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Godlike Men and Sex Assault Coverage: the Cases of Cosby and Kumar

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Women have always gone to great lengths to avoid rape. In West and Central Africa, the most rape-ridden regions of the world, mothers sear or flatten their daughters' budding breasts to protect them from rape, lest they be perceived to be asking for it by their mere appearance (Mayor, 2014). In the Ottoman Empire, girls and young women used to put ash on their faces in order to appear unattractive (Otten, 2017). These practices reflect a cross-cultural and pan-historical "wisdom" embedded in folklore and literary texts: women are objects of male desire,

and avoiding rape is their responsibility.

When raped women have challenged this narrative, they have faced attacks intended to humiliate and silence them. In the rare process of being held accountable, rapists have often received just as much, if not more, sympathy and concern than their victims—as did boxer Mike Tyson, convicted of the rape of 18-year-old Desiree Washington in 1992 (Lule, 1995; 2001), two high school football players in Steubenville, Ohio, convicted of drugging and raping a 16-year-old girl on camera (Oppel Jr., 2013), and TV anchor Matt Lauer, fired after being accused of rape and serial sexual harassment (Jones, 2017).

Seeking an explanation for the longstanding and cross-cultural tendency to blame rape victims, this study compares and contrasts the news coverage of two recent cases in which the men facing sexual assault charges or accusations were celebrities. The goal is to contextualize the dominant media frames against the backdrop of ancient myths. It should be noted that, for the purposes of this study, the words "myth" and "mythological" refer not to modern rape myths, but to archetypal narratives that have shaped culture and social memory across time and space.

Important cultural tropes and popular sagas, such as Star Wars, have been molded upon mythical themes and archetypal characters (Moyers, 1988). News stories are no exception (e.g., Berkowitz, 2005; Bird & Dardenne, 2009; Lule 2001, 2005), but almost no previous research has investigated mythological motifs in the news coverage of rape. The only such analysis we uncovered concerned myths used in the coverage of Mary Kay Letourneau (Grimm & Harp, 2011). This analysis aims to fill in this gap in the literature through a feminist framing analysis of the news coverage of sexual violence committed by two celebrity men: former TV star Bill Cosby, convicted on three counts of sexual assault in April 2018 and still facing at least 10 civil lawsuits (Reilly, 2018), and former Bollywood actor Inder Kumar, who was never tried and died from a heart attack in July 2017 (Goswami, 2017).

The cases were chosen to compare Western and Eastern news narratives about rape within the

context of Western and Eastern mythological narratives, respectively. The choice of an Indian celebrity reflected the ease of accessing English-language media content about him and the expectation that the coverage may reflect Hindu-Buddhist mythological motifs—contrasting with those of Greek/Roman mythology, the narrative foundation of Western culture (Kaplan & Algon, 1997; Phipps, 1988). Although Kumar's celebrity status was not equivalent to Cosby's, he was well-known and popular in India, and his rape accusation received substantial media coverage.

Case Summary: Inder Kumar

A Bollywood actor appearing in more than 20 films ("Inder Kumar Saga," 2014), Kumar was arrested and charged with rape, grievous harm, and criminal intimidation after a 23-year-old model reported he had abused and sexually assaulted her (Dsouza, 2014). Kumar claimed the sex had been consensual, but a medical exam confirmed a rape had occurred ("Inder Kumar Saga"). The model reported that she had gone to Kumar's apartment on April 23, 2014, expecting to discuss her role in a film; instead, Kumar locked her up, raped her, and physically abused her for two days, until she escaped. Kumar was taken into custody and then released on bail of 30,000 rupees, the equivalent of about \$460 (Dsouza, 2014).

Case Summary: Bill Cosby

Cosby's reputation for promoting family values suffered a blow after comedian Hannibal Buress called him a rapist in a standup routine on October 16, 2014, and the video went viral (Pickert, 2014). After that, more than 60 women came forward with stories of being drugged and raped by Cosby. Such accusations had been made earlier, with one case going to court, resulting in a settlement. In 2015, Cosby's deposition in that case became public, showing he had admitted to using Quaaludes to have sex with women: "I used them the same as a person would say, 'have a drink'" (Malone & Demme, 2015, para 3). In 2015, Cosby was charged on three counts of aggravated indecent assault of Andrea Constand, but the case resulted in mistrial (Chen, 2017). Cosby was eventually convicted on all three counts in a 2018 retrial, resulting in "one of the most thundering falls from grace in American cultural history" (Roig-Franzia, 2018, para. 1).

