion of everything that came up during analysis. The coding category that deals with rape myths is also set up this way, by looking at the myths that were identified by Burt in her original study and looking for additional ones in the sample,
a total of 21 codes in this category came up. In the coding for CA and setting up the CDA sample, one article makes up one unit of analysis. Several codes are mutually exclusive.

Conducting a pilot study by analysing 100 articles tested the suitability of the CA codes. This resulted in a review of the codes, leading to the set coding book, made up of a coding schedule and manual in Word Excel. For a full overview, see appendix A.

5.8.2 Operationalizing CDA

As CDA lacks a systematic and transparent approach to analysing data, the approach for operationalizing CDA depends on the kind of texts that are the subject of analysis, the size of the sample and the units of analysis. Whereas the CA for this research was based on a pre-set coding scheme, the base for the actual CDA were the texts themselves that were derived from the CA.

As a starting point for the CDA, all articles that were coded as suitable for CDA were collected via the procedure described above. These articles were closely reread and scanned for any recurring themes that could point towards discourses. This was done by searching for underlying ideas and ideologies. The colour coded parts of articles were leading in the rereading of the sample. As earlier described, words with quotation marks that suggest irony or downplaying of a certain issue were clear markers for discourses, as were recurring, unexpected topics, recurring ways of phrasing and journalists’ opinions or subjective/judging ways of reporting. Slowly, during the second reading of the sample, different topics were recurring, pointing to the present discourses. Both the secondary literature and the texts themselves were guiding in the search for discourses, but half of the found discourses emerged ‘out of the blue’. The next picture shows how the colour-coding looked like both in CA and CDA:
5.9 Validity

Ensuring validity is an important part of both qualitative and quantitative research. In this case, a valid content analysis entails codes that are able to measure the categories involved. In other words, validity deals with indicators measuring what they are supposed to measure. A large part of the codes that are used in the Content Analysis are manifest codes, which are self-explanatory and valid at first sight (e.g. date and paper). Other codes, such as genre, topic, sensationalism and sexualisation, are derived from either secondary literature or came up in the inductive coding process. To ensure the validity of these codes, all are thoroughly explained in the coding manual. Both the origin of the code and the application of the code are explained, enabling replication, adding to reliability and validity. This also provides insight into the setup and rationale of the used codes.

Explaining the rationale behind the Content Analysis codes enables the reader to see how the codes lead to the results and thus being valid instruments of measure. Ensuring validity of the CDA part is less straightforward, as it is mostly a result of qualitative research methods because qualitative research is not as focused on measurement as quantitative research is. As Creswell and Miller note: ‘Writing about validity in qualitative inquiry is challenging on many levels. […] There is a general consensus, however, that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible.’ (2000:1) Here, the notion of internal and external validity can be adopted to ‘measure’ validity of a quantitative method. In an internal valid study, the findings are coherent with the theoretical ideas.
that are developed. To ensure this, this research has thoroughly made use of existing theoretical ideas. Secondary literature on rape reporting, rape myths and used narratives in rape reporting form the basis for this research, were devised into codes and afterward the literature was again used to interpret and analyse the findings. This results in an internal valid study. Next to internal validity, external validity deals with the generalization of findings. The current research underlines earlier findings in both similar and different research settings, therefore being able to generalize to a certain extent. However, the case-study design is a factor that requires caution for generalization onto very different cases.

5.10 Reliability
A reliable research ensures all findings to be consistent. The best way to ensure this when working with a Content Analysis is to use an Intra-coder reliability test. Part of the sample is then re-coded to check validity. In this case, 10% of the sample (82 articles) was re-coded. First, a random number generator was used to select this new ICT sample. Then, this collection of articles was coded in a similar fashion as the general coding was done. Comparing the results shows a 90,75% of similarity with 111 out of 1200 individual coded codes in the ICT deviating from the first round of coding. This shows that the coder was able to code correctly with use of the coding manual and book, proving the study to be sufficiently reliable. Checking reliability on the Critical Discourse Analysis is not possible via a tool as an Intra-coder reliability test. Since this approach stems from qualitative analysis it is necessary to see reliability in an adapted fashion, by looking at external reliability and internal reliability. Internal reliability is not applicable here since there is only one researcher involved. However, external reliability deals with the ability to replicate a study. Of course a CA is easy to replicate when all codes are described correctly. In this research, the same was done with the codes for the CDA, making the research replicable and therefore externally reliable.

5.11 Limitations

Limitations on the methods used
The methods in this research stem from quantitative and qualitative research strands. All (social) research methods have their advantages and drawbacks. As a form of quantitative research, a Content Analysis enables the researcher to quantify certain variables from texts and perform a research that is highly replicable, usually leading to a study with high validity. CA is therefore seen as a transparent and even an objective method of research while able to generalize the findings (Bryman, 2008). On the other hand, there are also considered to be drawbacks in CA. The researcher relies on the quality of the documents at hand, latent codes are hard to code in a valid fashion, why-questions are hard to answer with CA and as Bryman notes, ‘it is almost impossible to devise coding
manuals that do not entail some kind of interpretation on the part of the coders’ (2008:291). Especially coding latent variables and the interpretation of the coding manual are pitfalls in this research. However, combining CA with a qualitative research method partly makes up for this, which is exactly what is done in this research by adding a Critical Discourse Analysis. A pitfall of CDA is the lack of a pre-set research approach. That is to say, CDA is a method, and it is not, because there is no standard way of operationalizing CDA. In this research, CDA was operationalized in the form of a textual analysis. (Excerpts of) articles were studied in depth on textual level to find discourses. As a result of lacking a standard approach in operationalization, another downside to CDA is that it is not easy to replicate this type of research. This is enhanced by the qualitative nature of CDA. Since the researcher is the interpreter in a qualitative study, it is even harder to replicate such a study. To minimize the effect of these downsides and to be able to replicate the study, the used methods and strategies are explained thoroughly. Since the highly quantifiable and replicable method of Content Analysis forms the basis on which CDA is performed, this pitfall is partly made up for.

Digital sample vs. print sample
The sample collected for this research was collected through LexisNexis. This is by far the easiest way to access these articles but it also poses some limitations. The original articles in this analysis appeared in print. Since it was not possible to access the articles in print for logistical reasons and for managing the data, the digital ones were used. This approach made it impossible to look at the placement of articles in the paper and the use of photos. Looking at these factors could have made a valuable adding to the image of rape reporting in the papers. For instance, the degree to which sensationalism is present is not only visible in text but also in the make-up of newspaper pages and the use of photos and headlines.

Another factor to bear in mind is that changes in discourses are an important factor in facilitating organizational change in societies. In this study, that is the debate and legislation around rape and women’s safety in India. However, as Fairclough (2010) notes, it is important not to see changes in discourse as organizational change itself. It is essential to link findings in discourse analysis to actual organizational change. The scope of this research is too small to go beyond the discourse found in news texts and to look at the effect these discourses have. Preferably, interviewing journalists would be a welcome addition to the present study since this would shed light on the production of news texts, and thus the making of meaning. Unfortunately, the scope and resources of this research did not allow this.
Chapter 6: General overview and numbers

In this first chapter of results, a brief statistical overview of the data is presented. The data discussed are a result of the Content Analysis. This helps to get a general overview of the data and serves as a foundation for the two chapters to come. Also, at the end of this chapter, it is clear that earlier findings on rape reporting after the DGR are largely coherent with the findings here. The DGR incident truly was a watershed moment in rape reporting in the Indian dailies studied here in terms of volume and content. The increase in coverage on rape is clearly visible after the DGR and journalists also altered their tactics in rape reporting with some developments staying visible on the long run and some don’t.

6.1 (Descriptive) Statistics

Of the 822 analysed articles, 366 were published by the Times of India and 456 were written by journalists from the Hindustan Times. Schematically noted in a table, the sample looks like this:

Table 3 Amount of articles per paper in selected time period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOI</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>HT</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 16 - July 16, 2012</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>June 16 - July 16, 2012</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>366</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Figure 1 shows, the amount of articles that was devoted to rape incidents and rape, in general, was fairly even before the DGR happened. It hovered around 5 to 25 articles per month for both newspapers. There is a clear spike in coverage in December 2012, with TOI publishing 229 articles in the month afterwards and the HT 273. Looking at these numbers and figures, the claim Drache and Velagic (2013) make about the DGR being a watershed moment is certainly true.
The spikes in the amount of coverage after the DGR occur because of different developments in the DGR case and other cases, such as Gudiya rape case\textsuperscript{12}. For instance, the spike in September 2013 was caused by coverage of the end of the DGR trial and in December 2013, both newspapers took on the time of year to look back on the events of the year before. Both newspapers roughly follow the same pattern, although the HT is less constant in comparison to the TOI. This could point to this paper being more susceptible to picking up sensational cases, whereas TOI is less tempted to write a lot on a case and covers rape more gradually throughout the time period.

\textsuperscript{12} The Gudiya rape refers to the gang rape of a 5-year old that occurred in the Gandhi Nagar district in April 2013. It is also referred to as the Gandhi Nagar case. This case also caused a lot of uproar in India.
Figure 2 Mean word count over all time periods for both papers

In this case, the length of an article is related to the relevance that is attached to a certain topic. The more space a topic gets, the more important it is rated. HT hovers around a mean of 350 words per article with an exception of both December 16 – January 16, 2012, and 2013, when the paper pays more attention to rape which is related to the DGR incident. The average word count of the TOI articles differs more between time periods. Both newspapers address rape in fewer words in the summer months, when there are fewer background articles and rape coverage is increasingly incident driven. Overall, incidents are reported in articles that differ from 80 to 300 words whereas background articles, columns and editorials are longer. In exceptional cases, long reads are devoted to rape. This leads to articles over 1000 or even 1500 words. These long reads only appear in the direct aftermath of the DGR, which shows again that covering this particular case lead to exceptional forms of rape coverage.

**Article genre**

With article genre, articles can be categorized into types of reporting. Most newspapers offer different types of articles, such as news articles, analyses or follow ups. In this research, originally 9 types of genres were distinguished. The point of looking at these categories is to distinguish to what extent both newspapers cover rape in an incident-driven way and when they choose to offer in-depth background information. Generally, news articles and follow-ups are based on incidents, governmental decisions, measures, and events surrounding rape (issues). Analyses and background
articles offer in-depth information about rape as a societal problem and/or women’s rights and/or addressing deeper lying issues, causes or solutions for rape in society. Last, interviews, reports, editorials and columns are the ‘extras’, often offering opinions or personal experiences on the topic.

Table 4 Types of genres in TOI and HT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>TOI</th>
<th>HT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. News article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Follow-up</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Background article</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Commentary</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Report</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Editorial</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Column</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of both TOI and HT, most articles fell into the news article genre. Over the whole time period, HT published 50.1% of its content in the form of a news article. For TOI, this comes to 51.7%. This is followed by follow-ups (HT=17.5%, TOI=26.6%) and background articles (HT=14.2%, TOI=10%). HT also published a large amount of commentaries about rape directly after the DGR. Both newspapers published mostly news articles, sometimes accompanied by an analysis or commentary on rape before the DGR. After the incident, they added several genres to their coverage of rape, which continued in the years thereafter. This change was thus sparked by the DGR and is also visible in the long term. Next to news articles, analyses and commentaries, new categories appeared: interviews, reports, background articles, and follow-ups. This again is in line with earlier findings on coverage on the DGR, which was found to be broader and more in depth after the DGR (Drache and Velagic, 2013).

The news articles published are about incidents, arrests, and charges regarding a rape case and about the investigation, legal changes, law cases, government discussions and decisions, protests, measures and solutions to prevent rape. Background articles provide more information about these measures, old rape cases or statistics, the role of the police in handling rape cases and rape in general in Indian society. Analyses, commentaries, and editorials are generally written about rape in society, measures that are taken or suggestions for solutions, the role of the government and/or the police. The division of genres per newspaper over all time periods is shown in graph 3 and 4. It is visible that HT addressed rape more often in commentaries, where TOI published more follow-ups and analyses. HT reserves more space for personal opinions while TOI is largely news-driven.
In the graphs below it is visible which developments occurred over all time periods with regard to the division of genre. For the sake of clarity, the 9 categories are compressed into three categories: news (news + follow ups), background (background articles and analyses) and miscellaneous (commentaries, interviews, reports, and columns).
Looking at the development of article genres over time, it becomes clear that the DGR indeed led to a spike in background articles and analyses in December 2012. This reclaims after the month of
the incident in December, but in the time periods analysed thereafter on average more background articles and analyses are published than before.

However, although the number of background articles does show significantly growth, the number of analyses stays low. Most background articles in the sample vary from providing extra information on developments in society to more sensational topics as updates on people involved in rape cases. Therefore, the increase in background articles cannot be linked to giving a better or more honest image of rape to the public. Editorials on the subject are first published in the month of the incident but are never repeated again in the time periods that follow. The same follows for reports, columns and to a lesser extent for interviews on the subject. The single occurrence of these new genres of article shows that the coverage on the DGR was an exceptional media event for both newspapers, in the sense that they published articles, which normally do not appear.

