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How In Which is the Brett Kavanaugh Rape Case Discussed and Reported Throughout the Media- A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate how language used throughout tweets and news reporting, regarding the Brett Kavanaugh rape case, can influence the social construction of rape. Tweets from verified users and online news reporting were used. A critical discourse analysis was conducted on the data to reveal 3 prominent themes: Us vs Them, Mockery and Disbelief and Reclaiming of Power. All three themes contained elements of power imbalance and rape myths, yet with the final theme these were used for deconstruction. The first two themes contribute heavily to the negative perception of rape victims and societies' common ideology however, this is contrasted with the deconstruction effect of the third theme. This shows how the media can be used to achieve alternative outcomes. The use of language in a negative manner contributes to rape culture, the negative perception and treatment of victims, and lack of reports and convictions. However, language can also be used to deconstruct these ideologies and power imbalance to empower victims to step forward and report.

KEY WORDS:	RAPE	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION	POWER	MEDIA	CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Introduction:

The Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2018a) reported in England and Wales, by September 2017, 48,773 incidents of rape were reported to the police- a 254% increase from April '06- March '07. This increase raises the question of whether it is a).prevalence or b).reporting of rape which is increasing or of course an interaction of both. What follows could shed light onto this as the present aim is to elucidate this inter-relationship.

The ONS (March 2017) report that 21,058 people 16 and over have experienced rape or assault by penetration (ONS, 2018b), however only 17% told police and 31% never told anyone about their experiences. When victims were asked why they never reported the incident, the top four replies were: embarrassment (47%), thought the police could not help (40%), feared humiliation (35%) or feared being disbelieved (28%). Other factors that discourage victims is the fear of non-supportive reactions, such as victim blaming and patronisation (Campbell et al, 2001), they may encounter afterwards (Ahrens, 2006).

Rape Culture, Rape Myths and Impact

Rape 'culture' can be defined as 'a society or environment whose prevailing social attitudes have the effect of normalising or trivialising sexual assault and abuse' (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). Thacker and Day (2017) have also defined it as the normalisation of sexual assault with victim blaming that influences the outcomes of trials and the treatment of victims.

Rape Culture is generated by Rape Myths (RMs) which are 'prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists' (Burt, 1980:217). They are generalised beliefs of sexual assault (SA) which affect subjective definitions, creating distorted beliefs of 'typical rapes', causing problematic responses from society such as victim blaming (Franiuk, 2008; Bohner et al, 2009; Suarez and Gadalla, 2010). Bohner et al (2009:3) identified four main types of RMs:

1) the victim is to blame
2) the victim is lying
3) the perpetrator is not at fault
4) only certain types of woman are raped, occurring in certain situations such as a violent physical attack perpetrated by a stranger in a dark alley (Lichty and Gowen, 2018).

When RMs are believed, this is Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA). RMA causes distortion of beliefs on sexual assault (Waterhouse et al, 2016) creating damaging effects for society and victims (Campbell et al, 2001; Temkin and Krahé, 2008), such as reduced reporting rates (Du Mont et al, 2003; Franiuk et al, 2008;Bohner et al, 2009; Waterhouse et al, 2016). RMA can been seen when looking at Bohner's RM, "the victim is to blame", regarding cases involving alcohol consumption. In such cases the blame is placed on victims as the presence of alcohol shifts the culpability to them (Hockett et al, 2016). This occurs as socially, alcohol is seen as a sexual aid, therefore its use suggests that a person is open to having sex (McMahon, 2007). The societal acceptance of this belief is shown by Lichty and Gowen (2018) who found that when youths were given a hypothetical situation regarding the use of alcohol and rape, more blame was placed on the women when she had consumed

alcohol compared to if she had not. This confirms victims' fears of victim blaming, influencing lack of reporting (Campbell et al 2001).

