When does violence against women matter?
Gender, race and class in Australian media representations of sexual violence and homicide

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This paper presents a critical discourse analysis of violence against women in Australian news and information media. We draw on Judith Butler’s concept of ‘grievability’ to question the frames through which violence against women is made to ‘matter’ in media representations. Through an intersectional feminist lens, we explore how victims, perpetrators and the violence as a whole are represented in three relatively high profile cases of sexual violence and homicide. In the case of Jill Meagher, discourses of the victim’s ideal White femininity and the perpetrator’s deviant underclass morality frame the murder as tragic. In the case of Lynette Daley, stereotypes of deviant aboriginal sexuality and abject motherhood frame the case as ‘wild sex’ gone wrong. And in the case of Jyothi Singh, Indian society as a whole is condemned for the attack, distancing male violence from White, Western morality. We argue that while gendered discourses do indeed saturate the representations of each case, racialised and classed discourses are integral to constructions of who is a ‘grievable’ and, conversely, who is a ‘killable’ victim of male violence.

Introduction

This paper presents a critical discourse analysis of sexual violence and homicide in Australian news and information media. Drawing on intersectional feminist theory and using methods of corpus linguistics, we explore the language used to construct the meaning of violence against women in three separate cases. The cases in question occurred within the same year (2011-12), and each received a relatively high profile at different points from 2012-2016. Jill Meagher was a 29-year-old Irish woman living and working in Melbourne when she was raped and murdered by a man unknown to her, Adrian Bayley, on the short walk home from a local bar. The case received unparalleled coverage in Australia media and has been described as ‘the crime that shocked the nation’ (Carlyon & Florence 2015). Months later, the gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey in Delhi,
India made headlines in Australian news as ‘The Delhi Gang Rape’ (*Herald Sun* 2013). This case was framed in terms of ‘the problem of sexual assault in India’ of ‘epidemic’ proportions (ABC 2013). Lesser-known is the case of Lynette Daley, an Indigenous woman who was killed during a violent sexual assault by her alleged partner and another known man, on a beach in Illuka, New South Wales. Although Daley was killed in 2011, the case only became visible in mainstream Australian news media in 2016 following an investigative report by *Four Corners* into why Daley’s assailants had never been prosecuted. During this period of heightened visibility in the press, the case was described as a tragic incident of ‘wild sex’ ending in death (Burke 2016). In this paper, we consider how a gendered, racialised and classed social hierarchy and national identity shaped the way these cases were represented.

To understand the differential representation of murder victims of male violence, this study draws upon Butler’s (2003; 2008) theory of grievability. Specifically, we ask ‘who counts as human, who’s lives count as lives, and what makes for a grievable life?’ in Australian media representations of male violence (Butler 2003, 20). In articulating this theory, Butler (2008, 14) has argued that ‘only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of life appear’ and thus ‘grievability is the presupposition for a life that matters’. By this she means that the specific terms under which loss of life is acknowledged in public are always underscored by relations of power. For instance, Butler draws upon the example of war to argue that when only certain lives are publicly avowed as lost, others are positioned outside the frame of ‘grievable’ life (Butler 2003, 38). When these ‘other’ lives do become visible in public discourse their humanity is disputed, and the violence they have endured is denied (Butler 2003, 147). The consequence of this for Butler is more than a politics of visibility. She argues that by engaging in public grief on specific (political) terms, we fail to come to terms with a collective proximity to structural and systemic violence. In effect, the ‘prohibition’ on mourning certain lives works to ‘suppress any internal dissent that would expose the concrete, human effects of its violence’ (Butler 2003, 36). As such, the politics of public grief play a crucial role in enabling violence to continue. In this way, Butler provides a new way to understand an issue that feminists have long recognised with the representation of male violence. In particular, the power that the media holds to minimise and obscure violence against women as a cultural phenomenon. Thompson and Louise (2014) have compared the coverage of Jill Meagher to Melbourne sex worker Johanna Martin, and have argued that Martin was rendered less grievable through a discourse on ideal and deviant femininity. In doing so, they have pointed to the gendered ‘norms
of recognition’ (Butler 2008, 7) that frame the sense of loss attached to victims of male violence. However, we contend that there is a need to consider further how, beyond gender alone, interlocking discourses of race, class and nation ‘operate to produce certain subjects as "recognizable" persons and to make others decidedly more difficult to recognize’ (Butler 2008, 6). As such, in this paper we take up Butler’s (2003, 2008) theorisation of grievability to analyse violence against women through an intersectional feminist framework. We presuppose that a colonial, classed and gendered ‘matrix of meaning’ (Dhamoon 2011) continues to operate in Australian society, and underscores the way that violence against women is rendered intelligible in the media. It is from here that we question the differential representations of a victim, a perpetrator, and subsequently, the meaning of violence against women in each case analysed.

Each of the three cases are addressed in turn. We explore how discourses of Whiteness, class and gender intersect in the portrayal of Jill Meagher as a life that matters, Melbourne as a safe community, and Adrian Bayley as an evil social deviant. We then argue that in reporting on the Lynette Daley case, an ongoing colonial narrative of Indigenous women as wild and irresponsible, as well as a relational privilege afforded to her White perpetrators, ultimately rendered victimhood, intimate partner violence and systemic injustice invisible. Finally, we contend that the representation of Jyoti Singh Pandey as a grievable victim of systemic gender inequality in Indian society reflects an 'imaginative geography' (Said 1979) of patriarchy, in which gender progressivism is assumed to be rooted in the West and in normative middle-class Australian society. These three cases together reveal how classed, racialised and gendered narratives intersect to distance violence against women from normative White middle-class society and masculinity.