**Topics**

Although the subject of rape reporting is of course rape, it was possible to discern subtopics. Looking at the kind of topics that are covered point toward clues on what is perceived as newsworthy, how rape reporting unfolds after a single incident (compared to the DGR) and how rape is portrayed in general. This variable is also useful in looking at the degree of incident-driven reporting. 21 Different topics were coded during analysis, non-mutually exclusive. Some articles contain more than one topic, leading to a total of 368 topics being present in TOI and 520 in HT. These numbers both represent 100%. For TOI, more than half of the appointed codes fall either in the categories of ‘incident’, ‘court/verdict’, ‘measures taken’, or ‘investigation incident’. These topics point towards incident driven reporting, in which either one isolated rape incident, the investigation into the incident and following court case is cause for an article. Underlying causes for rape are not addressed. Addressing the measures taken against rape is also a topic that emerges when government decisions are made. Journalists rely heavily on official press statements and report decision made by government officials without any interpretation. They seldom take original points of departure here. For HT, the same follows. Here, incident-driven reporting takes the same form with the same categories being most present. However, ‘rape as societal issue’ gets more attention compared to TOI and journalists of HT also offer more statistical information on rape. Both of these practices are likely to add to a broader understanding of rape. Below, the division of used topics for both papers is visible.
Figure 7 TOI: Division of topics

TOI: Division of topics

- Incident
- Arrest/charge
- Statistics on rape
- Investigation incident
- Legislation
- Measures taken
- Court/verdict
- Government related
- False rape charge
- Rape as side-issue
- Medical follow up victim
- Rape as societal issue
- Role police
- Protests
- (Health) care for victims
- Public transport
- Celebrities opinion
- Life story victim
- Update on victim
- Update on perpetrator
- Old case
- Acquittal of rape charges
- Other
Not only article genres but also article topics diversified after the Delhi Gang Rape. During December 2012, more articles on all kinds of topics emerge that were not published before. The most notable change is the publication of articles on rape as a societal issue, which points to sudden attention for rape in a broader perspective. Also, both newspapers write extensively about measures to be taken on rape, the role of the police in handling rape cases and incidents (also other than the DGR). Especially the Hindustan Times publishes about legal issues and measures surrounding rape. Some of these changes continue to be visible in the sample. For example, the attention given to
measures on rape keeps being subject of articles also after the DGR. The same follows for statistics on rape, court cases, investigation of incidents, the role of the police and (health) care for rape victims.

Figure 9 TOI: Developments in division of topics

This implies that there has been a heightened sensitivity to subjects relating to rape and rape prevention after the DGR. Other topics are only emerging in December 2012 and thereafter no more,
such as the medical follow-ups on a victim, life stories of victims, updates on victims and perpetrators and old cases. The use of these topics again shows that the DGR was an extraordinary case in which journalists used all tools to be able to write on the subject, either in order to inform the public or to sell the news.

Out of 822 articles in the sample, 509 were related to the DGR. 258 Articles were related to other incidents, whereas 60 were about rape in general, not related to any specific incident. Looking at the coverage of ‘regular’ rape cases compared to the DGR shows that the media attention given to the DGR lead to reporting more on other rape cases as well. Rape suddenly became an issue of heightened importance for both newspapers. The level of reporting of other cases stays the same following time periods. This shows that the DGR sparked not only reports about that particular incident, but also spurred newspapers to take up reporting other incidents, as well as publishing general articles about rape. This leads to the conclusion that the DGR made rape a more newsworthy topic than before.

6.2 Conclusion

The above results show that Drache and Velagic (2013) were largely right. As far as the statistics show, the DGR was indeed a defining moment in rape reporting for the TOI and HT. The DGR sparked an outburst in rape coverage never seen before. Also, the DGR lead to more attention to rape in general since not only the DGR was covered but other cases also received more attention compared to the time periods before. Furthermore, after the DGR, article genre and topics diversified. For TOI, this trend is temporary but HT keeps publishing more genres and article topics compared to before the DGR. It is thus safe to say that it is a media event in its own right, which caused both temporary and longitudinal changes in the media. Drache and Velagic (2013) argue that rape coverage includes more background information after the DGR. This is partially true, since in the direct aftermath of the DGR the amount of background and analyses increases. HT again keeps this up while TOI returns to publishing news articles. HT also publishes some interviews, reports and columns in the time periods after December 16 – January 16, 2012. The diversifying genres and publication of commentaries, editorials and analyses is likely to lead to more and better public awareness of rape than the sole publication of news articles on incidents. However, with the growth of background articles, Drache and Velagic (2013) observed that sensationalistic content also grew. The next chapter seeks to find an answer to the question if this is indeed the case.
Chapter 7: Patterns and characteristics of reporting

In the previous chapter, it became clear that the DGR was a defining moment in rape reporting for both studied newspapers. This chapter aims to show how rape is reported on the article level. It also seeks to answer the question whether coverage has moved towards or away from sensationalism. This is based on the findings of the content analysis. Whereas chapter 6 deals with descriptive statistics, in this chapter the content of the actual articles is the subject of analysis. First, the characteristics of incident reporting are explained. Thereafter, the extents to which sensationalism and sexualisation are present in the coverage are discussed. Several articles from the sample are used to illustrate and strengthen the argumentation. At the end of this chapter, it will be clear what rape reports typically look like and in which direction the amount of sensationalism has developed.

7.1 Ingredients and patterns of incident reporting

By looking at the rape reports in the sample, it turned out that reporting on rape incidents is made up of several standard ingredients. Thus, an article that reports on an incident usually follows the following pattern:

1. The rape is reported, always in wordings as ‘[victim] was allegedly raped [by] perpetrator(s)’.
2. The circumstances in which the incident happened are described, meaning the time, location and (social) situation. Always almost, the first source of the story is a police officer, who is very willing to give (personal) details about the case.
3. If the perpetrators are arrested, this is mentioned.
4. Details on the persons involved are given. The name of the victim is never disclosed (this is forbidden in Indian law regarding media conduct) but those of the perpetrators are often published. Also, the occupation of both victim and perpetrator(s) is mentioned.
5. A police registration of the incident (First Information Report) is described.
6. If the victim is admitted to a hospital due to (severe) injuries, this is mentioned.
7. The status of the investigation is mentioned.
8. The medical examination that is supposed to confirm rape in Indian law is mentioned. If a woman denies a medical examination this is stressed.
9. Reporting several rapes in one article is not uncommon. It seems quite arbitrary which of the cases is the focus of the article. The reporter starts with describing a case in detail and adds one or two that then mostly lack in a detailed description.
This pattern is consistent throughout the whole sample and underlines the tendency to report reactive and incident driven. Next to reporting a rape, investigation of a case is also often the reason rape is the topic of publication, again a very reactive way of reporting.

While it is already clear that the DGR was causing a change in some practices, it also changed incident reporting. First of all, the victims of the DGR are not said to have alleged or accused anyone of rape. Instead, it is not questioned in any fashion that they were raped. In other ways, responsibility is not conveyed to the victims but to the perpetrators, also by making the rapists the actors instead of the victims. This point will be elaborated upon in chapter 8.

In the following article on an incident from the Times of India of July 5th 2013, the pattern described above is visible. The different parts are accompanied by the corresponding numbers as described above. This article is one of many examples. In all other examples that follow and deal with incidents, this pattern is also visible.

**Colleagues rape 40-year-old**

NEW DELHI: [1] A 40-year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped by two of her colleagues and their two associates. [2] The accused offered her a drop took in a car, offered her a cold drink laced with sedatives and raped her, police said on Thursday. The woman was then thrown out of the moving car. Police said the woman was found in Dilshad Garden, east Delhi, on Wednesday night in an unconscious state. [3,4,7] A case of gang-rape has been registered and two people have been detained. [2] “The woman said that four of her office colleagues had offered her a lift to the local market. On the way, they offered her a cold drink laced with sedatives. When she became drowsy and semi-conscious, two of them, Ravindra and Lokendra, raped her at a secluded place in east Delhi,” said a police officer.

[4] The woman, who lives in Madhu Vihar, east Delhi, told the police that the two other accused were one Rakesh and one Jai Singh. [5] The woman’s statement was recorded on Thursday. [4] The accused worked with the victim at a private company in Gautam Buddha Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh.

Often, the papers describe how the incident came to light, such as:

*The victim kept quiet for the night but broke down the next morning when her mother kept asking her why she was so quiet and scared.*—TOI, January 8, 2013, Youth held for raping minor in east Delhi

Sometimes, additional information is provided, such as the marital status of the victim, the status of a relationship between the victim and a rapist or a more detailed story on the circumstances in which the rape occurred. In most cases, this either gives a sensationalist and/or
sexualised tone to a rape report since these details are not necessary to inform the public about the incident. They merely serve to make the story juicier. They transgress their role as information provider by extending their information supply with personal details that promise an enticing story about affairs, stranded relationships, revenge and other forms of drama. Both papers almost always take one incident as starting point for rape coverage. Adding to the degree of incident driven and reactive reporting, leaving out in-depth coverage on causes for rape and possible prevention of it.

7.2 Reporting the DGR

Reports on the DGR appeared on December 17th in the Hindustan Times and on December 18th in the Times of India. Both papers do not report the rape via the pattern listed above. Instead, they offer detailed stories and background analyses on Delhi as India’s rape capital. This is probably because India’s TV and radio stations were already broadcasting about the case, while the Internet and social media also exploded with information and opinions. This resulted in the first articles below, in which the story is unfolded with more detail than normal. In the example below, the first paragraph discloses the extraordinary nature of the case:

23-year-old girl gang raped in moving bus in Delhi, main accused arrested

New Delhi, Dec. 17 -- Late Monday, police arrested the main accused in the Capital’s latest rape case even as the victim struggled for her life - with attending doctors claiming they had never seen a victim of sexual assault subjected to “such brutality”. The 23-year-old had been raped in a moving bus by four people for about 25 minutes on Sunday night, and doctors who attended on her said she seemed to have been beaten with a blunt object and sustained injuries to the stomach and intestine. The accused, identified as Ram Singh, 30, was driving the bus which he uses to ferry students of a prominent school in Pushp Vihar as well as Noida. Police also arrested Mukesh, who was an accomplice.

“This is not only an animalistic act, but in the past 20 years I have spent in this profession I have never seen a victim of sexual assault being subjected to such brutality,” said a senior doctor at Safdurjung Hospital where the victim was admitted.

This is followed by the standard way of chronologically listing what happened:

Chhaya Sharma, deputy commissioner of police (south) said seven people had been detained for questioning. The victim, a physiotherapist from Uttam Nagar and her friend, a 28-year-old software engineer, had gone to the Select Citywalk mall in Saket to catch a movie. By the time the show was over, it was past 8pm and the couple took an autorickshaw to the DDA Munirka bus stop on Outer Ring Road. After waiting for more than half an hour, the two decided to board a luxury bus en route Dwarka and Palam Village. No sooner than they boarded the bus that one of the seven occupants made a lewd comment. The victim, in the meantime, was forced into the driver’s cabin, where the men took turns to
rape her. The bus, meanwhile, circled the Mahipalpur flyover thrice before dumping them. Later, the girl and the boy were thrown out at a toll plaza on NH8 near the Mahipalpur flyover.

After the initial reports in December, when journalists realize the brutality of the attack, more articles are published that emphasize the extraordinary nature of the case. This is also the moment that journalists start to use adjectives to judge the incident, the perpetrators and the victim. This leads to a more personal and emotional form of reporting that is not seen in the sample before. A year after the incident, it is regularly referred to as ‘the tragedy’ in articles that look back on the incident (TOI, 16 December 2013, Gender a mainstream issue now, say activists).

In an excerpt of the report in the Times of India of December 19, 2012, below, the tone is not yet emotional but very detailed when compared to any other rape report or follow up.

**Delhi gang-rape case: Cops got first clue from CCTV of hotel**

NEW DELHI: The Munirka gang-rape\textsuperscript{13} accused were on a holiday ‘joyride’ in the bus on Sunday night. They drank and feasted on chicken inside the vehicle, and even robbed a ‘passenger’ of Rs 7,000 and his mobile before setting eyes on the victim couple, police said after piecing together the sequence of events. Cops arrested a fourth accused from Rajasthan late on Monday night. Now, just two others are yet to be nabbed. Police said the victim, along with her male companion, had put up a brave fight against the rapists but was overpowered.

Among the accused are the driver and cleaner of the bus that ferried children to a south Delhi school. Sometimes, they also did duty for a school in Noida and also ferried office-goers. Ram Singh, the main accused, had washed the bus and was taking office-goers on Monday morning when his employer, Dinesh Yadav, was asked to call him back to R K Puram with the bus. It was here that he was apprehended in the afternoon.

In the coverage of the case in the weeks that follow (January 2013) and also in later time periods, the DGR is called a ‘ghastly’, ‘horrific’, ‘brutal’, ‘demonic’ and ‘spine-chilling’ rape. The perpetrators are also called ‘brutal’, ‘beasts’ and their immoral character is stressed by detailed accounts of their behaviour, such as drinking and gambling. Their occupation (and absence of it) and illiteracy are also mentioned, as well as their full names. The Hindustan Times published an online article devoted to all perpetrators with a full profile on each that disclosed all their personal details. In the days, months and years following, both newspapers regularly give updates on the perpetrators. One of them commits suicide while in custody, which is covered extensively, as is the

\textsuperscript{13} NB: the DGR was also called the Munirka gang-rape since this was the location of the bus stand the bus picked up the victim and her friend.
case of the juvenile that leads to a discussion on juvenile law. Also, court days and verdicts regarding the DGR are covered in detail. This is never done in an ‘ordinary’ rape case.

An article from the Hindustan Times shows what reporting on the DGR looked like a week after the incident. Compared to the first example in this chapter, it is clear that the DGR is covered with a lot of detail and emotion. In the first section, medical information is disclosed, a practice that recurs in covering the case until the victim dies.

On a wing and a prayer: Delhi gangrape survivor airlifted to Singapore

New Delhi, Dec. 26 -- The 23-year-old gangrape victim fighting for her life in a Delhi hospital was whisked away to Singapore on Wednesday night in a move to better her chances and limit any outburst of fury in a volatile Capital. The girl, who was brutally assaulted by six men in a moving bus ten days ago and dumped on the roadside to die, has been battling acute infection and a clot in the heart. Her stomach has been cut open twice and her small intestines have been removed. She was taken from Safdarjung Hospital to Indira Gandhi International Airport's Terminal 1D airport at 10.30 pm and boarded a chartered 12-seater aircraft an hour later from Delhi airport. With her were her parents, two relatives, two nursing staff and two doctors. Prior to the move, three police vans and two cars full of policemen kept watch outside the hospital.

The paper then continues to portray the victim and continues to offer medical information.

The girl, a physiotherapist, comes from a lower-middle-class family, with her father having sold his ancestral land to fund her studies. The family did not have passports, and the government arranged these, along with visas for Singapore at top speed. The girl will be treated at Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital, one of Asia's best centres for organ transplants, sources said. It is the same hospital where politician Amar Singh and southern superstar Rajinikanth underwent treatment. Earlier, doctors described her health as "critical" but "a shade better". "She is certainly not out of danger and continues to remain on ventilator, but her parameters have improved," said Dr Sunil Jain, senior surgeon at the hospital. Doctors said the girl was communicating meaningfully and was "very optimistic about her future".