RMs are widely held within society (Gerger et al, 2007), even within the criminal justice system (Brown and King, 1998). RMA influences decisions made by investigators, prosecutors and the assessment of guilt, or innocence, made by jurors (Temkin and Krahé, 2008; Stewart and Jacquin, 2010). Those who accept RMs are less likely to label an assault as rape even when it fits in with the legal criteria (Norris and Cubbins, 1992). The UK Sexual Offences Act 2003 (2003:1) defines Rape as 'A person (A)

(a) penetrating the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis and

(b) B does not consents to the penetration and

(c) A does not reasonably believe that B consents'.

The RMA within the judicial system could be influencing the decline in conviction rates (Kelly et al, 2005; Temkin and Krahé, 2008) as well as the light sentences given, in the rare instances that people are convicted (Franiuk et al, 2008). Finch and Munro (2005) found that RMA in jurors in mock trials led to lower conviction rates for accused rapists and shorter sentences for those convicted. This supports victims' beliefs that the criminal justice system could not help them (National Office of Statistics, 2018) as nothing was done to punish the culprits, rather it was the victims on trial.

RMs not only influence the society surrounding the victim, but also the victim themselves. If a victim does not view their assault as rape, due to their partial RMA, they may not report it (Waterhouse et al, 2016). Research has shown that perceived 'real rapes', where a stranger is the perpetrator, are the majority of reported rapes (Waterhouse et al, 2016) and are twice as likely to be reported (Clay-Warner and McMahon-Howard, 2009).

RMA increases the likelihood of committing a SA, contributing to the prevalence of sexual violence (Franiuk et al, 2008). Research shows that RMA increases the self-reported likelihood of committing a rape (Bohner et al, 1998 and Bohner at el, 2009). It could be argued that this study was a hypothetical situation within a non-criminal population, therefore self-reported likelihood does no directly translate into actions. Yet, research has shown that RMA is linked with the actual perpetration of SAs (DeGue et al, 2010). RMA contributes to the commitment of assaults as individuals have skewed views, not viewing their actions as SA. For example a man may believe that acts of sexual aggression, such as verbally threatening someone to have sex with them, is not a 'real rape' therefore continuing to behave in this manner (Waterhouse et al, 2016).

Rape Culture in Technology and Media

Digital media in our society has become the standard means on how people acquire information, news, and viewpoints on cultural issues (Zaleski et al, 2016). It is an important component of modern-day culture and social change (Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018). Technology has created the allowance for individuals to influence others in a readily available public setting (Westerman et al, 2014). RMs are an object of transmitted culture and get passed on, person to person, through means such as the media (Franiuk et al, 2008; Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018). Therefore, creating new pathways for victim blaming in assault cases (Boux and Daum, 2015). Twitter users who engage in victim blaming are more likely to receive more retweets and more followers than those who engage in victim support (Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018).

Therefore victim blaming will be seen by more individuals, increasing the number of people accepting these RMs.

Instances of rape culture and influencing behaviours is seen throughout various forms of social media and popular culture, for example, sexual objectification (Davis, 2018), victims of rapist athletes labelled as "career destroyers" (Edwards, 2013), lyrics in popular songs; 'rape a pregnant bitch called it a three-some' (Tyler, The Creator, 2010) and 'I know you want it… blurred lines' (Thicke and Williams, 2013). The commentary of RMs discussed within social media reinforces rape culture (Zaleski et al, 2016). Another online issue influencing rape culture is online porn, being mainly aggressive and misogynistic, some estimating up to 88.8% (Bridges et al, 2010) and the way that sexual violence is legitimized and normalised within the western culture (Dodge, 2015). The age that children are accessing porn is getting younger (Fight the New Drug, 2018) exposing them to this type of violence at a younger age, integrating them into the rape culture of society earlier. This exposure promotes aggression and violence towards women, suggesting that this behaviour is socially acceptable (Baxter, 2018).