Media representations of violence against women

Aligning with the findings of research in the United Kingdom (e.g., Mahria 2008; Clarke 1998; Mason & Mockton-Smith 2008) and the United States (e.g., Bullock & Cubert 2002; Consalvo 1998), recent Australian studies demonstrate that only a small proportion of violent crimes against women make the news, and those that do present an image of violence against women that is inconsistent with statistical realities. Cases of violence against women are most often reported in Australian news as disconnected random events (Sutherland et al 2016, 31, 15). This events-based or episodic framing (Morgan & Politoff 2012, 29) ignores the broader context,
for example an abusive relationship, or wider social conditions that facilitate abuse. It has been demonstrated that male perpetrators are likely to be either exonerated for their actions (Morgan & Politoff 2012, 69) or altogether invisible (Sutherland et al 2016, 27). When perpetrators are acknowledged, they are distanced from society through descriptions of social abnormality or mental illness (Little 2015). Researchers widely argue that such depictions sustain the inaccurate myth that violence against women is rare and when committed, not reflective of society’s true values. A corresponding pattern in reporting is sensationalism, in which particular crimes read as bizarre and titillating are more widely reported, promoting an image of male violence as unusual and shocking rather than commonplace (Morgan & Politoff 2012, 54; Evans 2001). Further, a disproportionate number of sexual violence cases are reported where it appears the perpetrator is unknown to the victim (Morgan & Politoff 2012, 62; Sutherland 2016, 24), despite the fact that violence from a known man is significantly more common.

Although in Australian media explicit blame of female victims is rare, the suggestion that women enable violence is commonplace (Morgan & Politoff 2012, 64). In what is now a seminal piece of research in this area, Benedict (1992, 19-23) identified a binary archetype applied to victims of sexual violence in the press: the ‘virgin’ who is sexually subdued and victimised and the ‘vamp’ who provokes her own rape due to her loose sexual morality. Since then, many have pointed out that victims are depicted as more or less deserving of male violence (particularly rape) based on their transgression of feminine ideals such as passive sexuality and domesticity (Meyers 1997; Morgan 2006, 496). For instance, in a recent high profile Australian case, Sutherland et al (2016, 40) found that the victim was portrayed as the archetypal good woman through repeated reference to her innocence, youth and inexperience. As Serisier (2005) suggests, in such cases it is not women who are sympathised with, but rather, an ideal form of womanhood itself that is seen as worthy of protection, defence and public commemoration.

It is important to understand the way that race and class constructions also permeate media representations of victims and perpetrators. Ideals such as passive and controlled sexuality and domesticity emerge from colonial constructions of race and class that pathologise ‘other’ women (McClintock 1995) and continue to set the standards of hegemonic femininity (Pietsch 2010, 136; Skeggs 1997). As such, Angela Davis (1983, 201) pointed out that in societies in which constructions of race, class and gender intersect and support each other, the theory that rape myths are merely gendered
is inadequate. As Davis argued, a feminist theory that focuses upon gender alone cannot account for the disproportionate portrayal of women of colour as non-victims, or the historically entrenched myth that men of colour are more likely to perpetrate violence. Many studies in the US and Canada have since pointed to the racialised elements of reporting on violence against women. For example, women of colour are virtually invisible in news media as victims of sexual violence and homicide (Gilchrist 2010), and when they do appear as victims, racialised tropes of sexual deviancy underscore their representation, and engender blame (Meyers 2004; Jackson 2013; Jiwani 2014a). For immigrant women, violence is often attributed to ‘tradition’, for example, as an ‘honour killing’ rather than domestic homicide, distancing the violence from normative White society and culture (Jiwani 2014b; Vollp 2011). To a lesser extent, class discourses have been pointed to as a distancing mechanism, framing violent men as ‘losers’ by neo-liberal standards (Benedict 1992, 15; Consalvo 1998; Meyers 1997). Jackson (2013, 56) further suggests that classed descriptions of White perpetrators are themselves racialised, presenting underclass men as different to ‘normal’ good White males. In Australia, there is some indication that race, Whiteness and ethnicity shape representations of violence against women in the news (Baird 2009; Sutherland et al 2016, 41). As such, scholars have identified that more research is required in this area (Morgan & Politoff 2012, 72).

As an added layer of complexity, Patil and Purkayastha (2015, 598) have suggested that intersectional analyses are routinely limited to an isolated domestic framework and fail to consider the implications of increasingly transnationalized media content for the (in)visibility of violence against women. Post-colonial feminists have argued that hypervisibility of the ‘Delhi gang rape’ supported both a denial of sexual violence as a problem in US society, as well as a neo-colonial narrative of ‘uncivilised’ and ‘backward’ culture of the patriarchal ‘third world’ (Durham 2015, 178; Patil & Purkayastha 2015; Roychowdhury 2013). In some ways, this is not a new argument – Uma Narayan (2013 [1997]: 84-85) identified decades ago that ‘culture’ is invoked in US media as an explanation for violence against ‘Third World women’ but not ‘mainstream Western women’. The continuation of colonial logics in representations of violence against women evident in the media coverage of the Jyothi Singh Pandey case demonstrates the need for vigilant intersectional feminist analysis as part of a refusal to ignore (and thereby normalize) these representations. With this in mind, this paper extends an intersectional framework beyond the domestic, and asks how the case of Jyoti Singh Pandey in Delhi was
represented in Australian news and information media compared with the cases of Jill Meagher and Lynette Daley.

Methodology

This study employs a corpus based critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the dominant discourses which frame the coverage of each case analysed. We draw upon the term ‘framing’ throughout the article to describe the way that information is selected and organised to direct a reader’s perception (Entman 1993). These ‘frames’ that the media provide can promote a specific ‘problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation’ of an event or situation (Entman 1993, 52). More specifically to this article, Butler argues that ‘the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated. They are themselves operations of power’ (Butler 2009, 2). As such, in this study we employed CDA to analyse the way that violence against women, and the loss of a victim’s life is differentially ‘framed’ on the basis of race, class and nation. Although proponents of CDA come from a wide range of epistemological perspectives, in general this methodology addresses the ways discourse structures legitimate and reproduce or challenge power relations (Van Dijk 1993, 353). In relation to the representation of sexual violence, past studies have demonstrated how specific lexical choices can ‘discursively minimise’ the severity of violence, obscure wider social context (Sutherland et al 2016, 39), and ‘perpetuate ambiguity and ambivalence’ towards male violence, as part of an overall ‘masculinist representation’ (ibid., 51). We agree that these gendered linguistic patterns wield powerful effects, however in this paper we use CDA as part of an intersectional feminist approach (Dhamoon 2011) attuned to the way that women are differently situated in the politics of representation as a result of the interlocking of power systems (colonial/ imperialist/ capitalist/ masculinist or patriarchal), and the discourses that uphold them.