The rape and the government's leaden-footed response to it led to unprecedented protests near the seat of power in Delhi, forcing a lockdown of the city's administrative district. Security was stepped up across Delhi on Wednesday, especially near government buildings. A debate raged on the penalty for rape and whether Delhi's cops should report to the chief minister instead of the central home ministry. Calls for the police chief to go have also gained momentum, though indications are that the Centre will back him for now.

Patterns of reporting in large cases
A few months after the DGR, another big rape case hits the headlines. Known as the Gandhi Nagar rape case or the rape of Gudiya, as the victim was called by the Times of India, a five-year-old was gang raped five months after the incident of December 2012. Although this case gets less attention compared to the massive coverage on the DGR, the same pattern of reporting unfolds. Again multiple articles are written about the case. These involve the reporting of the crime, shedding light on the role of the police in handling the case, medical follow-ups and a life story on the girl. Also, the court case is followed and the papers keep giving updates about the girl as she is released from the hospital or her family gives a statement. The same happens when a journalist from Indian daily Tehelka is raped, a gang-rape of a Danish tourist occurs, and the Shakti Mill gang-rape and the Badaun rape case take place. (See for more information on these cases the timeline in chapter 5.) Articles on these cases often link new cases to the DGR or the Gudiya case to strengthen the argument on the severity of rape issues in India. In comparing the coverage on these cases, again the watershed moment that the DGR was is visible, as are the longitudinal effects of this moment. The DGR made editors of both newspapers sensible to rape news and the way it is reported. After the DGR, more rape cases are reported, including more detail and emotion than before.

7.3 Sensationalism

By now it is clear that the DGR lead to vastly more coverage on rape and also both HT and TOI (temporarily) increased background information directly after the DGR. Drache and Velagic (2013) observed that with an increase of background articles, sensationalism also increased. To understand the nature and extent of sensationalistic reporting after the DGR, it is necessary to look closer at the way sensationalism occurs. To do this, sensationalist articles were coded in the Content Analysis. As described in chapter 5, four codes were used and the words, sentences, and paragraphs that belonged to these codes were also noted in the coding scheme. In this way, it was easy to see and prove what was sensationalistic about the articles. This resulted in four types of sensational reporting:

1. Use of excessive detail on case/victim/perpetrator
2. Use of sensationalist language/tone
3. Use of excessive detail on medical condition
4. Use of sensationalist topic

These were coded non-mutually exclusive. In total, 437 articles were coded with one or more sensationalistic features. This is 53.2% of the total sample.
As Figure 11 and 12 show, half of the articles published by TOI are coded as having some kind of sensational content. However, the ratio of sensationalistic content vs. non-sensationalistic content does not differ from before. TOI publishes around 50% of articles with a sensational undertone. This is coherent with all other time periods. It is possible to say that HT increases sensationalistic reporting directly after the DGR and in the two time periods following the DGR. This returns to the
50/50 ratio in the summer of 2014. HT addressing rape in a sensationalistic manner adds to the impression that HT is more susceptible to pick up sensationalistic storylines than TOI. All in all, the amount of sensationalism seems to only slightly increase in HT, not in TOI, and both newspapers return to normal levels of reporting after the DGR. As the amount of sensationalism does increase, information on the degree of sensationalism tells a different story, as is visible in the next paragraphs.

Types of sensational reporting

Sensational tone and topic

Both newspapers use all four types of sensationalism mentioned above. As seen below, the use of sensational language is most apparent, followed by details on the people involved in reporting rape. These variables were coded non-mutually exclusive. For TOI, 199 times a form of sensationalism was found, which makes 100%. For HT, this is 317 times.

![Figure 13 Types of sensationalism in HT](image1)
![Figure 14 Types of sensationalism in TOI](image2)
All types of sensationalism increase when the DGR is the subject of reporting. Especially the use of sensational language increases. The graphs below show this for both newspapers:

**Figure 15 HT: Development in the use of sensationalism**

**Figure 16 TOI: Development in the use of sensationalism**

The article below is an example of sensationalist reporting, in which the topic is explicitly sensational but the used words and phrases and tone are also sensational in the sense that they draw in the reader by playing on emotion and details. In the first section, the journalist uses words such as ‘that fateful night’.

**A year on, forgotten victims of December 16 still waiting for justice**

NEW DELHI: *Nirbhaya's brutal gang rape on this date exactly a year ago led to an upsurge that jolted...*
the country. But there were others too who suffered abuse on that fateful night. Their cases never attracted attention and their prospects of getting justice appear extremely bleak.

This is followed by a story about a young boy and a woman who were both molested, told in vivid detail. ‘Trouble was waiting for her’, is a typical sensational way of introducing the reader to the story.

*Barely nine, Raju was sodomized and thrashed on December 16, 2012. When he didn’t come home even after dark, his mother went looking for him in the forest that overlooks an upscale locality in Vasant Vihar. He was found unconscious and profusely bleeding.*

*Razia is in her early 20s and lives in a slum in New Seemapuri. Her house doesn’t have a toilet. Around 10pm on December 16, she had stepped out to answer nature’s call. Trouble was waiting for her. A man tried to force himself upon her, and only stopped because a group of children arrived on the spot. Around the same time elsewhere, Nirbhaya was trying to fend off her attackers in a chartered bus.*

In the next section, the mother of one of the victims tells what impact the incident had on her son. This functions to appeal to the reader, while ending with the phrase ‘What followed is something Raju desperately wants to forget’, putting images of the crime in the head of the reader without explicitly stating what happened.

*"The Nirbhaya case took away all the attention. My son was also raped, but the media never came to our place, though the spot where it happened was not even a kilometre away from the Munirka bus stand," said Raju’s mother. They live in a JJ cluster in Vasant Vihar’s Kusumpur Pahri. Raju continues to be traumatized by the incident. He has lost a lot of weight, keeps to himself most of the time, and doesn’t go to the forest anymore. That day, he had gone to the forest to play with his buddies after school. That’s when he met Ravi, who had come to feed his pigs. "He first asked me my name and family’s details while stroking my back. He asked me if I would like to feed the pigs with him. He then asked me to take off my pants as there will be water and it was already getting cold," said Raju. What followed is something Raju desperately wants to forget.*

[*…*]

*(All names have been changed to protect identities of survivors)*

As mentioned above, the kind of rape that is reported seems to carry a certain (extra) news worth. In general, the more extraordinary a news fact is, the more news worth it has. This also counts for rape. Sensational incidents in which victims are (very young) children, women are gang raped or foreigners who are raped, are reported the most. These are outspoken sensationalistic topics. The Hindustan Times uses this strategy the most, with 52 out of 64 articles with a sensational topic. Stories and updates on perpetrators or victims also carry a sensational aspect. These articles
do not inform the public about rape but largely serve to entertain. Both newspapers give updates on the victims in the form of medical follow-ups. In the case of the DGR, the perpetrators are also followed. Their lives and developments in court and in jail form a narrative that is newsworthy in itself. Celebrities and their statements are also a motive for writing rape-related articles in the Hindustan Times. If a Bollywood celebrity makes a statement on rape in India this is crafted into a news article.

**Acquaintance rape**

An important issue here is the (lack of) coverage of acquaintance rape. As Estrich (1987) has noted, stranger rape or ‘real rape’ is the kind of rape that is reported upon most in the media since this kind of rape sparks the imagination and guarantees an exciting story. However, only reporting this type of rape leads to a misrepresentation of rape where the public thinks rape only happens at night, in dangerous situations, while rape happens most between acquaintances. This is definitely true for India as well, as research has pointed out rape happens most in the Indian household (Trustlaw, 2011). As the variable ‘acquaintance rape’ was also coded, it is easy to see what portion of reports is devoted to acquaintance rape.

**Details and medical follow ups**

Next to use of sensational tone and topic, sensational reporting is also visible in other manners, such as detailed reporting that reveals a lot about the case, victim and perpetrator and the publication of medical follow-ups. HT covers the medical condition of the victim in great detail. It is in these articles that the reader gets to know most of what happened to the victim. The unfolding of the event is described in detail in the article below. In these cases, the newspaper transcends its informing function and turns to very sensational and entertaining reporting. Below, another example of this is given. The details on the medical condition of the victim are also visible here:

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**Rape victim still critical writes to mother 'I want to live'**

New Delhi, Dec. 20 -- The 23-year-old girl gangraped on a bus in south Delhi was brutalised so badly that she had only 5% of her intestine left inside her when she was brought to hospital on Sunday night.

On Wednesday, doctors at the Safdarjung Hospital removed the remaining 15 inches of intestine in a bid to stop the spread of a life-threatening infection that had begun to develop in her many injuries.

The girl is in a critical condition and faces the prospect of never being able to eat a meal in her life if she survives. But doctors said she was fighting on, and her brother told HT that she had written, "Mother, I want to live," on a piece of paper.

As outrage continued to build across the nation, he added: "We want the culprits to be hanged as early as possible." A doctor in the hospital said that it appeared that the girl had been violated with a metal
rod. "It appears to be that a rod was inserted into her and it was pulled out with so much force that the act brought out her intestines along. That is probably the only thing that explains such severe damage to her intestines," he said. According to sources, one of the accused persons who were brought to the hospital for a medical examination on Tuesday confessed to having seen a rope-like object - likely her intestines - being pulled out of the girl by the other assailants on the bus. The sources said that the girl had bite marks on her body. "There was permanent damage to her intestines, and with the intestines completely gone she will have to feed through intravenous fluids all her life. But that is secondary, our primary focus at the moment is to save her life," said Dr BD Athani, Medical Superintendent, Safdarjung Hospital.

The surgery was performed around 10am and at 12.30pm she was brought back to the ICU. According to doctors, the girl withstood the surgery well and her vital parameters such as blood pressure, urine output, pulse rate and respiration are within the acceptable range of normalcy. Dr Athani said that the girl's abdomen, which had been open until today, had been cleaned and closed, with a tube inserted in her stomach to drain fluids.

As Drache and Velagic (2013) already mention in their research into rape coverage after the DGR, medical follow-ups are used to draw readers in. Both the TOI and HT give an excess of detail on the medical condition of the DGR victim, although the HT publishes more articles that provided a medical follow up and disclosed more details on her condition than the TOI does. Giving details on the medical condition of a victim is first encountered in reports on the DGR, but appears again in other controversial cases. When the Gandhi Nagar case breaks, journalists also give details about the medical condition of the victim. In special cases that attract more and longer attention, journalists turn to these ways and topics of reporting.

**Balanced reporting and background stories**

Although throughout the sample sensationalism is widely present, there are also articles that provide balanced reporting and background information to readers. A few days after the DGR the TOI publishes articles that investigate causes for rape and measures to prevent it. Several scientists and experts are asked about the incidents or comment on the protests happening at that moment. Also, the TOI sheds light on counterproductive measures taken by the government to curb the protests (TOI, 25 December 2012, More punishment: 9 Metro stations stay shut). In another article from January 2nd, a journalist sheds light on the way rape cases are typically handled in court and what measures would prove effective (TOI, January 2, 2013, 5 special courts not enough for 1,000 pending rape cases). The underlying societal issues, such as women’s rights and the imbalance between men and women in the workforce and marriage are written about a few times, as well as the attitude of men towards sexual violence in society. The stigma surrounding rape is mentioned sporadically. (See
TOI, December 26, 2012, Minor’s gritty fight finally led to rapists being imprisoned) TOI also reports about sexual violence in lower strata in society and the lower conviction rate in cases with victims of low class. (TOI, January 1st, 2013). The notorious ‘two-finger test’ that is used in India to ascertain that a woman is raped is only the subject of an article if a quote gives cause to that. However, the practice itself is never the subject of debate, in both newspapers.

Rarely, the newspapers come up with an original subject or source. Most of the time statements or actions by the police and the government are sources for articles on rape. This is in line with the degree of incident driven reporting as described earlier. One clear exception is an article by a female reporter who takes the bus late at night in Delhi to report what she experiences as a woman in public transport in New Delhi. This is one of the few articles that seem to be crafted not by using official sources and news. Instead, it takes a new and creative approach that addresses commute problems for women and shows the way women are perceived by men. Reading this piece is helpful in understanding rape issues from a woman’s point of view.

Furthermore, in analyses, experts and scientists are consulted on several issues. As noted above, both TOI and HT mostly pay attention to special or brutal rape cases, but an analysis in TOI of December 2013 does shed light on acquaintance rape:

_The helpline data suggests that many women in live-in relationships get a raw deal. “Five per cent of the total callers are women in live-ins who have been dumped by their partners. They suffer extreme mental trauma. We support them with counselling,” said Faruqi, adding, "Married women who are victims of domestic violence find some support from society but women in live-in relationships are generally looked down upon. This needs to change”. – TOI, December 17, 2013, All ears for women in distress, even those who give missed calls)_

HT also reports a survey that pays attention to acquaintance rape in an article of December 25, 2012. (30% of the accused in rape cases were neighbors of victims: Study). Whereas TOI reports facts and comes up with analyses towards the end of the researched time period, HT publishes several analytical articles directly after the DGR. The largest difference between the both newspapers is that HT publishes more in-depth articles in the month after the DGR and also gives more space to experts by doing interviews with them, analyses and columns by external writers. Also, the number of long reads grows in the month after the DGR, especially for HT. A year after the incident, again analyses and long reads on rape are published by HT.

While HT uses more sensational language and topics to report rape, at the same time the newspaper publishes more in-depth articles and analyses that shed light on the underlying issues of
gender and women’s rights and problems in India. Also, HT shows its stance on certain topics more. In the weeks after the DGR, the newspaper publishes articles that strongly advocate for or reject certain measures and practices for preventing rape and helping victims. In this sense, it is more subjective than TOI but also more critical and fulfilling the role of the watchdog in society.