News reporting reflects the views and perceived norms of journalists and their audience (Hamilton, 2004), reinforcing perceptions and influencing those of others (Happer and Philo, 2013). When rape culture is expressed in the media, it predicts the frequency of rape (Baum et al, 2018), supporting this notion. A data analysis of keywords in newspapers, regarding rape culture such as victim blaming, was conducted and found that the higher prevalence of rape culture was associated with higher reporting of rape (Baum et al, 2018). Additionally, the expression of RMs in reports of SAs play an important role in defining and shaping the audience's perceptions of SA (Franiuk et al, 2008). This expression is detrimental as it tends to display SA as a random act instead of a societal issue (O'Hara, 2012). Research supports that the use of RMs in news articles influences the reader's beliefs about the event, such as blame and guilt/innocence (Franiuk et al, 2008). Franiuk et al (2008) looked at articles regarding the Kobe Bryant assault case and found those exposed to articles endorsing RMs were more likely to claim that the victim was lying and believe Bryant was innocent. This study consisted of both male and female participants with an age range of 18-49, giving data from both genders and a wide age range giving a wide varied sample easy to apply to society.

Therefore, the reports and discussion of SA in the media and social media could be substantial contributing factors to the prevalence of RMA throughout society (Suarez and Gadalla, 2010). This could also influence the low levels of reports of SA as the presence of rape culture decreases the likelihood of reporting (Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018). The use of RMs throughout social media and news reporting impacts the views of society regarding SA negatively (Franiuk et al, 2018) and increases the prevalence of SA (Baum et el, 2018). Therefore it is very important how SA cases are reported.

However there have been many prosocial uses of this technological development, such as combating rape culture (Mendes, 2015; Keller et al, 2016). The '#metoo' movement began with Tarana Burke who aimed to help women of colour who had experienced SA (Evans, 2018), with the title 'me too' being given to stress that women are not alone in their experiences (Fishbein, 2018). The hashtag movement online on twitter was encouraged by actress Alyssa Milano to encourage survivors to share their stories and demonstrate how prevalent and widespread SA and

harassment has become (Grady and North, 2018). Therefore, in this societal climate there are two opposing uses for technology regarding rape culture and SA which could impact the findings compared to previous years.

Twitter as 'Social' Media
Twitter is one of the fastest growing social media sites (Abel et al, 2011), its success accredited to its ability to connect people from many different cultural and geographical backgrounds (Raamkumar, 2018). Twitter involves users creating posts (tweets) of 140 characters which can contain @ to tag another person or use a hashtag for shared information (Murthy, 2010).
The unique nature and ability of Twitter allows statements from users to impact large audiences - one retweet can reach over 1000 people (Murthy, 2010). To date there is still very little known about how rape culture presents itself in social media, particularly regarding a mainstream case (Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018).

Social Constructionism, Power and Ideology
Social constructionism suggests that knowledge is created and sustained by social processes (Burr, 1995). It maintains a critical standpoint towards mainstream psychology and challenges the ideas of social phenomena, thoughts and behaviours as due to internal constructs such as personality and pre-given content (Burr, 1995) but rather due to language (Burr and Dick, 2017). People construct knowledge through language and social interactions in daily life, allowing knowledge to be shared (Burr, 1995). A key feature of social constructionism is cultural and historical specificity (Burr and Dick, 2017). The ways we view and understand the world are due to cultural and historical ideas, meaning all ways of comprehension are relative (Burr, 1995). Another key feature is power (Burr and Dick, 2017). Power comes from social factors such as status, wealth and job, meaning certain individuals, such as the president, have greater power than others generating more influence (van Dijk, 1995). Although power positions are not fixed, those with authority are those who set standards and social norms (Burr and Dick, 2017). It is through this influence and distribution of created social knowledge that ideologies can be formed (van Dijk, 1998). Ideologies are shared representations and group schemata which influence group beliefs and social practises (van Dijk, 1998). The different social constructs and ideologies in society lead to different social actions which can include, or exclude individuals (Burr, 1995).