The research and analysis for this paper were conducted by the first author. To compare key differences in each case, Hart used the corpora analysing program Wordsmith 7 to examine 309 news and information texts. Although most articles collected were news reports, opinion pieces were also collected for analysis. Regardless of claims to objectivity and neutrality in news reporting (compared other genres), we presuppose that all texts contain a point of view, and that all representations have a stake in constructing the ‘truth’ of an event (Van Dijk 1988, 41). As such, the
decision to analyse multiple genres was made with the imperative to examine dominant language patterns and themes that emerged (or did not emerge) across coverage of the cases as a whole. In total, 170 sources were collected for the Meagher case, 102 for the Singh Pandey case, and 37 for the Daley case. To build each sub-corpus, Hart searched key terms relevant to each case. Using the information database ProQuest, all print news articles from mainstream Victorian and national news outlets including *The ABC*, *The Age*, *The Herald Sun* and *The Australian* were retrieved, and those with a word count below 300 were excluded. Hart then conducted a search via Google News to locate as many online news articles as possible from the above sources, as well as national online sources such as *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. Through a separate online search, blog and opinion pieces were also sourced from Australian sites with a high circulation such as *Mamamia*, *The Conversation* and *Crikey*.

To examine differences in language used in each sub-corpus formed, three separate frequency and keyword analyses were undertaken. This uncovered the most salient words in each case, or those that are most frequent and do not appear merely due to chance or generalised use. These tests provided a list of words sorted according to their statistical significance ($p > .05$) referenced against the other two sub-corpora. Once keyword patterns were identified, they were analysed within a concordance line list, revealing which words a keyword consistently appeared alongside, thereby revealing significant discourses running through each case. Finally, Nvivo was used to qualitatively analyse broader themes and discursive patterns framing each case through a process of inductive coding.

**Whiteness, class and ideal victim representation in the case of Jill Meagher**

A significant element of media surrounding the Jill Meagher case was the ‘common sense’ inference that Meagher represented the ‘ordinary’. The words ‘me’ (f 136)$^1$ and ‘your’ (f 86) were found to be significant compared to the other sub-corpora, clustering in phrases such as ‘it could have been me’ (f 14), or ‘she could have been your sister, mother or your friend’. This sense of familiarity was commonly linked to Meagher’s ‘ordinary’ white physicality and middle-class behavioural characteristics. As Mia Freedman

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$^1$ (f) refers to frequency. We have chosen to include frequency in the examples provided as opposed to the specific ‘Log Likelihood’ produced of each word, since the concept of frequency is much easier to understand. However, each keyword included was not merely frequent, but statistically key, meaning that its significance to the sub-corpus (data set) was likely beyond chance ($p > .05$).
(uncritically) suggested, Meagher was part of a series of murdered women through Australian history who were relatable in the sense that they ‘looked like us, lived like us, could have been us’ (Freedman, 2015). In more detail, Claire Harvey (2012) remarked that Meagher was ‘relatable’ since she was ‘someone we might all know, someone ordinary, unconnected to gangs or drugs or the dangerous side of life’. Across the coverage, it was relatively common to acknowledge that there are other murdered women who do not gain as much attention as Meagher, but the resounding and unambiguous ‘common sense’ was that Jill Meagher mattered because she resembled an image of who ‘we’ are. As prominent feminist Clementine Ford (2013) maintained: ‘Meagher was white, yes, and middle-class. For the people of Melbourne, particularly those in the inner north, she was one of us’. However, Ahmed (2004, 130) notes in relation to other national tragedies, this ‘could-have-been-me-ness’ is not literal, but ‘a judgment on whether others approximate the ideals that I have already taken on to be ‘mine’ or ‘ours’’. In the case of Jill Meagher, this ‘could-have-been-me-ness’ was constructed through an image of White middle-class femininity.

Meagher was consistently represented in terms of the feminine ideals she was perceived as embodying such as beauty, nurture, and morality. She was described as a ‘vibrant’ (Harvey 2012; Russel 2013a; The Age 2012), ‘supportive’ (Russel 2013a), ‘lively’ (Harvey 2012), ‘chirpy’ (Rule & Miranda 2012), ‘bright eyed’ (James 2012) and a ‘beautiful’ (Ford 2013) ‘life force’ (Justice 2012), with ‘a smile that lit up the room’ (Rule & Miranda 2012). There was also a pervasive theme of a future of domesticity, an unfulfilled gendered destiny. As one Herald Sun article headlined ‘Jill wanted kids, a home and Tom, dreams of idyllic future cut short’ (Deery 2013) with the leading paragraph stating that ‘Jill Meagher had been planning to buy a house and start a family’. The potential for motherhood was also emphasised in public victim statements released during Bayley’s trial, which were framed as ‘the words of a husband robbed of his chance to start a family with the woman he loved’ (Landmaide 2013) and of grandparents ‘robbed of the right’ to grandchildren. The common knowledge drawn upon in these articles was that a future of motherhood and middle-class domesticity made Meagher’s death particularly tragic. As many critical race feminists have pointed out, in White hegemonic societies, the public glorification of women as future mothers has applied chiefly to middle-class White women, who have been symbolised as ideal ‘mothers of the nation’ (Hill-Collins 1991, 138; Yuval-Davis 1997; Moreton-Robinson 2000, 40-41). Exemplifying this link between White femininity and the nation were references to Meagher as a ‘national identity’ (Lillebuen & Gannon 2012) who despite being an Irish national had ‘always had Australia in her blood’
(Rule & Miranda 2012). Meagher was thus represented through a very specific ‘respectable’ imagining of White femininity consistent with a white hetero-gendered logic of the nation (Shome 2001). In this sense, an ‘injurable and loseable’ (Butler 2008, 1) victim of male violence was re/articulated as a particular kind of woman, already seen as worthy of protection and safety.