Nothing has changed. The national outrage and hysteria that the gangrape of a 23-year-old woman in the national Capital sparked notwithstanding, the business of crimes against women continued unabated in Delhi. [...] A clueless Delhi Police, which was put on the defensive after the crackdown on the protesters at India Gate last Sunday, are yet to initiate measures to bring down the north-bound graph of crimes against women. – HT, December 30, 2012, Deterrence will be the real tribute

Another aspect of the extraordinary nature of the DGR as a media event becomes clear by pieces written on a personal note. As an HT journalist writes:

As a journalist I am trained to distance myself from the story; to remain objective. I have never participated in a candlelight vigil. I have never drafted a petition demanding change. I almost never sign chain letters. But now I felt helpless and angry. I needed to believe that we have not given up and reached a point of no return. – HT, December 22, 2012, A tipping point for change

HT also tries to capture the reasons rape happens in an article of December 22, 2012, and writes:

[...] WHY do rapes happen? And why do groups of men attack a woman?
According to psychologists, gang rape is a manifestation of certain psychodynamics in a patriarchal society - factors such as false appraisal of masculinity, peer approval, boredom, joblessness combined together can lead to such sort of psychopathic gang behaviour. – HT, December 22, 2012, A wounded nation seeks answers


Especially TOI reports a lot about court cases, politicians, and governmental decisions. The news is crafted along traditional lines. The HT is more creative and addresses rape as a societal issue more as there is more space for commentaries and analyses. Thus, while sensationalism is certainly a factor that is present and deepens, with extraordinary sensational articles that discuss the DGR incident in great detail and give very detailed medical information, there is also another side to the coverage that provides some original takes on rape issues in India.
7.4 Sexualisation: telling a story

A part of sensationalistic rape reporting revolves around sexualisation of the topic. Sexualisation stresses the sexual aspects of content and gives the reader more information about the sexual aspect of rape than is strictly necessary. It is a form of sensationalism, giving the reader titillating, shocking or arousing details about sexual violence. Rape always carries a sexual aspect but a journalist can describe such an incident with or without sexualizing the story. Strictly speaking, everybody knows what rape entails and providing sexual detail does not add to more awareness. On the contrary, often sexualisation of rape leads to a misrepresentation, stressing the extraordinary nature of the case. In this research, a sexualised article consists either of details about sexual acts or details about the sexual history of victims and perpetrators. Next to sensationalism, sexualisation was coded in a separate coding category. Explicit sexualisation was coded 47 times (HT 22 times, TOI 25) in the whole sample, for which two codes were used:

1. Rape (experience) described with sexual detail
2. Sexual history of victim described in detail

Figure 18 and Table 5 show the division of sexualised content and the changes during the time period. Sexualisation is slightly more present after the DGR but since it is hard to capture in an explicit way, this trend is not visible well. Here, first, the explicit ways of sexualising a story is explained, followed by latent manners of sexualised reporting.

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</tbody>
</table>
Sexualisation was found in 5.72% of the total sample, with most of the articles of this kind being published in December 2012. It comes up most in the reporting of incidents. Out of 111 incident reports 21.6% was charged with some kind of sexualised form of reporting. Also, reports about investigations, court/verdict reports, and medical follow-ups are sometimes written with sexualised content. These forms of coverage are most eligible to make a titillating story out of a rape, which I will call ‘storyfying rape’. This is even more visible in more latent forms of sexualisation that are used in writing. The most important form of sexualisation that came up in almost all articles is this storyfying aspect of rape reporting. The expected explicit forms of sexualisation - describing a rape experience and the victim’s sexual history being disclosed - that are described in previous research were less present.

As can be seen in the above example(s) of typical rape reports, the report makes a ‘juicy’ story out of incidents. This is done by using detailed and personal information about the people involved and the circumstances. A more elaborate example from the TOI on the Delhi Gang Rape below shows how the events of the DGR are narrated in detail, painting a vivid picture of the events without addressing them explicitly.

First, the place and time of the incident are described:
40-min ride: Beaten, raped & dumped

NEW DELHI: It was a 40-minute ordeal which is likely to haunt not only the victim and her friend but all commuters who are out during the evening and night. The movie was over and the two were waiting for a bus around 9.15 pm when a white luxury deluxe bus - looked like a chartered bus that ferries officegoers daily in the capital - stopped near them at the Munirka bus stand. A person standing near the front door of bus, posing as the conductor, called out for passengers for Dwarka. The girl had to go to Mahavir Enclave, which is at Palam, and asked if they would drop her there.

The next sentences ring in the story:

The man readily agreed. After just 15 minutes, the nightmare began unfolding. What began as misbehaviour soon turned into violence and bestiality. The Times of India accessed the primary statement of the victim's male friend which recalls the entire horror story.

The story is told with several details that refer to the rape itself. Sexual acts are not described explicitly, but the acts surrounding the rape are as if the reader was there.

According to the statement, after boarding the bus, they noticed there were seven men inside - one driving, two sitting at the front and four at the rear. The couple had settled down in the middle. Around 9.30 pm, the drunken men started misbehaving with the girl and began passing comments like "Ladke ke saath ghumke aa rahii hai, maze lekar aa rahi hai," (you were hanging out with a boy and having fun) said a source. When the woman's friend objected to the comments, the men had an argument with him and started beating him up. When the boy retaliated, two men gagged him near the driver's seat, hit him with iron rods and punched him several times. Meanwhile, four men pinned down the woman. She was repeatedly hit in the abdomen by five of the men, who also took turns to rape her. The girl was almost unconscious when she was sexually assaulted, say the investigators and doctors.

During the entire incident, the boy made desperate efforts to save the victim and begged with the men to let her go, said a source. The boy told the cops in his complaint that the men seemed to be speaking a Haryanvi dialect while interacting with each other and smelt of alcohol. The door of bus remained shut as it moved and sources said it probably went towards Palam and Kapashera before coming to the Mahipalpur flyover. "They stripped the victims of their clothes and dumped them there. The girl was unconscious at that time. They took away their mobile phones, credit cards and cash (Rs 1,000) before fleeing. The man just managed to notice the first initials of the registration number - DL1PB - as he was also badly injured. The number finally turned out to be DL1PB 0149.
It was 10.10 pm when they were thrown out of the bus. They were lying on the roadside for a few minutes after which the boy mustered up some courage to come out on the road. That’s when a passerby spotted them and called up the cops. Around 200 people had gathered there by the time the police arrived, said a source. Delhi Police has registered a case under sections 376 G (gangrape), 365 (kidnapping or abduction with intent to secretly and wrongfully confine a person), 368 (wrongfully concealing or keeping in confinement a kidnapped or abducted person), 394 (robbery) and hurt of Indian Penal Code at Vasant Vihar police station. – TOI, December 19, 2012

In this example of a rape report, it is clear that the reporter unfolds the story. By naming details such as the place of the incident and actions of perpetrator and victim, the incident becomes clear in the mind of the reader and the article transcends factual reporting. In reporting a rape it is not necessary to report that the victim was gagged, tied down or asked for mercy. In this way, it gets a sexual and titillating tone.

In some articles, this is even taken further. Also by disclosing details about relationship statuses, marriages, affairs and/or sexual details articles are sexualised. The article above about Raju and Razia (see page 56 above) is an example of this while also using other forms of sensational reporting. Next to details about the incident, details about relationships and personal affairs are disclosed, forming a more latent form of sexualisation:

Devastated by the break-up, the victim contacted Rajesh, who also raped her at his friend’s house in Green Park. The girl’s first attempt at taking her life was on October 12, when Naveen abused her on the phone, claiming to have found out about her intimacy with his cousin. She again attempted suicide by slitting her wrists. – HT, January 3, 2013, 17-year-old alleges rape by two cousins

[...] As she was being pinned down and raped, she bit three of the assailters. (…) – TOI, January 2, 2012, Assailants in bus tried to run over Delhi gang-rape victim

[...] She was dumped near Fortis hospital in Noida around midnight with her hands and legs tied and a bottle shoved inside her. (…) – HT, July 14, 2014, Ghaziabad rape case

[...] Since she knew him for several years, she let him in. However, when the man began to molest her, she resisted and tried to scream. It was then that the accused tried to tie her hands. Luckily, he received a call on his mobile just then and left the room to answer it. The girl took this opportunity to flee and then raised an alarm after which the neighbours came and rescued her. (…) – TOI, January 13, 2012, Man held for rape attempt
The victim, who is separated from her husband, was abducted allegedly by the five accused from Dayal market in Alipur where she had gone shopping. - HT, January 9, 2013, Capital shame: woman abducted, drugged, raped

Mentioning the sexual history of a victim, meaning mentioning previous sexual relationships or sexual behaviour was also present. Use of these narratives also points to the use of rape myths and the vamp-narrative (for detailed results on this see paragraph 8.1 and 8.2). By disclosing such details it implies that women who are sexually active before marriage or have had multiple partners are promiscuous, asking for it and/or being immoral and so deserve to be sexually assaulted. The actual sexual history of victims is not described very detailed and therefore not coded much. In fact, this code was only used three times in the sample. However, the marital or relationship status of victims is regularly disclosed in reporting an incident directly connected to the event, as is shown by the examples below.

[...] The victim, who is separated from her husband, was abducted allegedly by the five accused from Dayal market in Alipur where she had gone shopping – HT, January 9, 2013 (Capital shame: Woman abducted, drugged, raped

[...] The court also noted that the advocate, who represented the 33-year-old woman in her matrimonial disputes with her first husband, has been engaged in several litigations with her since 2006, but she did not make any allegation of sexual harassment against him till 2010. – TOI, January 13, 2013 (Lawyer acquitted of rape charge)

When these details are described reports are made sensational to read. The focus is shifted from the seriousness of the crime to creating a juicy story. By doing this, the reader is not just informed but also (mainly) entertained. The journalist transgresses the boundary of information supply and enters the entertainment area.

Next to relationship status, also occupation, social class and caste, place of residence and descent, parenthood, education, and hobbies are sometimes mentioned, seemingly arbitrary. Some examples of this practice will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

In an article from the TOI, January 3, 2013, rape is also crafted into a story (see next page). What is striking is that the tone of the article is vindictive, the victim is pictured as naïve and online dating is seen as dangerous. In a latent fashion, the article seems to say the victim asked for it. The relationship between the victim and perpetrator(s) is spelled out in detail, as is the attempt to suicide
of the victim and her results in her studies. This also shows what importance is ascribed to getting high grades for (middle-class) Indian girls.

The first paragraph unfolds the story, as the author uses phrases such as ‘a sordid tale of exploitation’ and revealing events chronologically, building up tension towards the point the victim is raped.

**17-year-old rape victim had twice attempted suicide**

NEW DELHI: The 17-year-old girl from a south Delhi public school, who was allegedly sexually assaulted by two MNC employees, was driven to desperation and attempted suicide twice in October and November last year. Her statement to the police reveals a sordid tale of exploitation by the two men who, she alleges, were working in tandem. It was a Facebook friendship with Naveen Singh Khetwal, 24, that began in September 2011, which pulled her into the quagmire. Naveen introduced her to his cousin, Rajesh, 24, and by December, Rajesh, too, had befriended her on the social networking site.

The second part describes how the relationship between the victim and the perpetrators unfolded and carries underlying ideas about developing relationships (online), while also disclosing details about the relationships and even going as far as stating that the perpetrator ‘filled a vacuum in this girl’s life and would often console her’.

*The case underlines the perils that social networking sites pose to vulnerable teenagers. This girl became quite enamoured with Rajesh. They exchanged phone numbers and text messages and would speak to each other daily, meeting occasionally. But suddenly in March 2012, Rajesh discontinued his friendship with her. She was heartbroken and went into depression, she says in her complaint. Soon, her studies provided the necessary diversion. Police sources said the girl, a science student, had scored 100% in three subjects in her previous class and her depression affected her studies. This seemed to be the cue for Naveen to take over. He filled a vacuum in this girl’s life and would often console her, she says. They gradually became close and he would often take her out to Lodhi Garden, Lajpat Nagar and Connaught Place on his bike. Eventually, on July 24, she alleges, he spiked her soft drink and raped her in a flat in Safdarjung Enclave.*

The author then goes on disclosing further developments in the relationship. The article transgresses the information providing the function of the newspaper by far. The article could either make mention of the victim being raped or go into dangers of online dating, but instead focuses on the details of the (sexual) relationship.

*Accused gave her number to others*

*By September, Naveen seemed to have gone cold on the teenager and there was a sudden break-up on September 7. According to the girl’s statement, he said he had given up his job and was going back to*
his native place in Uttarakhand. This time Rajesh did the handholding, and the very next day, she alleges, he raped her in his friend's room in Green Park. Now, both turned abusive. Her phone number got circulated among strangers and she started getting obscene calls, she has alleged. They had her photographs on their mobiles, she told the police. This was the time when she attempted suicide by consuming Lizol and was treated at a prominent south Delhi hospital. She told the cops that she intended to take a cough syrup and had by mistake consumed the disinfectant liquid cleaner.

Last, there are explicit details about the rape when the author writes: ‘”Since she knew him for several years, she let him in. However, when the man began to molest her, she resisted and tried to scream. It was then that the accused tried to tie her hands. Luckily, he received a call on his mobile just then and left the room to answer it.’ An account of a rape could not get any more exciting than this.

After she recovered, her mobile was taken away by her parents but she continued to try to reach out to Naveen who only rebuffed her. She sliced her veins, she says, but survived. The girl, out of guilt and fear, fared very badly in academics and her parents got extremely worried. "Since she knew him for several years, she let him in. However, when the man began to molest her, she resisted and tried to scream. It was then that the accused tried to tie her hands. Luckily, he received a call on his mobile just then and left the room to answer it. The girl took this opportunity to flee and then raised an alarm after which the neighbours came and rescued her. We were informed and we immediately arrested the accused," said Jaiswal. – January 3, 2013, 17-year-old rape victim had twice attempted suicide

This example shows all kinds of overt and latent sexualism that is found in several articles. It also shows that details about the circumstances in which a rape incident occurs cause an article to become charged with sexualisation and the extent to which details are disclosed and the tension in articles is built up to make rape coverage into titillating stories.