This work researches the ways in which reporting and discussions on social media of high profile SA cases influence the publics' beliefs around SA , as well as potentially exacerbating the rape culture prolific in our modern day society. There is a lack of research around this topic (Wolf, 2013) and with SA being a prominent and important issue, it is important to examine how our public behaviour can influence and impact individuals, as well as society as a whole. In order to do this, tweets and media reports regarding the Brett Kavanaugh rape case will be analysed. This case has been very prominent in the media, with a large outreach, therefore it is an ideal case to use.

Theoretical Perspective and Methodology:
Design:
This investigation used a qualitative analysis to investigate how news reporting and social media discussions could impact the thoughts and beliefs of society

surrounding sexual assault. Qualitative research is an umbrella term for components of research methods which value language data (Polkinghorne, 2005). It is concerned with meaning and how people make sense of the world (Willig, 2008). Qualitative research techniques allow the understanding of the standpoint and beliefs of individuals regarding a focused topic (Hammarberg et al, 2016), such as sexual assault. This is why a qualitative research method was selected rather than quantitative.

Data collection:
All of the text data was taken from top result verified twitter users and news article searches. Verified user content has more outreach to the public, due to greater numbers of followers, and top news search results will reach a large number of people as they are first to be suggested. The news articles and tweets are top results but form a varied sample of opinions and views in order to reduce bias and allow insight into all positions.

Data analysis:
Once the data was collected, it was analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method. Discourse is the way in which people use language to build and create their social worlds, creating an intimate relationship between discourse and social practices (Jones et al, 2015). It is a specific practise of language use, in the form of social interaction, which can be interpreted individually forming a cognitive structure of belief (van Dijk, 1990). Discourse analysis is the study of the way in which the use of language can elicit different meanings and beliefs for different people depending on their individual comprehension of discourse in situations (Jones et al, 2015).

CDA encompasses the opposition of 'interpretivist' and 'structuralist' social sciences, suggesting that social life is constrained by social structures yet also informs the transformation of these social structures (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).
It attempts to investigate the complex relations between discourse and society, yet this cannot be done without the consideration and use of linguistic and sociological approaches (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). In CDA, discourse is seen as a mode of social practise which facilitates the sustaining, reproduction and even transformation of social norms (van Dijk, 1993; Weiss and Wodak). CDA aims to address the intertwined relationship between language and power (van Dijk, 1995; Weiss and Wodak, 2003) and how this can influence dominance and inequality throughout society (van Dijk, 1993). For CDA language is not only powerful by itself, it gains power from the powerful people that use it (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). Through the use of discourse in regards to power and inequality, such as inequalities between men and women, ideological constructs can be created (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Ideology is considered crucial in the maintenance of the power imbalance with CDA aiming to explain the discourses used through the comprehension and explanation of ideologies to illuminate the root of these ideas (van Dijk, 1995; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). CDA also deals with resistance against such dominant ideologies and elite power within discourse (van Dijk, 1995). Therefore, CDA aims to explore how the relationship between discourse and power interacts with the ideologies held within society. CDA was chosen as the methodology of this research as it aims to investigate how sexual assault regarding the Brett Kavanaugh case is reported and

how this can impact society.

There is not a universal methodological approach to CDA, rather a multifarious approach derived from various theoretical backgrounds (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). CDA does not characterise a specific methodology of discourse analysis, rather it expresses a critical approach and stance of analysing text (van Dijk, 1995). Multiple theorists propose differing approaches to CDA (Fairclough, 2001; Van Dijk, 1995). but throughout I will take reference from van Dijk's (1993; 1995) work.
CDA is useful when analysing news and social media data as they are a large influence on social interpretations and ideologies (Zaleski et al, 2016) and CDA uncovers the processes of language which creates and influences these (van Dijk, 1995).
The data was analysed with inspiration from van Dijk's (1993; 1995) work. Throughout I questioned how the articles and tweets referenced and exposed the imbalances of power, status and gender and the impression this imposed onto the reader. It is not only the power, or lack of, within the social participants but also that of the writer as they also control the discourse within the media (van Dijk, 1995). The construction, or deconstruction, of power and ideologies was considered and its' participation in the beliefs of society and the reader, with reference to van Dijk (1993).