In contrast, perpetrator Adrian Bayley was dominantly portrayed as of a force of evil beyond the realm of humanity. The word ‘evil’ (f 27) was found to be key compared to both other cases. It was used most often as a noun in place of Bayley’s name (f 16) (e.g., ‘evil stalks its prey’, ‘crossed paths with evil’) rather than an adjective (f 6) (e.g., ‘soulless and evil human being’), effectively distancing personhood from the act of rape and murder. Bayley was also represented as a ‘soulless’ (Akerman 2013) ‘reptile’ (Silvester 2013), a ‘brute of the night’ (Russell 2013c), and a ‘shell of a man’ (Johnson 2015), implying a lack of resemblance to the ‘normatively human’ male (Butler 2003). This use of metaphor to represent perpetrators of sexual violence as ‘monsters’ is not unique to this case, and helps to construct and perpetuate the myth that rape is an individual, rather than societal issue (Clark 1998; O’Hara 2012).

Numerous headlines also organised around the notion that Bayley was a ‘bottom feeder’ (Silvester 2013), ‘avoided fines’ (Cauchi 2013) ‘ate kebabs’ (Anderson 2013) and received ‘Rolls Royce’ taxpayer funded legal representation’ (Dowsley 2013). This framing draws on already loathed class archetypes; the ‘bogan’ who represents the culture of the white lower and working-class (Pini & Previte 2013) and the ‘dole bludger’ (or welfare recipient), constructed as ‘the financial burden of the taxpayer’ (Archer 2009). The distance between Bayley, as an underclass male and Meagher, as a member of the inner city middle-class, was frequently highlighted: ‘Meagher’s bubble floated high above the depravity of her murderer, Adrian Bayley, 41, they barely fit in the same sentence’ (Legge 2013). These classed representations of Bayley further precluded an interpretation of him as a reflection of normative White masculinity (Jackson 2013, 49; Jiwani 2014a, 1).

The word ‘community’ (f 82) was found to be significant to this sub-corpus, referring to the city of Melbourne, often coded as White and middle-class, and represented as homogenised in a morality counter to Adrian Bayley’s evil. The word ‘grief’ (f 59) was also found to be key, and was often
collocated with words such as ‘public’ (12%) and ‘community’ (9%). Many articles framed the crime around shared mournful feelings with headlines such as: ‘A city united in grief’ (Wills & Hingston 2012); ‘Melbourne opens its heart in the face of horror’ (Elder 2012); and ‘Community outpouring of feeling’ (Hosking & Thompson 2012). Exemplifying this, an article published in The Age entitled ‘Together we stand’ stated that: ‘Melbourne has responded. We’ve shown that, as a community, we are in this together’ (Jordan 2012). The community was also framed as a force of ‘peace’; ‘galvanized against a predator’ (Laurie 2012) and ‘against violence’ (Carlyon 2013) in general. Most often, this theme of the anti-violent and ‘peaceful’ community was portrayed through descriptions of the ‘peace march’ rallies and vigils held in 2012 and 2013. Importantly, within this theme of grief and anti-violence, the specific position of men within the community as possible perpetrators of violence was rendered virtually invisible. Instead, they were positioned as organising in ‘peaceful defiance of violence’ (The Australian 2013) and ‘fretfully pondering the security of their wives, partners and daughters’ (The Age 2012). ‘What happened to Jill’ was thus represented as ‘striking at the heart of Australian culture’ (Le Grand 2012), rather than as much research would tell us, rooted within normative attitudes that circulate in Australian society (Fileborn 2013).

Indigenous ‘Otherness’ and white male privilege in the case of Lynette Daley

Lynette Daley, a 31-year-old Bundjalung woman, was killed through a violent sexual assault inflicted by her alleged partner Adrian Attawar and another known man, Paul Maris, on a beach in Illuka, NSW in 2011. In 2012, the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) dropped Daley’s case with no reasoning, and chose again not to proceed with the case in 2014, despite an inquest that presented strong evidence against the perpetrators. During this period, the case received no more mainstream media coverage than local NSW headlines. Disparity in public and judicial responses to the violent homicides of Jill Meagher and Lynette Daley during this time in particular demonstrate what Butler (2003, 24) calls the ‘differential distribution of grievability across populations’. Whilst there remained a very

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2 The percentages included here reflect the proportion of incidences of this keyword in which it was collocated with (appeared near) these other terms.

3 We acknowledge that local campaigns, discussion and social media coverage of this case would have no doubt occurred during the time prior to the Four Corners report. Whilst in this article we focused on mainstream media representation, we do not wish to suggest that other media discourse did not exist prior to mainstream public recognition of the case.
significant disparity in the quantity of media reporting on each, the Lynette Daley case did eventually appear in mainstream Australian media. In May 2016 the case was made publicly visible in a *Four Corners*’ investigative report ‘Callous Disregard’, which adopted a thematic frame to cover the case, highlighting the violence of the perpetrators, as well as systemic injustice in the failure of the State to resolve the case. By centring the perspective of Daley’s family, as well as the critical perspective of experts such as Yiman woman and professor of Indigenous studies Marcia Langton, the report presented a salient account of racial and gendered injustice. As a result of public pressure that ensued following this report, an independent re-enquiry into the case occurred, resulting in an eventual conviction of the two men in late 2017 (The Guardian 2017). This context is important to acknowledge, as it highlights the ability of investigative journalism to intervene in the (in)justice arena, and the power of critical media representations to advocate for justice, and to produce material effects. In this article however, we focus on the mainstream news coverage that followed the *Four Corners* report⁴. We do so not to suggest that the coverage was wholly negative, but to highlight how ‘a confluence of prevalent narratives of race and gender’ (Crenshaw 1991, 1283) re-emerged when this case did eventually appear in the public field of vision. In our analysis of this case we intend to draw attention to the differential language used to frame violence against women, and importantly, to highlight the specific racialised discourses that worked to render violence once again invisible in this case.