A note on sensationalism: sources

Some aspects of rape reporting in Indian newspapers would be seen as sensational in Western journalism practices but by looking at cultural differences and practices they are not necessarily definable as such. One of these is the consistently naming of perpetrators in reporting an incident. Also, police officers are used to giving elaborate statements about circumstances of a rape, the condition of the victim and the perpetrator. Most ‘sensational’ details that journalists use come directly from these sources. Here, it is visible that the practices journalists have are partly based on the relation the media has with government officials. If police officers are used to and willing to give detailed information about cases, most journalists will be happy to use these in their reports. This
shows that the workings of journalists go further than their own field. The relation between journalists and their sources shapes the way they report. This also shows that cultural circumstances are important in this research. The workings of the police and government do shape some of the reporting characteristics that journalists use. Also, the way the law handles rape also shapes the way journalists talk about rape. For instance, ‘eve-teasing’ as a euphemism for sexual harassment could be seen as downplaying of sexual violence. However, this term is part of Indian law on sexual harassment so if a journalist talks about eve-teasing he or she is simply quoting Indian law. At the same time, journalists are not very critical about these practices but saying they should, would imply that a Western way of looking at this is superior. The question here remains if the public is correctly informed about rape, taking the cultural circumstances into account, as well as looking critically at the results of this research as Critical Discourse Analysis as a method demands.

7.5 Conclusion

Reporting rape incidents in TOI and HT is done following a pattern which leads to relatively objective reporting. The DGR is initially reported in the same manner. However, as the severity of the incident unfolds, reporting takes on a subjective and emotional tone. While this also occurs in other large rape cases, the DGR is covered very emotional, broad and sensational, making this case an extraordinary one. Sensationalist language, details, and subjective reporting soon take over the coverage. While the amount of sensational articles does not seem to increase in the long run (only short term in case of HT), the severity of sensational content does increase with rape coverage getting more emotional, judgmental and sexualised. Sexualisation is an important part of this trend. Both papers craft stories out of rape incidents that are sexually titillating or disclose very personal details about the people involved. The DGR gives way to publication of more of this type of coverage. Both papers seem to discover that these articles are fertile grounds for selling the news.

Also, the occurrence of medical follow-ups shows the special nature of the DGR case, as does the sudden appearance of editorials. Both papers use editorials to position themselves on rape, measures against sexual violence and governmental decisions. However, while the depth of sensationalism increases, both papers also offer more background information with analyses and background articles. Sometimes original takes on rape issues are published, but reporting is largely incident-driven with a high reliance on governmental decisions, events and new rape incidents.
Chapter 8: Identifying discourses

The last part of this research, consisting of a critical discourse analysis, resulted in ten themes or narratives that are explored in this chapter. The first three themes belong to the traditional rape coverage characteristics. They deal with known narratives in this kind of reports. Next to these, three other narratives came to light that show a shift in attitudes towards rape. It moves away from an individual problem and develops into a collective issue. Together, all narratives show that the DGR was an exceptional case for both newspapers. Compared to regular rape coverage this incident was covered in a very different style, which has minor longitudinal effects but not repeated in such intensity and depth thereafter.

8.1 Virgin- and vamp narrative

The virgin- and vamp narrative as described by Benedict (1992) is definitely visible in the sample, in multiple ways. In cases of the vamp narrative, manifest descriptions of women having loose character are nearly absent. However, certain details about her situation are given that contribute to a description of promiscuity and serve to show that she transgressed certain boundaries that heightened her chances of getting raped. These details include her sexual history, relationships and behaviour (e.g. going out late at night, dressing behaviour and drinking). For instance, the newspaper discloses that a victim and rapist were friends, had a live-in relationship or the woman is divorced or lives with another man. This subtly downplays the seriousness of the incident and implies the woman is not living up to (Indian) moral standards. Implicitly, the woman is blamed for the rape.

One way to stress the virgin-qualities of a woman (or man) is done by calling the innocent party a ‘girl’ or ‘boy’, where the guilty are ‘men’ and ‘women’. Although the victims of the DGR are in their mid-twenties when they are attacked they are almost without exception portrayed as a girl and boy. The perpetrators are called men although three of them are younger than the victims. Being a boy or a girl implies innocence while being a man or woman is associated with aggressive, criminal or immoral behaviour. The same is visible when a young boy has sexually abused another young girl. This is written about in a way that downplays the seriousness of the incident.

With regard to the DGR victim, several facts are used to paint a picture of a promising and innocent girl, coming from a low-class family, studying hard and being a good daughter in the house. The victim shows all the qualities that are admired in a young Indian girl. Especially the Hindustan Times writes extensively about the victim in this fashion, with a lot of detail
She was the entertainer of the household, the perennially smiling one who had her brothers in splits with her jokes at the dinner table. She was the brilliant student who gave tuitions for younger kids when she was 14 to help her lower middle-class parents run their home. But on Saturday her smile froze into sad permanence in the memories of those who knew her, and her brilliance flickered for a final time. [...] The girl was invariably among the top students in her class, and was determined to earn well and repay her father, who had sold his ancestral land to fund her studies. Hers was a story of charming ordinariness, of aspiration and hard work, of pleasure in life's little joys.

She would have been working full-time in six months. Her plan was to buy a new phone to replace her four-year-old handset. Her last days were illuminated by an extraordinary determination to live. A doctor marvelled that even in the ICU, she wanted to change her clothes and do her hair. She insisted that the tubes be removed from her mouth so that she could testify against her attackers. She died, but she lit a flame that will burn on. – HT, December 30, 2012, She lit a flame

The girl's dreams were also modest and achievable, for a young, bright, educated girl on the cusp of getting a job. She was planning to buy a Samsung smartphone. And dreamt of an Audi someday. – HT, January 12, 2013, Delhi Gangrape: Lives, interrupted

In the case of the DGR, the girl is safeguarded from any form of guilt by stating that falling victim to her perpetrators was purely coincidence. According to the papers, the couple went home at a ‘decent hour’ and were not aware of the bus being a private vehicle:

A 23-year-old girl returning home around 9 pm with her friend, not a particularly late hour in a metro like Delhi, was gangraped and beaten so violently that a usually apathetic city is reeling in horror. (HT, December 18, 2012, A nightmare on the streets).

The man who accompanied the DGR victim is also part of the virgin narrative, depicted as working hard and being courageous:

[...] Rajesh completed his studies at a local school and went on to pursue his B.Tech from a college in Meerut in 2007. He bagged a job with an IT company and worked for a couple of years. At present, he was working part-time for a Noida-based IT Company and was preparing for civil services.[...] – TOI, December 19, 2012 - I did my best but could not protect her: Gang rape victim's friend

The virgin narrative is enhanced by the way men are depicted. Next to a virgin there is always a beast (the fiend/beast narrative). The next examples show this dualism:

Women in Delhi aren't safe from sexual predators even in broad daylight and in a relatively "safe" area like Connaught Place. [...] The woman, a mother of seven, was lured into the building by Roshan with
The promise of a job, the police said. – HT, July 2, 2014, Woman raped, confined in CP office building at 3pm

The Hindustan Times has another tactic to portray one of the perpetrators of the DGR as a beast. By portraying his wife innocent, his brutality is highlighted. The paper ascribes beauty and sensitivity to her to highlight his ugly and insensitive, inhuman character:

This is where Akshay Kumar Singh alias Thakur, 25, grew up. One of the six Delhi rape accused, Singh has a beautiful wife and a two-and-a-half-year-old son. With the possibility of death sentence now looming large, his wife fainted twice after hearing the news of the girl’s death in Singapore. - HT, December 30, 2012, 'The animals... How will our daughters get married now?'

Men are literally called sexual predators while a woman that is raped is described as a mother. This last description is factual but it helps to paint a picture of a woman as a mother of seven children. This adds to the image of a caring motherly figure, far from being a vamp, instead of adhering to the traditional image of an Indian woman.

In the fiend/beast narrative, rapists are portrayed as violent, maniacs, inhuman and/or abnormal. This narrative was, in comparison to the virgin/vamp narrative more present and also more manifest. Rapists are literally called ‘beasts’ in many articles, especially the ones on the DGR. Police officers are quoted calling perpetrators beasts, but journalists themselves also make use of this narrative separately, as the below example shows:

**Delhi gang rape case: Main accused went berserk after victim bit him**

NEW DELHI: Ram Singh, 33, the prime accused in Sunday's gang rape, is a volatile man, known among friends as "Mental," a police source said on Tuesday. During investigation, he is learnt to have told police how he lost control and ended up brutalizing the woman and assaulting her friend.

Then, a police officer is quoted, adding to the offered description of the perpetrator:

"When she resisted and bit his hand, he says, he got very angry. Alcohol and the victims' defiance, made him go berserk. He picked up a rod and hit the two everywhere. His accomplices followed suit," a source said.

The journalist then uses other personal details to strengthen the image of the perpetrator as inhuman and brutal:

Ram Singh reportedly started picking up fights at the slightest pretext after the death of his wife two years ago. There's an accident case registered against him and he has admitted to being involved in several other brawls. He had also run away with a girl in his neighbourhood, sources said.
A police officer said the investigating team led by Inspector Anil Sharma had found Ram Singh a cold and remorseless man. "Initially, he denied everything. But when he began to open up, he chose to divulge each detail, with no repentance. Such brutality does not affect him. He tried to destroy evidence by washing the bus with confidence and told his accomplices to not worry, and lie low for some time. He stayed calm when he went and parked the bus in RK Puram, and then took it back to the owner in Noida. The confidence he shows is not of a novice definitely," the officer said.

It seems that even as the gang was brutalizing the woman by turns, Ram Singh had made a plan to cover their tracks. Sources say Ram Singh decided to strip the victims completely before throwing them out of the bus to leave no trace of incriminating semen or blood. He also kept their mobiles and switched them off. Three mobiles -- one belonging to the woman and two to her friend -- have now been recovered along with some of their clothes.

The article is then concluded with a description of the beastly character of the perpetrator. This narrative is also formed with help of subjective language to describe one of the accused:

Although police were able to arrest him with his employer’s help, Ram Singh showed his shrewd side again by refusing to undergo the test identification parade on Tuesday. – TOI, December 19, 2012

Especially the perpetrators of the DGR are depicted as beasts. Their abnormal background or low class are highlighted as are they literally described as mental, bullies, alcoholics, ‘wayward men’ and ‘a gang of sadists’ (HT, December 1, 2012, Delhi gangrape: rapists tried to run over couple, HT, December 30, 2012, Don’t let her life go to waste). In these, rape myths are already visible, such as ‘rapists are from low class’, ‘rapists are abnormal/inhuman/mentally unsound’ or ‘rapists are drunks/addicts’

As the incident gets more attention in the papers, the descriptions also get wilder, as an excerpt from an article from the Hindustan Times illustrates:

A quarrelsome, evidently frustrated bully by day and a volatile brute enslaved by a fetish for drunken sexual gratification and innate misogyny by night. The Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde trapped inside 33-year-old Ram Singh’s average frame, officers interrogating him said, seem to supplement instead of balancing each other out.

He is known as ‘Mental’ to residents of each home located along the serpentine bylanes of RK Puram’s Ravi Das Camp slum cluster. Singh exhibits absolutely no remorse or guilt for his demonic treatment he meted out to the 23-year-old physiotherapist last Sunday, sources said
In fact, Singh was ferrying impressionable school children for a living on the basis of a driver's licence fraudulently obtained from Rajasthan. Not to mention his deformed arms because of an accident at Andheria More in 2009, and mental make up. Singh has confessed to having physically assaulted even his mother during a bitter quarrel two months ago. [...] “In 2009, Singh had eloped with a married woman from his locality. Whenever his mother would pull him up for it, he would listen without interest during the day before returning heavily drunk. He would wake her up in the middle of the night and quarrel with her,” an officer said, quoting what Singh told police during questioning. – HT, December 21, 2012, Remorseless brute behind rape

The fiend/beast narrative is visible in other coverage as well, mostly in cases that involve abuse and/or murder of a child. For example in this next excerpt, the profession of a butcher adds to a picture of a murderer:

**Butcher arrested for year-long sexual abuse of minor in south Delhi**

[...] According to the police, the girl had delayed reporting the matter as she was scared by the fact that the accused - identified as Tasleem - was a butcher by profession. – HT, July 15, 2014, Butcher arrested for year-long sexual abuse of minor in south Delhi

The fiend/beast narrative is most present and most vividly painted in DGR coverage. In other cases, the narrative is present too, but only in very brutal cases such as abuse and murder of minors. The fiend/beast narrative strongly adds to a picture of rape as special, abnormal or other. By portraying men as beasts and women as vamps, they are made other, giving the public an idea of safety.

Portraying a woman as a seducing figure of vamp and men as beasts is always done with the use of rape myths, representing women as immoral or asking for it.

**8.2 Rape myths**

Next to the virgin/vamp narrative, rape myths were also present. Often, a rape myth constructs the virgin/vamp narrative. However, they are used in two ways. First, they are visible in the traditional sense of the myths as described by Burt (1980). Secondly, in background articles, commentaries and analyses rape myths are actively challenged. In total, 22 different types of myths were distinguished in the sample.