Ethical considerations:
This work must adhere to the ethical code of conduct specified by The British Psychological Society (2018), which all psychological research must follow, as well as the ethical guidelines set by Manchester Metropolitan University (Appendix 1). There were few ethical considerations for this work as the data used was from online public domains meaning consent was not required.

<u>Analysis and Discussion:</u>
Us VS Them
Throughout analysis it was clear that the differentiation between different 'groups' was a strong strategy employed to further each case. This method is referred to as polarisation whereby positive own-group characteristics are emphasised whilst negatively representing the others in order to further own ideological views (van Dijk, 1993). In this instance being that Dr Ford is lying and Brett Kavanaugh is telling the truth, women lie about rape in order to 'ruin' men.
Extract one: 'Judge Brett Kavanaugh is a fine man, with an impeccable reputation, who is under assault by radical left wing politicians who don't want to know the answers, they just want to destroy and delay.' (Appendix 2)
This is a tweet by Donald Trump, the President of The United States, who therefore has great social and political power influencing those receiving this discourse greatly (van Dijk, 1995), feeding into the ideology and RM that women lie about rape (Bohner et al, 2009) and transmitting this ideology to many people through the media (Zaleski et al, 2016).
It begins with a declarative describing Brett Kavanaugh (BK) as a 'fine man', presenting him in a positive, yet not over exaggerated, manner. His reputation , 'impeccable', suggesting that since he has no trouble previously, therefore, he would not be the type to commit the accused act. This is juxtaposed with the negative portrayal of the Democrats as 'radical left wing politicians', emphasising the contrast between the positive in-group (Donald Trump, BK and Republicans) and negative

outgroup (Democrats and Dr Ford). It highlights the perceived contrast of Republicans and BK wanting to demonstrate the truth, opposed to Democrats and Dr Ford wanting to 'destroy and delay'. Again, emphasising personal positives and other negatives. This furthers the negative ideology of rape as threats towards the in-group, Republicans/men being destroyed by the Democrats/women, increases negative views and beliefs surrounding the outgroup (Caricati et al, 2016).

BK is said to be 'under assault', reversing the positions of the individuals involved as it is alleged that Dr Ford is the one who was assaulted by BK, feeding into the common practise of 'victims' being placed on trial rather than the perpetrators. It is the 'victims' who must prove it occurred, defend their stories and be interrogated rather than the alleged perpetrators protesting their innocence.

The title 'Judge' is used prior to BK immediately establishing his social status and dominance, subconsciously influencing our immediate perceptions. Those in positions of power are viewed as more trustworthy and credible (Nesler et al, 1993), influencing our beliefs on this situation that BK is trustworthy, due to his Judge title[1], therefore he must be truthful when professing he is innocent; Dr Ford is lying.

This could deter reporting of rape as it portrays a 'battle' between themselves and the accused, with rape being such an emotionally damaging and traumatic experience (Chivers-Wilson, 2006) individuals do not want to engage in such a distressing time for them to 'lose'.

Conversely, this technique is used in the news reporting for the benefit of Dr Ford vs Brett Kavanaugh.