Literature Review

Feminist scholarship views rape as a gender-based hate crime (Pendo, 1994; Rothschild, 1993). As in the case of other hate crimes, such as genocide, one of its defining characteristics is victim blaming, which can be explained through the lens of social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The constructivist tradition views people as social actors performing according to certain dominant mental images of reality and of each other. These mental images tend to privilege sociocultural elites while disadvantaging less powerful groups, such as women and racial or religious minorities. Social constructions are both reflected in and reinforced by media content, as demonstrated by research findings that mediated representations of reality can influence people's mental images of social realities (Scheufele, 1999).

Acceptable sexuality, negotiated in the context of social interactions (Laws & Schwartz, 1977), reflects patriarchal power dynamics (Foucault, 1976, 1990). In the U.S., "heterosexual men's sexuality ... is constructed around the domination of women" (Jensen, 2004 p. 254), and heterosexual women's sexuality is focused on maintaining "their traditional roles as sex objects for men" (Inness, 2004, 124). When unsettling events challenge the status quo, "master myths" based in archetypal narratives often emerge in the news coverage (Lule, 2001). To identify the possible presence of such myths in the news coverage of celebrity men's rape accusations, we begin by reviewing some prominent stories that detail instances of rape in the Greek/Roman and Hindu/Buddhist mythological traditions.

Rape in Greek and Roman Myths

An overall theme of misogyny permeates Greek and Roman myths, stemming from the mythological heritage of ancient Mesopotamia (Penglase, 1997), an agricultural society facing an urgent socioeconomic need to enforce women's subjugation (Omitowaju, 2002). Such influences are evident in the use of agricultural metaphors in Greek and Roman myths, such as when Zeus (in Greek myths) or Jupiter (the same god in Roman myths) transforms into a bull or a stallion in order to spread his seed. The mythological narratives of rape are undoubtedly rooted in the region's history. For example, the Iliad and the Odyssey suggest it was common knowledge that a fallen city's women would be raped during wartime (Kuo, 2002).

Several prominent rape tropes exist in Greek and Roman mythology and folklore. First, myths of Greek and Roman gods' sexual trysts provide a divine justification for the use of power and trickery to subjugate women. Serial rapist Zeus/Jupiter married his sister Hera after transforming himself into a cuckoo: "...soothing the pitiable bird, Hera suddenly found herself being raped by Zeus. Shamed, the goddess agreed to restore her dignity by joining in marriage with Zeus" (Monaghan, 2004, p. 60). To rape the human woman Leda, Zeus transformed into a swan pretending to seek protection from an eagle (Neigh, 2006). To impregnate the virgin Danae, Zeus turned himself into golden rain (Phillip, 1999). Europa, another human maiden, was tricked when Zeus turned into a gentle bull, allowed her to climb onto his back, and then kidnapped her to Crete, where she bore him several sons (Phillip, 1999). In Roman mythology, where Zeus is Jupiter, his serial rapes are memorialized in Jupiter's moons, several of which bear the names of his rape victims—such as Europa and Io (Seneca & Ahl, 1996).

Second, rape victims in folklore and history are almost always silenced through injury or death. One such myth is that of Philomela, locked in a tower after being raped by her brother-in-law Tereus and forced into silence as the perpetrator cuts out her tongue, fulfilling an archetypal narrative "to stamp out or destroy a women's agency" (Cutter, 2000, p. 177). The gods give Philomela a voice by transforming her into a nightingale, but despite her song, Philomela is effectively powerless (Marder, 1992). Medusa, another rape victim, has faced an even worse fate. After the sea god Poseidon rapes the beautiful virgin in Athena's temple, the angry goddess transforms the pregnant victim into a monster, soon to be beheaded by Perseus (Seelig, 2002). Historical accounts suggest that in real life raped Greek and Roman women were expected to conveniently silence themselves by taking their own lives. In the raid of the Gauls against Rome (Váárhelyi, 2007), women killed themselves to avoid being raped, as did Scedasus's virgin daughters, who committed suicide after being raped by Spartans (Harris, 2004).