**Table 6 Types of rape myths found in the sample**

<p>| 1 | Women ask for it |</p>
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<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>By dressing a certain way</td>
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<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>By being at the wrong place (at the wrong time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>By being around men</td>
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<tr>
<td>1d</td>
<td>By drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e</td>
<td>By flirting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f</td>
<td>By going out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1g</td>
<td>By traveling with public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1h</td>
<td>By their behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rapists are from low class/rural areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foreigners/migrants are rapists</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Playing video games causes men to rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rapists are inhuman/abnormal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Women lie about rape</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Women cry rape (for revenge)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rapists are vagabonds</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Live-in relationships lead to rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Availability of sedatives leads to rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rape by acquaintances is difficult to prevent/women cannot be raped by acquaintances</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rapists are drunks</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Rape is caused by pop culture</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Rape victims have loose character</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mixed/sex education leads to rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Modern society leads to rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Raping a woman with sexual history/who is married is OK</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Men are entitled to sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Women should keep quiet about sexual violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rape happens in the spur of the moment/when the opportunity is there</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Social inequality leads to rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Women should prevent getting raped themselves</td>
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</table>

By using certain words or phrases rape myths are still visible in the traditional sense. In a few cases, a reporter actively uses rape myths. They are used to portray women as vamps or men as beasts who can’t help raping women. Responsibility for rape is directed towards the woman or the man is protected from responsibility. As HT writes: ‘the usual lethal combination of lust, machismo, alcohol, drugs and bad judgment, causes rape’ (HT, July 2, 2014, In a rage that will erupt). Indian men are said to suffer from harsh life circumstances or lack education and as a result, turn to sexual violence:

*Despite exceptions, the average Indian woman is bound by the ropes of what is considered tradition. The male continues to be superior, born to be pampered and placed from birth on a pedestal, from where he can only look down at women - many of whom unfortunately placed him there. This kind of conditioning leads only to disrespect for a woman, a feeling that a woman can easily be put in her*
place. It takes only a moment of either madness or opportunity for men of deviant mind to cross the thin line to harassment or rape. – HT, December 19, 2013, Women are the lesser partners

Rapid urbanisation and migration have also been blamed for the increase in crimes. The economic stagnation of rural India has meant that more people are migrating to cities in hope of a better future. But without any particular skill set and education, they find their future as dark as ever. And, these young men, who have no hope for a comfortable future, often indulge in violence, especially against women. – HT, January 15, 2014, Attacks on women haven’t decreased despite tougher laws

Writing about raped women as ‘allegedly raped’ leaves room for the thought that they lie about rape. Headlines such as ‘Woman cries rape, one held’ and ‘DU student cries rape by friend’, imply directly that women lie about rape, as does putting rape into brackets, suggesting it did not happen. This is strengthened by articles about false rape charges and blaming men’s behaviour on their circumstances. The next example shows how a Russian tourist is portrayed as claiming rape falsely, lying and not willing to undergo a medical examination that is generally seen as proof of rape.

NEW DELHI: A major drama took place in north Delhi when a Russian woman alleged being gang-rape

by five men and then retracted her statement after being asked by the police to undergo a medical test.

Civil Lines police said that the woman, a native of Moscow, said that she was going to her rented accommodation in Majnu Ka Tilla on Saturday night with her partner when the five men raped her at a secluded place. However, by Sunday afternoon, after a five-hour long counselling session, she decided not to pursue the case.

Notice how the author uses the word ‘even’ and ‘in fact’ to underline the severity of the case:

The woman approached the cops on Sunday morning and even alleged that when her partner tried to save her, he was thrashed by the accused. As the case involved a foreign national, the joint commissioner of police and DCP of the area reached there. When cops asked her to undergo a medical examination to determine rape, she refused. In fact, she tried to flee from the police station and had to be stopped by women constables.
– TOI, July 9, 2012 – Russian alleges gangrape, then backtracks

Next to these practices, women are the actors in the articles. They are the ones who claim to be raped, accuse men of rape, claim rapes falsely or behaved in such a way that it seemed a logical outcome to be raped, while men are the real actors. They rape, the woman gets raped. However, getting raped is the act that is focused on, implying responsibility for rape lies with the one who gets raped. Interestingly, this practice is absent in coverage on the DGR. The victims are the ones that are
passive here, with the perpetrators being the actors. This reverses the roles as they normally are and puts the responsibility of the rape with the perpetrators.

Furthermore, rape myths serve to picture the rapist and victim as the other. Rapists are described as beasts, without mercy, as drunks, and vagabonds. Victims ask for it. Both parties are far from the Indian ideal where men work hard, treat women with respect and women only move and behave within the boundaries that are set for them. This leads to the idea that when behaving correctly, rape does not happen to you. This is the classic pitfall of rape coverage, in which rape is misrepresented.

**Challenging rape myths**

Reporters seem to know that certain notions about men, women, and sexual violence exist in society and attack these notions when used by politicians, or they write background stories to shed light on these ideologies. The existence of rape myths about men and women in Indian society is actively challenged in these articles.

*The society too needs to do its bit. It should understand that the girl's clothing and lifestyle had nothing to do with her being raped and that she needs their assistance.* – HT, December 22, 2012,

Provide support to victim - financially and emotionally

*In present circumstances, we find that it is mostly the victim, rather than the culprit, who faces social stigma. [...] Most of them believe that the woman was at fault.* – HT, December 22, 2012, The mindset of people needs to be changed

*The two-finger test, in which a doctor inserts two fingers into a woman's genital tract to determine whether sexual activity has taken place, has been criticised both because it underlines stereotypes of rape victims as being of loose character and because it piles further indignity on the woman.* – HT, January 12, 2013, SC says Delhi unsafe, seeks govt view on two-finger test

When sources, mostly politicians, do make statements that contain manifest rape myths, journalists openly contest them. These uses of rape myths show that journalists are aware of these ideas in society, their effects and are willing to go against them. The media, therefore, are in favor of freeing the woman from guilt and putting the responsibility with men again. Unfortunately, their unconscious practices in writing rape reports seem to undermine these efforts.

**8.3 Being the actor: shifting the blame**
As Clark, (1992) describes, often the blame for being raped is conveyed to the victim in rape reports. Looking on word-level at rape reports TOI and HT shows that both papers write about victims and perpetrators in such a way that responsibility for rape is also put on the victim.

First of all, the papers use euphemisms in describing sexual violence. This is either because their sources talk about rape this way or because Indian law itself uses these words to point to sexual violence. This is the case when the papers talk of ‘outraging the modesty of a woman’ or quote politicians who talk about ‘rowdiness’, ‘bullying’, ‘indignities’ and ‘misbehaviour’ when referring to sexual violence. This could be seen as downplaying the severity of the incident by using euphemisms in describing sexual crimes, but in this context, that is not always the case.

However, the newspapers do downplay the severity of the crimes or imply that women are lying by talking about ‘harassment’ with which rape is meant, or put rape into brackets, suggesting untruth:

“6 years on, ‘rape’ victim awaits justice” - TOI, December 26, 2012
5-year-old 'sexually abused' at school – TOI, January 12, 2013

Another important aspect of rape reporting that was already mentioned is the presentation of rape. In almost all articles, the writer makes sure he or she does not present a rape as a given, but instead portrays the woman involved as claiming, alleging and accusing. Without exception, a woman alleges that she is raped. She is only raped when a (male) judge or doctor says so. The following fragment of a rape report illustrates this:

**Woman alleges gang rape over job promise**

*New Delhi, June 22 -- A 22-year-old woman has alleged that she was repeatedly raped by two men over two months on the pretext of being provided a job, the police said on Saturday.*

Then, the story continues with the woman claiming. This is stressed by the quoted police officer, who also speaks of alleging and all sentences following in which nothing is presented as a fact.

*Police said the woman has claimed that she was first sexually assaulted in a car near Ashoka Hotel in south Delhi’s Chanakyapuri on April 25. This was followed by another instance of sexual assault at north Delhi. A case was registered at the Chanakyapuri police station on Thursday. The accused duo, identified as Panchal and Monil, are yet to be arrested.*

“In her complaint, the woman has alleged that she knew both the accused for the past one year. All of them, including the complainant, are residents of Hindon Vihar in Ghaziabad,” said a senior police
officer. The police said that the woman has alleged that the duo claimed to fix a job interview in the Capital on April 25 for her and asked her to accompany them to the Ashoka Hotel. At the hotel, the woman has claimed, she was offered a cold drink apparently laced with sedatives. “She lost consciousness after having allegedly consuming the drink which Panchal and Monil gave her. The men then allegedly took turns to rape her. [...]”

The article is concluded with the public being informed that the woman did not undergo a medical examination, which strengthens the possibility she is lying:

A case was registered on Thursday, but she refused to undergo medical examination. The woman also recorded her statement in a local court on Friday. HT, June 22, 2014, Woman alleges gang rape over job promise

TOI uses the same practice:

The girl who was rescued from the clutches of a conductor in a cluster bus on Friday night was raped at home by her brother. She made this sensational claim while recording her statement on Sunday – TOI, January 1, 2013, Rescued girl says brother raped her

As Clark (1992) describes it is important to look at who is the agent in a rape report, on a textual level. Often, not the perpetrator is the agent but the victim is. She gets the active role, in accusing the man of raping her, asking for it, or is portrayed as falsely claiming rape. This victimizes the perpetrator and takes the attention away from the victim of the crime. The use of ‘allegedly/alleging/alleged/alleged’ or ‘accuses’ also underlines this way of portraying victim and perpetrator. This always implicates that there is a subtle possibility the victim is lying about a rape and falsely accusing a man. This is taken further when the papers report false rape claims, in which the ‘women lie about rape’ myth becomes reality.

Other noteworthy instances are when a rape case becomes a side-issue. This happens on several occasions. In one case, the perpetrator commits suicide, which instantly becomes the focus of reports that relate to this case. Thereby the focus moves away from the sexual crime. In reporting the DGR, a highly placed police officer dies, which is also treated as a ‘spin off’ in the DGR case. Five articles are dedicated to the death of this officer.

In most common cases that are reported, the woman has an active role that adds to the idea that women lie about rape while the responsibility is put on her and the perpetrator stays out of sight. As already noted above, in coverage on the DGR, the position of victim and perpetrator are more balanced. The actions of the perpetrators are described in detail and they are called to account. However, compared to regular rape reports, this is an exception.
8.4 A shift to the collective

8.4.1 Battle and heroine discourse

The discourses following point toward a change in attitudes towards rape. As Bathla (1998) describes, rape is mostly the problem of the individual, the raped woman. However, several narratives that were used in covering the DGR turn this attitude in a more collective one:

1. Battle and heroine discourse
2. Shame discourse
3. Nationalism

The battle and heroine discourse are especially used in coverage on the DGR. From the beginning of reporting the DGR, journalists use this storyline. This narrative is important because it is omnipresent in the sample while also being an important pointer for power relations in both papers. The narrative is used on several occasions by both newspapers and consists of several parts. First of all, the victim of the DGR is ‘battling’, ‘fighting’ or ‘struggling’ for life in the hospital. She is portrayed as a heroine, fighting off the men who raped her. Doctors are quoted saying they have never met a rape victim that was attacked so viciously yet being so ‘brave’ and eager to help solve the crime. She is called a fighter, courageous, a brave girl and ‘Delhi’s braveheart’ in the coverage of the investigation and her medical condition. Doctors are ‘waging a war’ to save her from dying. Examples below show the different ways the battle narrative is visible:

*The assault wrecked her body but has left her spirit tightly coiled. Her survival so far has depended on emergency operations, blood transfusions, and ventilator support, but in her wakeful moments -- even when doses with morphine -- Nirbhaya has never lacked clarity of mind, or a sense of purpose.* – TOI, December 27, 2012, Delhi gang rape: Attack didn’t kill victim's fighting spirit

*Nirbhaya is fighting two battles, one for life and the other for justice. Hopefully, her mental coil spring will let her win both.* - TOI, December 27, 2012, Delhi gang rape: Attack didn’t kill victim's fighting spirit

After the victim dies, her family continues to ‘battle’ for her justice in the trial. While the victim is in the hospital, protests against violence against women and the way the police handles this in India emerge all over the country. The government tries to keep the situation under control by suppressing the protests. Both newspapers use the battle discourse for the protests as well. The protesters are battling the cops, battling the government and fight against patriarchal notions on women’s rights. The places where the protests are held are also pictured as battlegrounds or warzones.
Central Delhi was a fortress, barricaded against public anger - over the gangrape of a 23-year-old woman, a "highhanded" police and an "indifferent government". Police barriers sprung up overnight at several points to guard weekend’s warzones of India Gate, Raisina Hill and Vijay Chowk, where protesters, who Monday shifted base to Jantar Mantar, had clashed with the police. – HT, December 24, 2012, Govt’s answer: Shut Delhi down

Soon, India Gate was resembling a battleground with fires burning here and there, water on the ground and smoke in the air. But blood and bruises didn't deter the protesters and some of them were back at India Gate by nightfall, setting the stage for another day of uncertainty and confrontation on Monday. – TOI, December 24, 2012 (Delhi gang rape: The people are at the gate)

The next fragment shows how the narrative is transferred from the victim to the people of India. After the death of the victim on the 31st of December, the Hindustan Times writes:

After battling for 13 days, the 23-year-old gangrape victim died in a Singapore hospital. But our fight is not over yet. Time has come to take strict measures to make the city safer for women so that no girl goes through that trauma again. Hindustan Times shows the way. – HT, December 31, 2012 (Making Delhi safer: The way forward)

The battle of the victim becomes a national cause. Notice how the reporter talks about ‘our fight’ in relation to the victim and measures to be taken against sexual violence.

The battle discourse is also used in other cases, but only in those that cause some uproar. In reporting ‘common’ cases that don’t get follow ups or gain lasting attention this narrative is not used. A possible cause could be that short news articles are not eligible for the use of metaphorical language. Factual news reports on rape incidents do not mention a victim ‘battling’ in any way. Only when there is some form of emotionality in a story, the narrative is used. For instance, in the 2013 Gandhi Nagar case, in which a 5-year old was gang raped, similar wordings are used by TOI (Times of India, June 23, 2013, Week on, 5-year-old Gurgaon rape victim has no government support). Last, the narrative is also used to describe difficulties in the legal system, when victims are battling for justice.

Looking at the different uses of this narrative shows interesting links. The newspapers side with the victim and the protesters, sometimes giving their own opinion on what the government should do about rape problems. All the while, the paper distances itself from the perpetrators (of the DGR) and the government. The victim and the protesters are tied together by the same battle discourse which strengthens the feeling of victim-protesters-newspaper against the perpetrators, police, and government. As HT writes: As long as you keep blaming women for rape and for raising their voice against sexual harassment, you’re playing on the rapists’ team. (HT, December 16, 2013,
We are not any safer or freer.) Also, as the above example shows, in the case of the DGR, rape becomes a collective problem instead of an individual one. The next discourse found, on shame, adds to this movement.