Extract 2: 'Kavanaugh's performance could only look more unfortunate once Ford, had, in contrast, maintained her dignity throughout a Senate hearing whose resemblance to an early ecclesiastical court is probably inevitable- since both ritualise the public sex-shaming of a violated woman by disbelieving but insatiably curious patriarchs.' (Appendix 3)

Kavanaugh's behaviour during the hearing is described as a performance, suggesting that he was the one being false, contrasting the belief that Dr Ford is a liar, perhaps breaking down this popular RM (Bohner et al, 2009). This is juxtaposed with Dr Ford's dignity which she maintained throughout, creating the dimension of positive and negative attributes of each group. The complexity of maintaining dignity and respect deserved is highlighted by the difficult circumstances of the hearing, being compared to 'an early ecclesiastical court'. This refers to the historical context and how this influences social beliefs and ideologies (Burr and Dick, 2017). Throughout history it was viewed that rape was committed by black men, therefore, when a women was raped by a white man she had to protest and prove that she was truthful (Wriggins, 1983). This explains why there is much doubt and little action around Dr Ford's allegations, compared to other high profile allegations involving black men such as Bill Cosby who has been convicted (Durkin, 2018). This also explains why victims, such as Dr Ford, are said to be the ones put to trial rather than the perpetrators. This historical context emphasises the vast scale inequality between gender, power and race, creating opposing groups. The comparison of the hearing to a '17th-century rape trial' criticising societies view that we have evolved through history and are more knowledgeable and developed, yet this suggests this is untrue and that the Republicans and some of society are still stuck in this historical

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[1] This is an example of a Barthesian Myth (Barthes, 1972). This is where ideologies are so engrained within society that they are accepted truths and realities (Chandler, 2007)- those in positions of power within society can be trusted and relied upon.

mind frame. This creates the negative view of Republicans as 'backward' old thinkers and Democrats and Dr Ford as 'enlightened' and forward thinkers. The negative ideologies of rape originate in early history (Block, 2002) and are still in existence due to media transmission (Franiuk et al, 2008; Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018) and the use of social and political power (van Dijk, 1998). This is aiming to try and break down the engrained views, beliefs and ideologies in society and enlightening the readers to the history and reason of this being.

This could be the beginning to deconstructing the rape myths throughout society (Happer and Philo, 2013) and creating a safe community for victims of rape to feel comfortable in coming forward and reporting as journalists have power in the media to influence others in this positive manner (van Dijk, 1995)[2].

Mockery and Disbelief

Extract 3: 'Judge Kavanaugh now being accused of kicking his mother several times…………………… while in the womb.'

'Breaking: Democrats have a witness who says Kavanaugh cheated at Pin the Tail On the Donkey in Kindergarten class.' (Appendix 4)

These tweets come from a well-known radio presenter in New York. He has a lot of power and outreach due to his job (van Dijk, 1995) meaning that many people will interact with this tweet. The initial use of the powerful title 'Judge' again immediately influences our perceptions of BK and creates a positive initial view (Nesler et al, 1993). The use of the temporal adverb 'now' with the passive verb phrase 'being accused' implies that BK is innocent and that he is just accused, not guilty. Additionally, the Democrats are just creating many false stories and this is the most recent one. It is suggesting that all of these stories, including the rape accusation, are made up, strengthening the belief of the rape myth that individuals just lie about sexual assault (Bohner et al, 2009). The comparison between the actual accusation and the 'parodies', kicking his mother several times in the womb and cheating at Pin the Tail On the Donkey in Kindergarten, trivialises rape and mitigates its actual experience and effect. Mockery is used in order to uphold the power over women and keep them from coming forward by perpetuating the fear of humiliation if they do so (ONS, 2018b).

Another prominent example of mockery is from a speech given by Donald Trump which has been discussed in both tweets and news. Throughout the speech he poses questions about the night yet interjects quickly repeating the same declarative 'I don't remember' in such a manner implying no thought and automatic general response.