The keyword ‘mother’ (f 48) was routinely used to mark Daley as, for example, a ‘young mother’ (19%) and a ‘mother of seven’ (30%). Counter to the idealised depiction of Jill Meagher as a future mother (and thus a tragic loss), the theme of excessive and premature motherhood contained in this case was distinctly ‘abjectifying’. As Kristeva (1982, 1-2) proposes, ‘the abject’ is that which is expelled to the border of what ‘I’ or ‘we’ are not, and that which maintains the ‘clean and proper’ self, or collective identity (ibid., 8). Conor (2007, 171) has proposed that the spectacle of Aboriginal maternity as abject and failing, has played, and continues to play ‘a significant role in … the articulation of racial difference and the assignation of racial hierarchy’. This was indeed the case in the theme of a ‘young mother’s horror beach death’ (Fife-Yeomans 2016a). For instance, motherhood often appeared in the context of graphic descriptions of Daley’s

⁴ This study did not analyse articles published on the case beyond 2016, as this was the time limit in which research could be conducted. A number of articles were written on the court proceedings of the Lynette Daley case in 2017 which could not be analysed in this study.
body as ‘naked’ (f 18) ‘bloodied’ (f 11) and ‘bruised’ (f 10), in a manner that appeared to serve no purpose ‘apart from repulsion of the violated body’ (Janzen et al. 2013, 154). Further, the term ‘mother’ often appeared in the context of intoxication, for example, the headline ‘men who left drunk mother to die’ (Nine News 2016) or the detail provided that ‘the mother-of-seven was also found to have taken methylamphetamine’ (7News 2016). While generally a link is often stressed in the media between female binge drinking and rape, rather than perpetrator behaviour (Dwyer, Easteal & Hopkins 2012), the trope of Indigenous drunkenness further serves in the ideology of White Australia. As Langton (1997, 195) has argued, to make Whites ‘innocent of the destruction of Aboriginal society because the Aborigines are ‘drinking themselves to death’’. Intoxication therefore carried a loaded meaning of gendered and racialised responsibility for one’s actions in place of a discourse on victimisation, or perpetrator behaviour.

While Adrian Attawar and Paul Maris were occasionally described as ‘vile creatures’ (Fife-Yeomans 2016b), and ‘welfare twits’ (Fife-Yeomans 2016a), and in this sense distanced from the normative middle-class White male, this was not their dominant portrayal. As Clark (1998, 198) has noted, ‘only certain [ideal] victim roles are linked to “fiend” attackers’, namely, victims who are sympathised with, such as Jill Meagher. The sympathetic positioning of Attawar and Maris was most evident through the elevation of the perpetrator’s perspective and a noticeable lack of emphasis on their behaviour (as will be discussed below). However, at times an explicit and racialised defence of their character played out in the coverage. For instance, an article in The Guardian (Robertson 2016) led with a narrative of Attawar’s relationship with Daley:

In Maclean – a northern New South Wales town on the banks of the Clarence river, where racist epithets like “coons” and “darkies” can still be heard in everyday banter – Norma, an Indigenous woman, and Attawar, a White concreter, had bonded for years over alcohol. “They were friends,” a woman who knew the pair says. “They looked after each other.” Norma was “beautiful, happy-go-lucky” but simply had “no direction”, she says. Attawar was from a decent family of “battlers”, could be rowdy on the drink but was essentially “harmless”, the woman says.

In this excerpt, Attawar is framed as socially progressive for associating with Daley, and as a ‘battler’, which Huijser (2009) describes as a ‘trope in the white Australian national imaginary’ that shifts and moulds to represent the quintessential White male as hard working and ‘egalitarian’. Attawar’s
working-class White identity was valorised here (rather than pathologised), and marked him as ‘essentially harmless’, his actions intelligible within the realms of normative public morality. This was further compounded by the depiction of Daley’s life as ‘simply’ having ‘no direction’, thereby denying her a sense of life value, or a ‘future anterior’ that would render her life grievable (Butler 2003, 36).

In addition to the stark contrasts between the representations of victim and perpetrators in this case and those in the Meagher case, there were also marked differences in how the act of violence was represented. The presence of the two men, and their position in ending Daley’s life was effaced through routine passive use of the words ‘death’ (f 162) or ‘died’ (f 61) to propose that rather than ‘killed’ (f 5), Daley ‘died from’ (45%), or ‘of’ (28%) ‘blunt force genital tract trauma’ (26%), ‘injuries’ (16%) or ‘blood loss’ (6%). Correspondingly, the keywords ‘sex’ (f 61) and ‘sexual’ (f 45) were predominantly used in place of the words assault (f 26) or abuse (f 6). The effacement of sexual violence specifically can be seen through use of the term ‘sex act/s’ (25%) and collocation with the keyword ‘wild’ (f 18), clustering as the term ‘wild sex’ (f 15) or ‘wild drunken sex’ (f 3). The term ‘wild sex’ mostly appeared in inverted commas, since it was a direct quote, for example, ‘The two men who were with the woman both admitted to having sex with her, telling police they had engaged in a drunken night of “wild sex” in the back of a car’ (Burke 2016). However, the term was directly referenced as a claim only 55% of the time, and otherwise appeared as though it accurately described what had happened the night Daley was killed. For example, ‘33-year-old mother-of-seven died from massive vaginal trauma after ‘wild sex’ in the back of a vehicle on a NSW north coast beach’ (7 News, 2016).