8.4.2 Shame discourse

As Benedict (1992) writes, sexual violence and rape are often accompanied by narratives of shame. As shame and honor are important societal values in India, shame thus was an important pointer in conducting the CDA. Also, Rao observes that shame plays an important role in covering rape. As chastity and dignity are tightly connected to rape, as a violation of chastity and dignity, women are depicted as being shamed, for instance hiding themselves or their faces in TV coverage (Rao, 2014).

In several articles, shame is literally subject of the publication or is mentioned in the headlines. Three days after the DGR, HT publishes an article with this headline: More shame: 3-year-old raped in playschool (HT, December 19, 2012). More often, shame is talked about implicitly. In many articles that report a rape or discuss rape as a societal issue, journalists speak of (in)dignity. Molesting or raping a woman is described as violating her dignity and rape, in general, is also referred to as such. Also, saving lives and saving the dignity of women is given a lot of weight in articles that discuss measures against sexual violence.

The chief minister said a massive public awareness campaign will soon be launched on safeguarding the dignity and safety of women in the city. The country's top court on Friday expressed its concern about safety in Delhi, with specific reference to incidents of rape, and asked the Centre to respond to a plea seeking to protect the dignity of sexual assault victims. – HT, January 12, 2013, SC says Delhi unsafe, seeks govt view on two-finger test

The stigma that is attached to rape also points to shame and honor surrounding sex and sexual violence. This is addressed by the Hindustan Times by pointing out the stigma that follows going to the police after a rape and the damaged honor of a family when daughters are molested or raped. As HT writes:

In present circumstances, we find that it is mostly the victim, rather than the culprit, who faces social stigma. HT, December 21, 2012, End stigma attached to rape

The mindset of people needs to change. Most of them believe that the woman was at fault. They should not cast aspersions on the character of the woman but should ensure she is able to fight her battle with dignity. HT, December 22, 2012, The mindset of the people needs to change
A patriarchal culture where "a woman is seen as a source who can bring potential shame to the family," is responsible, says Nirmala Venkatesh, former member of National Commission of Women. (December 22, 2012, A wounded nation seeks answers).

Here, it is also visible that the paper goes against rape myths. HT addresses deeper lying issues more than TOI does. With regard to the perpetrators, shame is used in a very different light. They are the ones who need to be ashamed and have shamed the country:

Vice-president Hamid Ansari on Monday said last month’s brutal gang rape of a 23-year-old student in the capital made people of the country hang their heads in shame. – HT, January 8, 2013, Anger over incident justified: Ansari

On a cold winter night, exactly a year ago, six desperadoes defiled the sanctity of a bright young girl on the threshold of a promising life and career. The relentless fury and outrage that followed shook the nation out of its slumber. [...] The shame: in a country where goddesses are worshipped the most, women are respected the least; treated like a play thing by the juvenile, the youth and the old alike.— HT, December 16, 2013, Rape cases can conclude in 2 months

Interestingly, shame is in no way converted to the victim of the DGR. Instead, it becomes a problem of society, something the country should be ashamed about. In this light, rape and the shame that accompanies it becomes a collective problem. This shows again that reports on the DGR go against old, stereotypical practices in rape reporting.

8.4.3 Nationalism

As seen above, the shame discourse and the battle and heroine discourse are already intertwined with rape becoming a national problem. Nationalism was one focus of both newspapers that was also widely present in coverage on the DGR. Both newspapers, especially the Hindustan Times see the DGR as an incident that brings shame to the whole of India. The cause of rape becomes, even more, a societal issue instead of just a crime towards a young woman. The discourse seems to be a result of the outcry over the events surrounding the DGR but also add to the uproar. The newspapers, especially HT, describe the whole nation as upset and ready to end rape, with headlines and fragments such as:

Hang them! Demands India HT, December 19, 2013

If movements have triggers, the gang rape of a girl in a moving bus - an unnamed 23-year-old who battles against the odds to live - has become a symbol of crimes against women in the country and
has forced a pained and anguished nation to seek answers. But despite the heated exchanges between citizen and state, between political parties, between friends and colleagues or in the home, there is no doubt that now is the time to act. India has had enough. - HT, December, 22, A wounded nation seeks answers

Even as the nation continues to be outraged over the brutal rape and murder of a 23-year-old in the Capital, police chiefs and chief secretaries of a states such as Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have voiced approval of death penalty for rapists though a clear consensus on the issue continued to elude.
– HT, January 5, 2013, No unity on death for rapists

The young woman whose rape and torture by six hoodlums on a Delhi bus shook a nation’s conscience died early on Saturday, triggering a wave of grief and declarations of resolve not to let her loss go in vain.

Just as her 13-day struggle to live again had united a nation in its anguish and outrage against sex crimes, culminating last weekend in pitched battles between public protesters and police in the capital, her death on Saturday intensified the campaign for the dignity of women in this country of 1.2 billion people, where a rape is reported every 22 minutes.

Condoling her death, President Pranab Mukherjee described the victim as the daughter of the nation.– HT, December 29, 2012, Wake up India. 23-year-old Delhi gangrape victim is dead

The victim is called ‘India’s daughter’ and seen as ‘the symbol of a nation’s anger’:

Apart from expressing grief for India’s daughter who has departed, the common theme of mourners, men and women, in various parts of the country was one: change in the criminal justice system to book rapists. – HT, December 30, 2012, Nation demands change in rape laws

In the 10 days that the country has known Nirbhaya, she has emerged as a mentally strong, responsible and courageous person. Even before she became the symbol of a nation’s anger, she had symbolized hope for her family. Her father, a man of modest means, was counting on her help to educate his two other children as she had a bright future ahead as a physiotherapist. - TOI,
December 27, 2012, Delhi gang rape: Attack didn’t kill victim’s fighting spirit

Again, only in coverage on the DGR, this narrative is visible. This shows again that the DGR was a media event that temporarily altered the intensity of and the strategy for rape reporting.

8.5 Narratives of power
As described in chapter 5, discourses are excellent pointers for power struggles. It is, therefore, no surprise that in the found discourses several power narratives are visible. As described above, in the
battle narrative victims, newspapers and protesters are opposed to perpetrators, the government, and the police. This is one power relation that becomes clear. Secondly, modernization is an issue. A new India is opposed to ‘old India’. As can be seen in the next fragment, new India or ‘Young India’ is associated with new values that promote equality between men and women. The papers gladly side with this movement in society:

_But far from dousing the popular anger, the water cannons served to multiply the outrage._

_On television and social media, near office watercoolers and at street corners across the nation, people wondered if the government was competent to deal with citizens' protests, and if it was in touch with Young India at all._ – HT, December 23, 2012, Welcome to Raisina Hell

_Empathy was extensively on display in the closing weeks of 2012, when unaffiliated young people marched the streets of the national capital, in anguish and rage. It was an extraordinary moment in our public life, a sudden burst of light. Collectively, for a brief moment, we cared together. That instant, when we felt acutely the pain of another innocent, savaged human being, drove us to seek justice._ – HT, January 14, 2013, Let’s reach out in time

On the one hand, modernization is associated with a new attitude against women, but at the same time modernity also is seen to worsen sexual violence. This leads to a double-sided view on modernity. Modern society is said to bring up men that are unable to deal with their emotions and the temptations of modern living, leading to more sexual violence (HT, December 23, 2012, Emotional vacuum aids crime). While these articles try to find an explanation for rising sexual violence they grip back onto rape myths to do so, as modern society is blamed for rapist’s behaviour and their responsibility is put on external factors.

Another power struggle that is related to modernization is that of Indians vs. migrants. Modernization causes urbanisation and migration, according to HT (January 15, 2014, Attacks on women haven’t decreased despite tougher laws), which in turn leads to unemployed men who are said to ‘indulge in violence, especially against women’. Another _expected_ power narrative would be that of caste and class. However, these themes are only present sporadically. Only two articles in the Hindustan Times mention the hardship for women in slums and homeless women who are sexually abused (HT, January 13, 2013, Why one's social class decides her safety entitlement in Delhi, HT, January 14, 2013, Let’s reach out in time).

Last, the papers also stand up against the image that is created in Western media. The DGR was not only covered in India but also by European media outlets as the British newspaper the Guardian and the New York Times. TOI writes that these papers did not portray the events correctly,
portraying India as backward with regard to women’s rights and as a patriarchal society. In response, HT argues that modernity brings objectification of women. Here is it visible that the Western world is seen as technologically advancing but as a result thereof also morally deteriorating. Modern society is, according to HT and TOI, no guarantee for a society without sexual violence. Instead, HT pleads for reinterpreting Indian values in a modernizing world.

### 8.6 Role of the newspapers

In use of the battle narrative, the battle is not only the victims’ fight but also becomes the battle of the newspaper and its public. Both newspapers use the DGR as an opportunity to strengthen their identity and to position themselves on sexual violence. The Hindustan Times ascribes itself an important role in suggesting measures to prevent rape, which the Times of India does as well, next to giving the victim the symbolic name ‘Nirbhaya’. Specifically after the DGR, the TOI published several long articles (over 1500 words) that look at rape in-depth in which the last paragraphs are devoted to the Times’ View. In these, the chief editors give their opinion about rape problems, criticize the government and suggest measures against sexual crimes. Below, an excerpt of a Times’ View article is shown. In the first paragraph, the positioning of the newspaper with the victim and protesters is clearly visible, pleading for a society safe for women. Notice the use of ‘we’ when talking about taking measures, the opposition between old and new Indian values and use of the battle narrative.

*Times View*

*Channel this anger to secure real changes*

*Over the last five days, thousands of people, largely young girls and boys, have turned up on the streets of Delhi and other cities to express their anger at the gang rape of a 23-year-old in a moving bus last Sunday. They have braved lathicharges, tear gas and water cannons to register their rage. Their message is clear: this kind of crime against women will not be tolerated.*

*However, this is time to give the people’s movement greater relevance by thinking how this unprecedented energy can be channelized to secure more effective and durable outcomes. If we do not seize this opportunity to force some fundamental changes in the way our women are treated by officialdom, hoodlums and society at large, it would be a pity, and indeed, a fantastic opportunity lost.*

*What do we want? That calls for clear thinking informed by a firm conviction that women deserve and must be given respect. Justice in this particular case is a must, but not enough. We must demand much more. The goal must be to create an overall environment in which women feel safe and comfortable.*

- Times of India, December 23, 2012 (Delhi gang rape: Protesters refuse to beat retreat at Vijay Chowk)
In the rest of this article, the Times offers different solutions and also takes a stand against the use of euphemisms that downplay sexual violence (TOI, December 23, 2012, Delhi gang rape: Protesters refuse to beat retreat at Vijay Chowk).

Sometimes the newspapers actively stand up for a victim of rape (Artikel 401 (rape accused get to take a bath). Regularly, the newspaper sides with a victim by subjectively reporting what happened:

*The offenders were brazen, almost arrogant, about their act. They lifted their victim from the street from a well-inhabited part of south Delhi around 9.15 pm. They nonchalantly drove through the streets in the bus crossing three police pickets.* – TOI, December 20, 2012 – Victims need visible support.

HT also shows its commitment to the cause by starting a series of critical articles, called ‘HT for Delhi’:

*Bringing about effective policing is the first in our five-point campaign (details on Page 2) beginning today for a safer Delhi and NCR for women. As part of our ‘HT For Delhi’ series, we will strike hard at issues, hold authorities responsible, and try to bring positive change. We begin with a demand to downsize - not do away with - the number of cops set aside for often-wasteful VIP duty.* – HT, December 20, 2012, Dear VIP, instead of shedding tears for Delhi's rape victim on TV, shed your inflated security.

Some articles end with a few lines that suddenly disclose the opinion of the writer, such as the following in an article of December 26th in the TOI. First, the author sketches a fairly balanced image of male protesters and ends the story with a personal statement:

*... Who is responsible? Why did this happen? Why does this keep on happening? What next? Their questions are incessant. There are no easy answers. But perhaps raising the right questions is what really matters.* – TOI, December 26, 2012 - Who are the men at the gang rape protests in Delhi?

The TOI also ascribes a certain role to itself during reporting the DGR. First of all, the paper gave the victim of the DGR a symbolic name: Nirbhaya (meaning: fearless). Also, in the Times View, the paper suggests several measures to curb violence against women. In an article from January 4th, the paper suggests that the taken measures by the government are partly due to the attention the paper gave to the issue as does HT a few days earlier (TOI, January 4, 2013, All 180 police stations in Delhi to have women cops round the clock, HT, December 30, 2012, Don’t let her life go to waste).
The government then places restrictions on the media in reporting the DGR. Details that are normally available for publishing are now forbidden to put in print. The papers both inform the public about these measures and again stress the importance of their role in the case:

*A Delhi court order imposing a ban on reporting the gang rape case proceedings is pointless and an unreasonable restriction on the media. [...] Once again, it brings to the fore the tussle between people’s right to know and the rationale behind imposing restrictions on the media, particularly in a case that has led to a national outcry and has evoked unprecedented interest worldwide.* – HT, January 8, 2013, Why restriction on media is not justified

*Systematic rape and sexual assault happens because of societal indifference. Apathy is a vector. Sustained media advocacy can turn the tide. The media has underestimated its own power of prevention and finds itself between an information glut of its own making and a power gap that it does not understand or pretends not to. [...] The media can enable informed dialogue, not provide solutions. It can shift the debate from person to people, question professional control of information by demystifying it. Homework and leg work is their backbone.* – HT, January 16, 2013, Cut across all verbal taboos

Only in covering the DGR, both papers use these strategies to position themselves. This shows again the exceptionality of the case and strengthens the image of the DGR as a media event.