Extract 4: 'I had one beer (.) well do you think it was- *NO it was one beer* (.) oh really how did you get home- *I don't remember* how did you get there- *I don't remember* where was the place- *I don't remember*' (Appendix 5)

This suggests that Ford is lying and that she just repeats 'I don't remember' to all questions as she doesn't know the answer because the story is made up. This again pushes the rape myth that people just lie about sexual assault (Bohner et al, 2009) as well as increasing the fear that reporting an assault will be humiliating and cause negative responses (ONS, 2018b; Ahrens, 2006). It give the impression that Ford is flustered and unreliable due to giving the same answer for every question, however,

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[2] This is an example of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1956) where the language we use can influence the thoughts and beliefs of others- if they are aware of this ability, individuals can use language to their advantage to promote their cause in the media.

during trial she answered all of the questions clearly (Edwards, 2018). Granted, there are some questions where she could not remember, however, this does not automatically mean that she is lying. Trauma can cause lapses in memory at the time surrounding the traumatic event with the trauma being recalled in great detail (Levine, 2018), which follows her testimony (Edwards, 2018). Also, this analogy uses remembering drinking a beer as an equivalent to remembering a rape. This trivialises a traumatic experience to a usual activity, emphasising the perception of rape as more insignificant than in reality.

The use of the emotive 'shattered', describing BK's life and his wife due to the accusation and his life being in 'tatters' emphasises the negativity surrounding 'they'- the Democrats, women and Ford. The declaratives 'they destroy people' and 'these are really evil people' create the contrast between BK, his wife and 'beautiful incredible young' daughters. It creates the separation and negative polarising view of the others, further promoting in-group ideologies.

Reclaiming the power
Another key feature seen throughout was the reclaiming of power for women which is a relatively new strategy witnessed, probably due to the #metoo movement.
It is said that men use rape to uphold the power they have over women (Groth et al, 1977). It is also upheld by the denial of the women's experiences of rape if they did not report immediately. Throughout the media there is a beginning of reclaiming women's power.
Extract 5: 'I have no doubt that, if the attack on Dr. Ford was as bad as she says, charges would have been immediately filed with local Law Enforcement Authorities' (Appendix 6)
In this tweet Donald Trump is again enforcing societal ideologies and rape myths that women lie, insinuated by the fact that the attack must not have occurred as she said since she did not report. He is using his power, as a white man and president, to influence individuals to further ideologies (van Dijk, 1995) for his 'group' benefit. However, individuals are now beginning to reclaim the power that others are taking from them.
Extract 6: 'Hey, @realDonaldTrump, listen the fuck up. I was sexually assaulted twice when I was a teenager. I never filed a police report and it took me 30 years to tell me parents. If any survivor of sexual assault would like to add to this please do so in the replies. #MeToo' (Appendix 7)
This emphasises that even though the sexual assault was not reported, it does not mean that it didn't occur and that others are lying. The experience cannot be taken away because of this fact, they are not letting their power and experience be taken away by others (van Dijk, 1995).
The use of the noun 'survivor' as opposed to the usual 'victim' changes the dynamic and view of the individual. Victims are usually assumed to be 'hurt' and 'weak' (Fohring, 2018) whereas survivors are 'strong' and 'brave' (Papendick and Bohner, 2017). This is a reclaim of power as individuals who have experienced rape are not letting this strip their power to be viewed as weak and damaged but rather as resilient and courageous individuals. They will not be reduced down. This challenges societies views and beliefs of rape victims, gradually breaking down societies' ideologies.
The encouragement to share experiences and the use of '#metoo' creates a community and support network to share difficult experiences that individuals may

have not been able to share with anyone before, since 31% of rape victims never told anyone about their experiences (ONS, 2018b). This could be the starting point of increasing rates of reports as it empowers individuals who have experienced this and give them the courage to come forward after sharing their own experiences or reading others'. Reclaiming power is also shown in news reporting.