Third, Greek and Roman myths, folklore, and literary texts presented sexual violence as wrong but human. A prominent plot twist in Greek tragedies (Rabinowitz, 2011), rape was often normalized or hidden. In the New Comedies, portraying everyday people, rape and sexual abuse were framed as crimes of passion, youthful indiscretions, or drunken blunders (Lape, 2001). Rape happened because women were

assumed to possess an extraordinary ability to seduce men (Burr, 2001; Walcot, 1984)—as in the case of Odysseus, who had to be tied to a mast to avoid being lured by enchanting sirens (Wellmer 2000), and Epimetheus, whose failure to resist Pandora's beauty led to the opening of a box full of misfortunes and diseases (Walcot, 1984).

Fourth, rape in the ancient Mediterranean could be symbolically erased through retributions. Harris (2004) contends that ancient Greek literature often portrays sexual violence as inexcusable, but only because of the damage to the honor of fathers, brothers, or husbands of the violated women. If the victim and her family had low status, repercussions were impossible, but if high-status maidens had been raped, their male guardians were expected to seek revenge (Omitowoju, 2002). Perpetrators of sexual violence could escape punishment by adjusting the woman's "ownership" through marriage (Harris, 2004). This adjustment worked even for the gods in Greek and Roman mythology. Hades, the Greek god of the underworld (known as Pluto in Roman mythology), raped his niece Persephone—a child born from Zeus's rape of his sister Demeter—and then "married" her (Johnston, 2013).

Rarely do sexual violence narratives in Greek and Roman mythology showcase women's agency, but some exceptions are worth pointing out. Atalanta, a Greek amazon, killed two lustful Centaurs (half-men, half-horses) with her arrows (Mayor, 2014), but her victory may have been narratively permissible only because the perpetrators were not fully human. The Greek goddess Artemis (known as Diana in Roman mythology), a bow-and-arrows-armed virgin huntress, escaped rape but not the male gaze by killing the lustful Aktaion and Orion, who stalked her or her girlfriend nymphs (Fontenrose, 1981; Lacy, 1990). When she was accidentally seen naked and bathing by a Greek hunter boy, the agentic Artemis/Diana graciously spared his life by transforming him into a girl (Cohen, 2004). This myth suggests that in Greek and Roman mythology a male gazer was seen as deserving of more mercy than a female victim of rape.

Hindu/Buddhist Rape Narratives

Ancient Hindu/Buddhist stories circulate in different versions throughout Southeast Asia and can be traced back to Vedic mythology, whose origins are the subject of a longstanding academic debate (Bryant, 2001). In this mythological tradition,

which attributes great value to ascetic lifestyles, deities are much less likely to be serial rapists, and not even marital rape is condoned. In one story, aroused by the god of desire Kama, the destroyer god Siva feels an acute desire to rape his wife Parvati, but regains his composure through yogic techniques (O'Flaherty, 1969). Nevertheless, some sexual violence is still glorified in this tradition. Such is the case of the rape of the earth and light goddess Usha by the male Hindu god Indra, a narrative that scholars have interpreted as signifying a major social change from a gynefocal to patriarchal order (Thadani, 1999). Indra, known in Hindu mythology as an adulterous and coercive god, also raped the night goddess, Ahalya, by pretending to be her husband (Doniger, 1997).

Although women in the Hindu/Buddhist narrative tradition often have some social and metaphysical powers, they lack any sexual or justice-seeking agency. Women who face rape or have survived rape are voiceless and powerless, relying for revenge on the men who claim ownership of them. In the Indian epic Mahabharata, the queen Draupadi faces an attempted rape and an attempted disrobing, but is saved in both cases by external powers—the god Krishna the first time and her own husband the second time (Verma, 2015). In another narrative, when a serial rapist, Ravana (in some accounts described as a demon), rapes two celestial courtesans, Rambha and Punjikastali, he is cursed by Rambha's husband for the rape of his wife and by the god Brahma for Punjikastali's rape. One exception to this narrative of weak women protected or avenged by men is the chaste maiden Vedavati. In the Ramayana epic, she goes to a mountain to meditate on her wish to marry a god. A man attempts to rape her, but is stopped by her angry gaze. Vedavati then dies and is reincarnated as Sita, the wife of Rama (Doniger, 1997). In one variation of the myth, Vedavati is raped and curses her rapist. In another version, it is Sita—Vedavati's divine reincarnation—who protects herself from rape by sending an illusory version of herself into the physical world. Vedavati/Sita succeeds only because she is "empowered by her goodness, which both protects her from being raped and gives her the ability to make the curse herself" (Doniger, p. 10).