**8.7 A longitudinal view: gender issues**

In the preceding chapter, it became clear that the DGR lead to the publication of more articles that provided background information on both the incident and rape in India in general. The position of women in the country is addressed in several articles, although it is mostly a side-issue. This issue is highlighted the most when journalists use protesters as their sources. Both newspapers do not address these issues directly by writing articles on the subject of women’s rights, but only mention them if their sources do. However, HT mentions the changes in society that were caused by the DGR and the subsequent events a year after the incident:

*Another thing that the December 16 gang rape and the subsequent protests seem to have changed is the time and thought that media is now giving to the coverage of sexual violence.* – HT, December 16, 2013, ‘Nothing has changed since. Streets aren’t safe for girls, neither are homes

*But a few things have changed since a 23-year-old physiotherapist suffered the unimaginable on December 16 last year. Violence against women is no longer an academic discussion or a topic for TV debate. It is part of the mass discourse, something the political class cannot afford to ignore. Sufferers
and their families are coming out in increasing numbers to lodge complaints and demand justice. – HT, December 16, 2013, Safety is only a promise till Delhi gets basics right

On the long run, both papers do pay more attention to deeper lying issues but Drache and Velagic (2013) are right in stating that there is room for improvement. Whereas both papers publish a wider variation of genres in rape articles and include more analyses and background articles, the causes for rape are sought in external factors. Responsibility for rape issues is sometimes still put on women, on the government, on infrastructure but not on men and ideological notions that keep women subordinate to men and enhance (sexual) violence against them. Until India is ready to acknowledge and discuss the roots of rape problems openly, women will still encounter sexual violence on a very regular basis.

8.8 Conclusion
The CDA yielded ten different themes from the sample. Three of these are classic discourses in rape coverage: the use of the virgin/vamp narrative, rape myths and blaming the victim. Other themes show a shift in the attitude towards rape. Rape becomes a collective problem instead of an individual one, in which it moves away from the typical attitude Bathla (1987) described. The virgin/vamp narrative is mostly present in a latent fashion instead of a manifest one. Reporters use a lot of detail, which leads regularly to depictions that fit Benedict’s virgin/vamp narrative. A virgin is always placed against a fiend/beast, as Benedict (1992) described. In the case of the DGR, this becomes extra visible. Whereas normally a rape victim is subject to blame, the victims of the DGR are not. They are depicted as virgins, whereas the perpetrators are literally called beasts. Nothing is said about the victims being able to prevent what happened to them. Both newspapers, especially HT, use vivid and explicit descriptions of the perpetrators.

Rape myths construct the virgin/vamp narrative to a large extent. Rape myths are used both explicitly and latent, sometimes on purpose, sometimes seemingly unconsciously. They often lead to blaming the woman for rape. Men are protected from taking responsibility as external factors are blamed for rapists’ actions. Both papers make the woman the acting figure in articles. She is the one who alleges rape, accuses a man, behaves in such a way she asks for it or she lies about rape. The man becomes the object, subject to the (seducing) woman. However, in coverage on the DGR, this is more balanced. Use of these narratives and practices contributes to a distorted picture of rape as Walby et al. and Heath describe (Heath et al, 1981; Walby, et al., 1983). Both rapist and victim are described as the other, which gives the public the idea that rape will not happen to them, that rape will not happen if one behaves correctly.
Next to these three discourses, another three came up. They represent a shift to the collective with regard to rape. The battle/heroine discourse, shame discourse, and nationalism discourse all point to a shift in attitude towards rape and also show the extraordinary nature of the DGR case again. The battle/heroine discourse describes both victims of the DGR as heroes. It is also used to describe the difficulties the victim endures in the hospital. At the same time, people protesting in India against sexual violence are also portrayed as taking part in a battle. Analysing this discourse leads to an overview of all parties involved. On the one side, the papers side with the victim and the protesters. They are opposed to the government, the perpetrators, and the police.

The shame/dignity discourse breaks with the observations of Bathla, who stated that rape is seen as an individual problem instead of a collective one. This is still true for small ‘common’ cases. However, in the case of the DGR, issues on rape and sexual violence suddenly become a reason for shame for the whole country. Shame is an important factor in other articles as well. It points to the heavy taboo that is attached to sex and sexual violence. This discourse, therefore, plays a double role, partly being overthrown and at the same time still firmly in place. National shame is stressed by the third discourse found, that of nationalism. The papers stress the collectivism of the ‘battle’ against rape and the shame that accompanies it. This discourse thus also serves the other preceding two.

In the discourses described above, power plays a large role. The opposition between the parties described entails a power struggle. This is also visible in other oppositions that emerge from the analysis. Modernization is used to either explain reasons for rising sexual violence but also stands for new morals that should lead to fewer rape incidents. The nationalism discourse works through in the sense that migrants are sometimes blamed for sexual violence. Furthermore, media in India are opposed to Western media who are said to paint a distorted picture of India with regard to rape.

Both newspapers take on the DGR as a media event, an opportunity to position themselves at the right side, while stressing their own importance in informing about rape issues and solving them. This is visible in the way both newspapers suggest measures against rape and the number of editorials and personal statements that are published. This again stressed the importance of the DGR for both papers. It is safe to say that the DGR indeed changed rape reporting for HT and TOI at the time and on the long run.
Chapter 9. Conclusion

This study has focused on the reporting of rape before, during and after the Delhi Gang Rape incident in two Indian English-language dailies and the discourses are present in this coverage. It sought to dismiss or confirm earlier claims made about rape coverage on the DGR and to extend vision further into the future by looking at developments over a three-year time period. The central research question posed in this study was:

**How is rape reported before, during and after the Delhi Gang Rape incident in two Indian English-language dailies and what discourses are present in the coverage?**

In short, the DGR sparked extensive coverage on this case and other rape cases. Genres and topics diversified and both papers offered more background information, although temporarily. Sensationalism intensifies in the aftermath of the DGR. Sexualized reports make up a significant portion of this kind of coverage. Also, several discourses were found. They either adhere to the known practices that lead to misrepresentation of rape (use of the virgin/vamp narrative, rape myths), show that the DGR was an outstanding case (battle/heroine discourse) and show that attitudes towards rape are slowly changing (nationalism, shame discourse).

As became clear in the description of existing ideas on rape coverage in the media, reporting rape generally does not lead to a balanced and trustworthy representation in the media. Newspapers and other media outlets portray rape as a crime that happens in dark alleys at knifepoint, to women who are careless and promiscuous. Rape is something that happens to the other person, someone who does not adhere to the picture of a decent woman or benevolent man in society. Furthermore, rape is treated as a selling vehicle and rape coverage is constructed into ‘soft pornography packages’ (Walby, et al., 1983). These stereotypes are often created with the (unintentional) use of rape myths as described by Burt (1980) and women are described as virgins or vamps, attacked by beastlike men or seducing innocent men, as described by Benedict (1992).

The characteristics of rape reporting before, during and after the Delhi Gang Rape partly adhere to this general form of rape reports. Most of the characteristics that were expected were present in the sample, although mostly latent and not as manifest as the literature suggests. The virgin and vamp narrative is present, rape myths are used and rape is always almost presented as a form of stranger rape or real rape, whereas compared to this, coverage on acquaintance rape is almost absent. As a result of this, the public is not properly informed about rape as it happens in reality. However, as Drache and Velagic (2013) already argue in their research, the DGR is a watershed moment in rape coverage in these two Indian newspapers and has led to important
(temporary) changes. The content analysis in the current research confirms their findings: the DGR led to more rape reports during the time of the accident and the two months thereafter and a general increase in attention for rape issues. Also, the number of article topics and genres diversified, giving a broader perspective on rape. Next to news articles, the Times of India and the Hindustan Times both published more background information, opinionated articles, and analyses. Compared to before the Delhi Gang Rape, this led to more attention for background issues underlying rape issues and gender inequality in India. However, the amount of background information and the depth of the publications could improve, as the possible deeper lying causes for rape, gender inequality in India and the position of women are rarely addressed, if at all.

Sensationalism is still present in the coverage. In terms of numbers, the amount of sensationalism does not increase with the appearance of more background articles. This goes against the findings of Drache and Velagic (2013) on sensationalism. However, the depth and nature of sensationalistic content alters and increases. Journalists provide very emotional and detailed accounts of the DGR incidents compared to coverage before and after the incident. It is debatable whether the attention for rape in both papers has anything to do with a motive for informing the public. Rape carries all aspects of titillating coverage with crime and sex being the main ingredients. Therefore, it is probable that the increase in rape reports is driven by market goals. Sexualised reports are an important part of this. While sexualisation in overt ways is only present in 5,7% of the sample, the papers do craft stories out of rape reports that carry a sexualised tone. While these articles fell out of the CA analysis and sexualisation count, there are many more articles that try to draw the reader in with explicit details which accentuate the sexual aspect of rape coverage. This takes attention away from underlying issues or the severity of the crime and puts the mind of the reader at stories about relationships that went wrong and sexual promiscuity that led to rape. These practices also reinforce rape myths.

Results of the CDA also point towards the watershed moment Drache and Velagic (2013) talk about. Some practices in rape reporting suddenly change. Whereas victims of rape are normally viewed upon with some scepticism, the victims of the DGR are depicted as virgins, adhering to the Indian ideal of young, ambitious people simply being at the wrong place at the wrong time instead of ‘asking for it’. It is never implied they are to blame for the crime. The regular pattern of reporting is somewhat altered to free both victims of any form of responsibility. Instead, the perpetrators are depicted as beasts, adhering strongly to the fiend/beast narrative that almost always accompanies the virgin narrative. Also, contrary to regular rape reporting the perpetrators are the acting figures. Their acts are described (in detail), the victims are the passive party. This leads to an inversion of the
general practice to infer blame on the victim of rape. Furthermore, three other discourses are visible that are new or break with old practices. The newspapers take the DGR on to position themselves in the debate on rape by siding with the victims, against the perpetrators. They use a battle narrative to describe the difficulties the victims have, but also to picture the protests in India. This leads to an opposition between newspaper, victims and protesters vs. the government, perpetrators, and the police. This is not seen in coverage of other cases.

However, when looking at discourses that are present in cases other than the DGR, it becomes clear that several practices lead to misrepresentation of rape. For instance, the virgin/camp/beast narrative is used often in the traditional sense as Benedict (1992) described it. It serves to picture rape as real rape, as something that happens to the other. Victims and rapists are always others, in the sense that they are behaving outside the moral framework of society and do not adhere to acceptable societal norms. Women are promiscuous or asking for it, men are very violent, they are depicted as wayward, hobos, alcoholics or drug abusers. In coverage on the DGR, rape myths are not present but in other coverage, latent forms of rape myths are to be found. Interestingly, both papers operate on two levels. A certain amount of articles, especially commentaries and opinionated pieces, go against notions that carry rape myths. However, in other, often incident-related, reports, underlying ideas that carry rape myths are visible. On the conscious level, both papers try to deconstruct these notions but it is clear that rape myths still operate on the level of the unconscious.

This is consistent with findings of Rao, who stated that shame culture is both countered and perpetuated by Indian (TV) media. (Rao 2014: 153) Blaming the victim is also a practice that is visible in the sample. The woman is almost always the acting subject in articles, in which she alleges and accuses of rape, lies about it or behaves in such a way that rape was ‘inevitable’. The man is almost always the object that is not given any responsibility. When both papers try to explain reasons for rape they point to external factors that were at play, not to the moral standard and responsibility of men. This is in line with the observations of Walby, et al., who define this as ‘loss of control’ in their analysis of sexual violence in the news (Walby, et al., 1983).

Also, shame and dignity play an important role, as does nationalism. All of these discourses point to a shift in attitude towards rape. Whereas it was always the problem (and responsibility) of the raped woman, rape now becomes a crime for which the whole nation should be ashamed. Shame is conveyed from the individual to the collective, which seems to be promising in terms of the attitude towards rape. When the stigma of rape shifts from the private and from the responsibility of
the woman, to the public and the responsibility of all, chances are that rape will be put on the public agenda.

Whatever motive reporters had for changing their coverage in reporting the DGR, partially did lead to a truer picture of rape. It also generated more attention for rape, which is certainly necessary. Unfortunately, these changes did not last in the long run. Most important changes, such as putting responsibility for rape with the perpetrators and giving more background information are only visible in the direct aftermath of the DGR. To keep improving rape coverage and the representation of rape in both newspapers, journalists should pay more attention to acquaintance rape, downscale the sensationalistic tone and sexualisation of articles, and, most importantly, should provide more articles that address underlying issues that cause rape while refraining from the use of rape myths to explain these crimes.

This research has shown how rape coverage unfolded before, during and after the DGR and contributed to research into rape coverage in the media in a country where sexual violence is omnipresent. It has shown that coverage, in this case, was extraordinary because it was an extraordinary case, but the altered practices also lead to the DGR being a patch of light in rape reporting since the onset of important changes is visible here. One single rape case can lead to important developments in reporting rape, that contribute to a truer picture of rape in the media, contribute to ‘fair warning’ and put sexual violence on the agenda. However, these changes do not have to last. When changes are made unconsciously or made with market-driven motives, they might not likely to stay put. This seems to have happened here, although one can never be sure without talking to the authors of the analysed content.

Suggestions for further research

Several things would be able to improve or extend the scope of this research. First of all, the current study is focused on content alone. To discover which practices journalists apply consciously (such as the use of rape myths or certain narratives) and unconsciously, it would be favorable to interview the authors of the content. Doing this could also shed light on underlying beliefs and motives with regard to all kinds of topics, ranging from opinions on violence against women to the Indian newspaper market.

Second, the scope of this research could be broadened by taking a larger time frame, comparing large cases such as the DGR to find out what constitutes a media event on rape or comparing international coverage on rape with Indian reports. Also, the visual content is not taken
into account in this study. It would be of added value to perform a study like this while taking photographs, placement and other visual cues such as headlines and use of fonts into account.

It was not possible to study Indian newspapers in vernacular languages since the researcher did not have knowledge of the different vernacular languages that are present in India. Since India has an enormous amount of newspapers in vernacular languages which are to date studied little, if not at all with regard to rape. This would fill a void in research into Indian media while at the same time shedding light on ideas on sexual violence in other parts of India, such as Kashmir, where sexual violence also plays a major part in on-going military disputes.

Last, it would be interesting to look at the amount of sensationalism that is involved in other news reporting than rape reports. Then it is possible to see to what extent sensationalism belongs to the field of rape reporting. Unfortunately, the scope of this research does not allow for such an analysis. To this date, no numbers are available on this subject so a comparison was not possible.
Bibliography


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Appendices

Appendix A
Coding scheme and manual, results of ICT. (See separate Excel sheets.)

Appendix B
Excerpt of coded articles. (See separate Word files.)