Privileging of the perpetrator’s perspectives was also evident in the order of information across many of the articles. The keyword ‘consensual’ (f 11), was used repeatedly to frame violence, with explanations that the perpetrators ‘claimed’ (55%) or ‘maintained’ (18%) they had engaged in ‘consensual’ sex. This was a detail that was never prefaced with, and very rarely followed by the fact that regardless of any claim, forensic pathologists declared Daley’s consent impossible in 2011 (State Coroners Court NSW 2014). For instance, the Daily Telegraph stated: ‘[t]he men told police they had “wild sex” in the back of Mr Maris’ vehicle but maintained it was consensual’. Only in the final lines of the article readers are informed that: ‘Norma [pseudonym for Daley] would have been too drunk to consent to sex’ (Fife-Yeomans 2016b). A powerful assumption of credibility was thus afforded to perpetrators Attawar and Maris, positioning their version of
events as the truth, or as key to making sense of the crime. By emphasising their claims that ‘consensual’ ‘wild sex’ had occurred (rather than violent sexual assault or rape), and consequently that Daley ‘died’ (rather than was killed) violence was effaced throughout the vast majority of coverage.

Moreover, repetitive use of the term ‘wild sex’, with its connotations of unrestrained sexuality, draws upon a long-standing discourse on Indigenous women as sexually ‘deviant’ (Moreton-Robinson 2000, 171). Historically, the consent of Indigenous women has been ‘perpetually assumed’ through imaginings of wildness, justifying systematic rape and abuse at the hands of White colonisers (Behrendt 2000, 355). Behrendt (2000) has pointed to the endurance of this discourse in the contemporary justice system, with the effect that Indigenous women face unique racialised and gendered barriers to being recognised as victims of sexual violence. The word ‘victim’ (f12) appeared significantly less frequently compared to both other cases, and was rarely used to describe Daley’s subject position in the crime. While the word ‘justice’ (f 65) was found to be key, and was indeed a prominent topic in reporting on the case, the notion that an injustice had occurred in the failure to prosecute the two perpetrators was dominantly positioned as a matter of speculation. Apart from two critical articles written by Indigenous studies academic Professor Marcia Langton (2016), and CEO of The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Centre Antoinette Braybrook (2016), the word ‘injustice’ was never used to describe the case. Much like the Jill Meagher coverage, the case was very rarely (13%) framed thematically to emphasise the wider issue of systemic racial and gendered barriers to justice that Indigenous women routinely face, even in death (Behrendt 2002). Instead, a failure of the justice system was reported as a ‘claim’, ‘feeling’ (A Current Affair 2016) or ‘criticism’ (Benny-Morrison 2016) of Daley’s family and those campaigning for a review of the case. To state that a miscarriage of justice ‘had’ taken place, and to acknowledge this as a racialised and gendered phenomenon (Behrendt 2000), was in this sense at ‘the limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear’ (Butler 2003; xviii). Thus, in the coverage of this case victimisation is itself altogether denied and erased, evoking Butler’s important assertion that for those who are regulated to the outskirts of the ‘normatively human’; ‘violence leaves a mark that is no mark’ (Butler 2003, 36).
Outsourcing patriarchy in the case of ‘The Delhi Gang Rape’

In 2012, multiple perpetrators raped and murdered Jyoti Singh Pandey, a 23-year-old Indian woman, on a bus in New Delhi, making international headlines as ‘The Delhi Gang Rape’. In the context of India, mainstream media portrayed Jyoti Singh as an ‘ideal victim’. She was represented as the ‘everywoman’ in terms of her middle-class, upper-caste Hindu status (Shandilya 2015; Teltumbde 2013), her behaviour identifiable as within the limits of normative femininity in this context. Her perpetrators were distanced from the ‘normal’ Indian man, their violence represented as symptomatic of their lower-class status (Teltumbde 2013; Shandilya 2015; Lodhia 2015). However, Jyoti Singh Pandey’s murder also became a media cause celebre of international proportions, and at this level, an orientalising colonial gaze framed the crime as evidence of India’s purported backwardness on a scale of progressive modernity (Roychowdhury 2013; Durham 2014). In our own study, the word victim (F 154) was used significantly more than in both other cases, serving as the primary marker of Pandey’s subject position both before and after her name was revealed to the public. While described in very different terms, both Jill Meagher and Jyoti Singh Pandey were represented as embodying a 'future anterior' of womanhood that would render them 'recognizable persons' to a specific national public (Butler 2003, 6) – and thus as grievable victims of male violence.

Pandey’s representation reflects the long history of imagining 'Third World women' as victims of ‘culture’ (Narayan 2013), in need of liberating from ‘tradition’ (Mohanty 1988). As Roychowdhury (2014, 283) pointed out of US coverage of the case, this was a narrative of 'A new, relatively empowered, "Third World" woman — one who not only demands women’s liberation but does so within the confines of a global consumer economy'. We would add that in Australian coverage, Pandey was represented as gradually 'shedding culture' (Vollp 2011) to achieve the decidedly liberated status of the secular Western woman. Readers were informed that Pandey ‘worked night shifts in a call centre, advising Canadians on their mortgages and honing her English’ and ‘the once shy Jyoti had swapped her traditional dresses for jeans, tops and high heels’ (Dhillon 2013a). Multiple articles informed readers that ‘this young woman was from a provincial background but “aspirational”’ (Butcher 2015) and ‘ambitious’ (Elliot 2013). Pandey’s story was thus linked to a broader imagining of ‘newly’ liberated Indian women who ‘now’ ‘exercise autonomy; they behave like equals’ (Dhillon 2013b). In this sense, Pandey was represented as a worthy and grievable victim since she was perceived to have ‘the promise, if not the actuality, of
being/becoming like us' (Jiwani 2014b, 39); imagined as autonomous and free.

It is telling that although Pandey was never aligned with Indian culture in her representation as a grievable life, ‘culture’ (f 29) was invoked throughout the discourse much more than in both other cases to discuss male violence:

Pandey's shocking death also plunged Indians into a period of national soul-searching about why their culture treats women so badly. (Dhillon 2014)

The case sparked mass street protests and public scrutiny of a culture that devalues women and permits attacks against them. (Doherty 2013c)

Further, the emphasis throughout the coverage on the ‘brutal’ (f 29) and ‘savage’ (f 12) nature of the attack recalls a familiar colonial archetype of uncivilised masculinity in contrast to the progressive ‘gentlery’ of White Western men (Razack 2003; Parameswaren 1996).