The narratives reviewed above suggest that both Western and Eastern mythological traditions view rape as something men do to women because of lust or custom. To explore the potential influence of these narratives in contemporary news, we asked the following research question: How, if at all, do media frames in the coverage of convicted rapist Bill Cosby and accused

rapist Inder Kumar reflect known mythological narratives of sexual violence? To identify the representations of such narratives, we employed a media framing analysis.

Method

The analyzed stories appeared in news publications in the U. S., the UK, Canada, and India during the first 18 months of reporting on each case. The articles were collected by searching for "Bill Cosby" and "Inder Kumar" in the LexisNexis Academic database. The search was limited to news publications. The search used only the actors' names because the accusations against them had been labeled anything from "rape" and "sexual assault" to (for Kumar) a case of "the casting couch." Cosby news article search covered the period from the day Hannibal Buress called him a rapist (October 16, 2014) to April 16, 2016. Due to the large number of results, individual searches in monthly increments were conducted, for a total of 8,108 headlines, from which the 1,000 most relevant ones (automatically generated by LexisNexis) were selected. After duplicate and irrelevant articles were eliminated, 330 remained in the dataset. The search for "Inder Kumar" encompassed a period from April 23, 2014 (the first day the reported rape was covered in the news) to October 23, 2015, resulting in 143 news stories. Duplicate and irrelevant articles were removed, leading to a final count of 53. Both authors read each article closely, seeking frames aligning with mythological narratives, and organized article excerpts accordingly.

The unit of analysis was the frame, defined as "a cognitive device used in information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 57). Framing focuses on the selection and salience of information in news stories because the inclusion or exclusion of certain details can mold narratives to fit certain dominant discourses (Entman, 1993). The analysis took into account the articles' themes; causal statements they seemed to contain; and rhetorical devices, such as word choices (especially ones denoting positive or negative attributes) and juxtapositions. Articles were analyzed systematically without using a coding sheet because framing analysis does not rest on "objectively identifiable meanings" (Pan & Kosicki, p. 58). The manuscript was continuously updated to reference Kumar's death in 2017, Cosby's conviction in 2018, and the changing cultural context brought on by the #MeToo movement.

Analysis

Although both men were celebrities, Cosby had enjoyed more fame and time in the public spotlight, had been accused by dozens of women, and had never been arrested. Kumar was accused of assaulting only one woman and had been arrested. The media frames reflected some of these inherent dissimilarities between the cases, but the parallels were many and aligned with the previously discussed mythological narratives of rape. Four main media frames emerged: (a) godlike performers; (b) everyone does it; (c) cruel wives; and (d) silenced victims.

Godlike Performers

Like the gods Indra and Zeus, still revered in their respective cultural realms despite their storied sexual coerciveness, Cosby and Kumar had enjoyed godlike standing. As mythological narratives indicate, rape accusations do not erode the status of a deity. In contemporary culture, this seems especially so when the perpetrators are likable performers—not behind-the-screen moguls, such as the disgraced film producer and serial rapist Harvey Weinstein, said to be “following in the shamed footprints” of Cosby (Deerwester & Mandell, 2017). Like Weinstein, Cosby had maintained his status and career for years without scrutiny: “It was a very badly kept secret in the comedian world, and a lot of us would talk about it” (Puente, 2015, para. 9). Unlike Weinstein, however, Cosby enjoyed the love and adoration of millions of TV fans. Kumar, a beloved actor in his early career, also saw limited consequences. Once he paid bail and no trial was scheduled, the coverage evaporated, allowing him to continue his limited performing career.

Unlike in the coverage of Kumar, some of Cosby’s coverage explicitly framed him as a godlike man on whom the weak preyed. Former TV host Glenn Beck saw an AP reporter’s interview with Cosby as a grievous offense: “You’ve just raped Bill Cosby” (Kutner, 2014, para. 2). Cosby co-star Phylicia Rashad also saw the accusations as a conspiracy: “This is not about the women ... this is about the obliteration of legacy” (Pilkington, 2015, para. 2). The Cosby Show producer Tom Werner reiterated the concern: “I’m hoping that people will still be able to watch the show and identify with the Huxtables” (O’Connell & Sandberg, 2015, para. 3). In his two trials, Cosby’s defense embraced this frame, portraying him as the victim of greedy women. After Cosby was found guilty, some of the news coverage still painted him as a godlike figure. Sitting at the top

of the defense table, he was said to have shouted in an “earsplitting roar that startled the courtroom and sent necks craning for a glimpse of his moment of distilled rage” (Roig-Franzia, 2018, para. 7). The eventual guilty verdict, though logical and deserved, signified the toppling of a godlike figure—and as such, it left the top prosecutor in the case “filled with awe” (Levenson, 2018) and a New Yorker writer “blank with shock” (Tolentino, 2018).

Everyone Does It

One prominent media frame was the attribution of Kumar and Cosby’s coercive deeds to the entertainment industry’s power dynamics that had created and maintained their godlike status. The coverage of Kumar argued that “[t]his incident once again proves that behind the glitz and glamour of Bollywood lies a crevice which is dark and where lies the real villains” (“Inder Saga Exposes,” 2014, para. 3). Police investigating the case stated: “This seems to be a case of casting couch...” (“Bollywood actor Inder,” 2014, para. 4). The term refers to pressuring aspiring actresses to perform sexual acts: “Bollywood men often find themselves on the wrong side of the law...” (Singh, 2014, para. 1).

Cosby’s early coverage also brought up the “everyone-who-has-power-does-it” argument by pointing to filmmakers Woody Allen and Roman Polanski, whose importance in the industry was not eroded by accusations of sexual wrongdoing. Comedian Damon Wayans said: “... the dude from 7th Heaven—his show is still on TV. Woody Allen is making shows and movies” (Washington, 2015, para. 8). Discussions of the “casting couch” were absent from the analyzed early coverage. Immediately after Cosby’s conviction, however, a scathing Philadelphia Inquirer column condemned the “institutionalized acceptance of sexual abuse, harassment, and assault of hopeful young people who yearn for professional success in it” (Polaneczky, 2018, para. 7).

Cruel Wives

Not unlike Athena, who turned the innocent virgin Medusa into a monster for having the misfortune of being raped in the goddess’s temple, Cosby’s and Kumar’s wives showed no compassion for the victims. Both vehemently defended their husbands and denigrated the victims—statements that received media’s full attention. Like Zeus’s wife Hera, they had been aware of their godlike husbands’ sexual

affairs (Pilkington & Gambino, 2014; Tiwari, 2014), but believed extramarital sex had been consensual. Both wives sought to punish the victims, even after the release of positive evidence from a rape kit in Kumar's case ("Bollywood Actor Inder," 2014) and the guilt-admitting deposition in Cosby's case ("The Creepy Cosby," 2015).

Kumar's wife had been away when the incident occurred because she allegedly knew her husband was going to have sex with the woman who later reported the rape (Bali & Talreja, 2014). Although upset by the affair, she stated emphatically: "The girl who is claiming that Inder has raped her was willingly staying with my husband" (Tiwari, 2014, para. 2). Cosby's wife maintained her husband's victims had agreed to take Quaaludes: "Camille Cosby says that the women who are accusing her husband of rape consented to take drugs and have sex with him" ("The Creepy Cosby" 2015, 24). Both wives denied victim status to the women who had reported sexual violence. In a statement, Camille Cosby said: "None of us will ever want to be in the position of attacking a victim. But the question should be asked—who is the victim?" (Pilkington & Gambino, 2014, para. 2). Pallavi Kumar Sarraf lamented her lonely quest to protect her victimized husband: "I am getting no help from police officials" (Tiwari, 2014, para. 2). She was repeatedly quoted saying the woman who reported the rape had "trapped" her husband (Tiwari, 2014), just like Camille Cosby wife repeatedly discredited the women who told stories of being drugged and raped: "There appears to be no vetting of my husband's accusers before stories are published or aired" (Kovaleski, 2014, A21). The two wives appeared blameless in the news coverage, even as they viciously attacked and denigrated their husbands' victims.

Silenced Victims

Like the mythological Philomela, whose voice was transformed into a wordless birdsong, rape survivors in both cases were silenced. The media frames in the coverage reflected a degree of awareness of this imposed silence. Cosby's coverage acknowledged that some of the survivors had been voiceless for years or decades (Malone & Demme, 2015). Their silencing had occurred preemptively because many had feared disbelief: ...I assumed I was not the only girl that he was doing this with, but who's going to believe me? Bill Cosby, the all-American dad, the all-American husband, Mr.