A neo-colonial civilizational narrative was also apparent in widespread framing of the attack as a ‘clash of the old country and the new’ (Doherty 2012a). For instance, in an article in The Australian entitled ‘Gang Rape Shame Could Drag India into 21st Century’, Libby Purves (2013) wrote:

despite its modernisations, the country has taken little care to promote serious cultural change where women are concerned ... Delhi itself has a particular problem because tens of thousands of newly urbanised people, from villages still almost medieval, live alongside modern workers including liberated women ... The rapists in this case were, we are told, from this demographic; their victim a medical student whose parents sold their land to pay for her education.

Here Purves reasons that violent misogyny can be explained by men from ‘villages, still almost medieval’ coming into contact with ‘liberated women’. What was eclipsed from this narrative was both the reality that most violence against women in India occurs from known men who are likely to be of the same caste and class to the victim (National Crime Records Bureau 2015), as well as any sense that violence against women, and misogyny in particular, could persist in spaces understood as ‘progressive’ both in terms of liberal politics and (post-)industrialised capitalism. Purves ends the article stating that ‘we in the west have the luxury of fretting about
feminist issues such as magazine images, rude remarks and men not doing housework’. This remark articulates a very common underlying implication across the coverage, that women are safe from male violence in geographic spaces marked as white, liberal and developed.

While ‘culture’ was a much more prevalent theme in this case than both others, it was the word ‘society’ (f 41) that was identified as key through the Wordsmith analysis. ‘Society’ was collocated with the words ‘Indian’ (32%), ‘women’ (12%), ‘culture’ (12%), ‘men’ (10%), ‘patriarchal’ (7%) and ‘misogyny’ (7%), and most commonly appeared in concordance lines as a reference to the social root of the crime, for example: ‘in this deeply patriarchal society’ (Doherty 2013b); ‘deep prejudice and misogyny in Indian society’ (Doherty 2012b); ‘in this profoundly conservative society’ (Dhillon 2013b); and ‘the mistreatment of women in Indian society’ (Edwards 2013). Moreover, the keywords ‘gender’ (f 36) and ‘women’ (f 84) revealed a wide contextualisation of violence in this case with the broader treatment of women and gender inequality in Indian society. The possessive form ‘India’s’ (f112) was often used to infer gender-based violence of an ‘appalling’ level as belonging to India specifically (f 30), for example: ‘India’s chronic sexual violence’ (Doherty 2013b); ‘India’s misogyny epidemic’ (Elliot 2013; ‘India’s appalling sexual violence’ (Doherty 2013a); and ‘India’s dismal conviction rates for sexual assaults’ (Bennett 2015).

Common use of the terms ‘society’, ‘gender’ and ‘women’ thus formed part of a larger discourse in which patriarchal gender relations were taken as ‘profoundly’ and ‘deeply’ prevalent in India. While at first this may appear to evidence a widespread feminist perspective adopted by the mainstream press, there are some ‘cautionary questions’ that should be raised when Other women’s suffering and oppression is represented (Abu-Lughod 2013, 58). As Edward Said (1979, 58) asserts, an imaginative geography is a process in which ‘their territory and their mentality are designated as different from “ours”’. Often, Said argues, it is precisely what is designated as ‘out there’ which constitutes one’s knowledge of what does or does not exist ‘here’. Considered alongside the absence of social and cultural explanations in the Meagher and Daley cases, the pervasive sense that the Pandey case exemplified India’s ‘misogyny epidemic’ is evidence of a ‘signification of sexual violence as a function of place, and more specifically, of a Third World location’ (Durham 2015, 176).

Representation of sexual violence in this case was bound by what Butler (2008, 102) has discussed as ‘hegemonic conceptions of progress’ which
‘define themselves over and against a pre-modern temporality that they produce for the purposes of their own self-legitimation’. In this case specifically, rather than locate current protest in a contemporary Indian women’s movement with a long and unique history of protesting violence against women and seeking gender justice (Kumar 1998), metaphors such as ‘soul searching’ (f 10) were used to symbolise that India was realising a feminist consciousness in ‘the time of the now’ (Butler 2008, 102). The implication was that India is or has otherwise been temporally situated in the past in the sense that ‘[m]en still disrespect and dominate women’ (Dhillon 2014) and ‘rape remains a notoriously underreported crime’ (*The Australian* 2013) (emphasis added). The notion that India’s powerful mainstream uprising might evidence a ‘societal’ consciousness for Western nations such as Australia to aspire to was a point of unintelligibility.

Instead of providing a counter frame to this narrative, online feminist coverage of the case in Australia tended to mirror the dominant discourse of other news publications. For example, in an article for online feminist blog *Mamamia* entitled ‘[i]n India, gang rape is just the beginning’, Bec Sparrow cites cases of violence against women in Sudan and Pakistan to stress a ‘global issue’, presenting a well-known image of ‘The Third World Woman’ as the monolithically oppressed Other (Mohanty 1988). While it is mentioned that violence against women ‘happens in our own backyard’ in this article, the case of Jyoti Singh Pandey was centralised as representative of women’s oppression; ‘a wake-up call to all of us who live lives of safety and protection and who take the freedoms afforded to us for granted’. In a remarkable display of ‘imperialist feminism’ (Burton 1998), Sparrow ended the article by stating that ‘we must step up and speak up for those who are unable to do so’, with no mention of the diverse and complex histories of feminism in any of the countries cited. As Vollp (2011, 106) argues, in popular discourse that ‘equate[s] gender subordination with traditional culture … the existence of feminist movements within communities marked as “traditional” are denied’. This line of reasoning is mirrored in an article in *The Australian* entitled, ‘West Needs to Help Women Win Rights’ in which Ida Lichter (2013) states: ‘It is time for feminists and human rights defenders globally to ride this wave and widen the campaign to include other societies.’ Here Lichter assumes feminist freedoms are rooted geographically in the West, and thus a ‘civilizing mission’ (Butler 2008, 204) is required in (presumed) lieu of any existing local women’s movement.
Conclusion

Recent studies on the representation of violence against women in Australian media have identified many problematic and gendered features of such reporting, including the individualizing of incidents of violence and the perpetuation of rape myths. By providing an in-depth comparison of three cases, this paper demonstrates that interlocking discourses of race, class and nation play an important role in sustaining an inaccurate, individualized and distanced image of male violence in Australian media. In taking an intersectional approach to the study of these cases, we have sought to highlight that it is not merely gendered discourse that dictates how violence against women is represented, but a confluence of racialised and classed narratives specific to the Australian socio-political context as a settler-colonial and neo-liberal society. As Butler (2003, 39) has argued, there is a need to question ‘the conditions under which a grievable life is established and maintained, and through what logic of exclusion, what practice of effacement and denominalization’. In this way, this study reflects a logic of grievable (and in turn ‘killable’) life that is reproduced in media depictions of violence against women, itself premised upon multiple, intersecting power relations that circulate in Australian society.