Jell-O, the guy everybody loves. Who would believe me? They would probably think I was out to get something ("Latest Bill Cosby," 2014, para. 3). The media frame acknowledging the victims' voicelessness was, however, at first overshadowed by an extensive focus on seeking "proof" and the reactions to it. After the release of Cosby's deposition in which he admitted to using Quaaludes, formerly staunch supporter singer Jill Scott tweeted: "Proof will always matter more than public opinion. The sworn testimony is proof. Completely disgusted" (Razaq, 2015, para. 4). Her widely quoted statement overlooked the accounts of all the women who had not been believed until Cosby's own admission became public. The victims' credibility remained under attack throughout Cosby's trials, with plaintiff Andrea Constand "hammered ... with accusatory questions" (Roig-Franzia, 2018, para. 22).

The coverage of Kumar's case portrayed the victim as agentic but utterly voiceless in comparison to Cosby's accusers. She reported her assault immediately, was tested with a rape kit, and filed a police report indicating she had suffered physical injuries (Bali & Talreja, 2014). Her name was not revealed, and her account never entered the public spotlight—whether by her choice or because of media's disinterest. Her character was formulated through police reports and statements from Kumar's wife. A few months later, Kumar's anonymous accuser was in the news again because she had reportedly tried to rob her sister (Devnath, 2014). This follow-up coverage, which reported no evidence, further stigmatized her and denied her the opportunity to speak publicly at any point without being harshly judged.

Discussion

This analysis explored media frames in the news coverage of sexual violence charges and accusations against Bill Cosby and Indian actor Inder Kumar. Despite the differences between the two cases (number of women coming forward, degree of stardom, method of "persuasion," etc.), the analysis suggests mythical narratives about rape, such as the many passes given to male celebrities for inexcusable behavior and the "monstering" of their victims, have continued to persist in contemporary news coverage even as Cosby's conviction became the first legal victory against a celebrity in the #MeToo era. When the media frames in the two cases diverged somewhat, it was mostly in that Kumar was defended by family

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and friends, while Cosby was defended by fans who had never even met him. Cosby's coverage also contained narratives of surprise that a man like him could ever act so inappropriately. Kumar's coverage, by contrast, emphasized the power dynamics in the practice of male celebrities taking advantage of female models or actors. These differences may reflect the Hindu/Buddhist emphasis on ascetism as well as the fact that Kumar never achieved Cosby's level of moral authority.

One major way in which the media frames in both cases differed from mythological narratives was that the victims were not seen as the property of guardian men or as unable to seek justice for themselves. Most of the news coverage reflected a pro-forma presumption of gender equality that maintained an illusion of journalistic objectivity, but failed to acknowledge the normativity of male dominance in sexual relations (Jensen, 2004). Presumed, instead, was an unrestrained sexual agency on the part of the survivors. In Cosby's case, one woman was asked in an interview why she did not bite Cosby's penis if she did not want to perform oral sex (Molinet, 2014). The survivor in Kumar's case was said to have been pursuing the actor and having questionable morals. The urge to mistrust and blame rape survivors in much of the coverage overwhelmed some of the frames' acknowledgment of men's social and sexual power.

This analysis was limited by dissimilarities between the two cases, but they are nevertheless important to consider as harbingers of the recent wave of sexual scandals affecting powerful men. Unlike Cosby and Kumar, more recently "discovered" perpetrators of sexual violence, such as Harvey Weinstein and Matt Lauer, have faced more immediate career consequences and swift public judgment. But in spite of Cosby's conviction and the few prominent cases, it is likely that in studios and newsrooms godlike serial rapists continue to enjoy power that renders their victims' voices inaudible and inconsequential. Future research should explore potential changes in the coverage of celebrity rape cases after Cosby's conviction and also include in-depth interviews with journalists, seeking insights about the rape narratives they may have internalized from literature, mythology, and popular culture. This analysis contributes to a large body of literature advancing the notion that sociocultural power dynamics are rooted in culture and history. It also has practical implications for journalists by offering a reminder that the commonsense, superficially objective "he-said-she-said" approach privileges an inherently patriarchal lens that rests in shared myths but betrays our current social reality.

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