Particularly, in this study we have drawn upon Butler’s analysis of public grief to question the media’s differential treatment of women as murder victims along lines of race and class. We have shown that the representations of certain women as loseable and violatable ‘work in tandem’ with a failure to apprehend violence against ‘other’ women, who are represented as un-violatable, and less ‘lost’ in the full sense (Butler 2003, 37). This was evident in the representation of Jill Meagher as ‘someone we might all know’ (Harvey 2012), and the subsequent articulation of a meaningful feminine life as one that is familiar in the national imaginary; the ‘subject position middle-class white woman’ (Moreton-Robinson 2000). Conversely, violence against Lynette Daley was rendered invisible through representation of her femininity as the abject ‘other’: as sexually ‘wild’ and an unrespectable/irresponsible mother. It appeared that the majority of media sources could find no frames to comprehend Daley as a life lost, or to apprehend the violence and racial injustice of her death. Thus, as a victim of male violence, Daley was largely rendered unrecognizable to the public through discourses of race and class deviation. We have also shown, through analysis of the Singh Pandey case, that transnational and imperialist logics are at play in determining a valuable and losable victim of male violence. The representation Jyoti Singh Pandey as a grievable victim, existed within a very specific colonial logic,
within which ‘brown women’ are imagined as in need of saving from ‘brown men’, through intervention from an ‘enlightened’ West (Spivak 1988, 91).

As such whether violence against women was rendered real, or made to matter in this study, appears to depend largely on how victimisation reflects onto the hegemonic ideals of Australian society and men. In the representation of an ideal victim, a common denominator was the depiction of the perpetrator as different and distant from ‘us’, who were implied as White, middle-class and moral. In the case of Jill Meagher, Adrian Bayley’s violence was not situated as symptomatic of a wider issue of misogyny in Australian society, but ascribed to his classed status as a ‘bottom feeder’. On this basis perpetration of violence was itself dehumanised, and cast as an individualised, outside force of evil as opposed to deriving from within normative culture. The representation of perpetrators in the case of Jyoti Singh Pandey worked to the same effect. Through a colonial narrative of ‘savage’ and ‘brutal’ South Asian men symptomatic of ‘deeply patriarchal society’, violent misogyny was set at a distance from the morality of the normative White Australian male. In contrast, to excuse violence against Lynette Daley, Attawar was afforded a racialised discourse of White ‘goodness’ and egalitarianism (a ‘battler’). Moreover, Attawar and Maris’ claims were in a position to be recognised as truth, given the relative position of Indigenous women in Australian society. Taken together, an analysis of each case demonstrates that men are condemned and excused for violence to the extent that their victims can be recognised as ‘one of us’, as sharing ‘our’ (White/middle-class) morality. And further, that violence against women is made to ‘matter’ in media representations to the extent that this portrayal reinforces pre-existing hierarchies of race, class and nation. As such, this paper highlights that in a feminist analysis of male violence in the media, it is crucial to treat gendered discourses as inseparable from discourses of race and class. As many feminists of colour have pointed out, failure to do so leaves our analyses ‘inevitably incomplete and partial’ (Dhamoon 2011, 239).

In relation to media praxis, there is a responsibility to be aware of, and engage with a wider politics of grief in representing murder victims of male violence. As Butler (2003) has suggested, public mourning can exist as a powerful political tool. Specifically, grief ‘furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order...by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility’ (Butler 2003, 68). The answer here is not to simply include more lives into accepted or normative frames already understood as grievable. For instance to render Daley a life that ‘matters’ by asserting she
was a ‘good mother’, or as Pandey was represented, with the ‘potential’ to become a respectable non-cultural ‘modern’ subject. Rather, the point is to broaden our recognition of a life that matters, and consequently violence that matters. Ultimately, to recognise ‘vulnerability [to violence], which serves as the basis for our apprehension of our commonality’ (Butler 2003, 36). In general, this means that representations must come to terms with the fact that women are not safe from violence through their proximity to white, middle class norms and men. It also means representing loss of life through male violence as tragic and real, regardless of the extent to which a victim fits ideals of femininity. A strong media praxis would also represent a shared proximity to gendered violence, and thus a collective ethical responsibility for violence against women. In practice, this kind of media praxis looks much like the counter discourse presented by Indigenous feminist commentators in describing the case of Lynette Daley. This coverage sought to render Daley’s life meaningful and loseable by asserting that she was loved by her community and family, a strong and ‘high achieving Indigenous woman’ (Langton 2016), and yet, was systemically vulnerable to gendered and racialised violence, as well as state negligence/injustice (Braybrook 2016). In the case of Jill Meagher, traces of this kind of subversive discourse were also apparent in media which sought to link violence against Meagher with a general public disregard for violence against street sex workers that Bayley had raped, who were also rendered precarious non-lives in the media (Ford 2013). This media coverage provided nuanced and critical frames to recognise a life as lost, and crucially, represented a relation between violence against women and hegemonic norms of gender, race and class in Australian society. Ultimately, we argue that to disrupt the way that violence against women is supported and maintained in the media, there is a need to remain aware and vigilant of multiple, intersecting forces of power at play in representing violence that matters, and violence that decidedly, does not.

**News and information media**


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