Extract 7: 'How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America' (Appendix 8)
This headline for TIME Magazine is very powerful. The use of the past tense for the verb 'changed' implies that her, seemingly simple, act of testifying has already made a difference to one of the largest and most powerful countries in the world (Baker, 2018). This is juxtaposed with the opening declarative
'History often seems inexorable in hindsight, shaped by powerful figures operating beyond our control.'
This highlights how it is the powerful individuals of society that shape our lives and knowledge, and yet Ford has managed to overturn these many years of construction with a single testimony. She is the one with the power now.
Throughout it is expressed how difficult it is to deal with the experience of rape and sexual assault as well as testifying and reliving it. The 'trauma of sexual violence', reliving the experience in 'excruciating detail' and the statement that 'I am not here because I want to be,' … 'I am terrified.' emphasises the pain and horror of this experience. It is not something to be trivialised or 'written off' simply because there was no report immediately. The expression of her fear stresses that even though she had a traumatic experience, and will have to relive it, she is not going to let the powerful strip her of her power, she is using her bravery and courage to rise above it and reclaim the power for her and other individuals in the world.
Throughout they also use the noun 'survivor' in replacement of 'victim' due to the more positive connotations surrounding 'survivor' (Papendick and Bohner, 2017). This could aid reporting as individuals witness that it is okay to feel scared and hurt by the experience but that it doesn't define them, they are brave individuals who have the ability to stand up and do something to change society, even if it seems so small it makes a significant impact.

Conclusion:
This research aimed to contribute to existing research regarding rape discussions in the media and social construction of beliefs, but also add more insight into how this occurs, effects beliefs and reporting when regarding a very high profile defendant and case.
It is highlighted that power and power imbalance is key. The use of the societal power imbalance is used throughout in order to maintain this dynamic. This is done through the use of rape myths such as 'she's lying' and the mockery of victims who have stepped forward. These are all used to dis-empower women in order to keep men's societal power and status above them. Emotive language is used when describing the alleged perpetrator in order to humanised him to appear more relatable and human, implying he is a good person and would not commit such an act. This positive portrayal contrasts the negative one of Ford. The villainisation of Ford and women upholds the positive power of the men and BK. However, it is now beginning that this power is being deconstructed with the reclaiming of women's power due to the #metoo movement.
This work shows how the use of language and power in the media aids the social construction of beliefs and ideologies regarding rape and how this can influence behaviour such as perpetrating or reporting. With the #metoo movement being

relatively recent, it would be interesting to investigate further how this is impacting societies views of rape and how it is influencing victims, reports of sexual assault and convictions.

This work elucidates the way in which societies' views and ideologies are created and maintained, to highlight how these and the use of language can negatively impact on victims. It highlights the importance of the media being accountable for propagating rape myths and exclusions of evidence which maintains the power imbalance in society between men and women, leading to miscarriages of justice and impacting significantly on individuals lives. Hopefully this will create more insight and knowledge leading to a more positive and supportive society for victims to come forward and report. Additionally, this will hopefully also lead to fairer trials and more conviction rates for rapists as juries will be more aware of rape myths and therefore may not be as influenced by them.

Reflexive Analysis:

Taking guidance from Willig's (2013) discussion of reflexivity, I considered my personal position in relation to the research and how this influenced my work.

I chose to investigate the social construction of rape and how language perpetuates societies beliefs as it is such a prominent feature of today's society, with new cases arising constantly. Sexual assault and harassment is a common occurrence in women's lives today, with everyone knowing multiple women who have experienced this in their lifetime, with it just getting dismissed. In order to reduce biases I decided to look into a rape case as I have had no personal experience of this, therefore this would reduce my personal bias on the research. I already had strong beliefs that the media is very unsupportive and condemning of rape victims and the use of specific language and rape myths in reporting perpetuates societies negative beliefs and ideologies. However, I was met with unexpected results. I had prior knowledge to the #metoo movement but I thought that it was confined to twitter and social media and had only impacted select individuals who interact with this type of media. I believed that more hostile views and language regarding women would be seen in news reporting compared to twitter data. However, the #metoo movement has been adopted throughout media reporting with them showing vast amounts of support for Ford and victims whilst most of the negativity is from white men on twitter.

This research aims to look at how the use of language within social media and news influences the social construction and ideologies of rape and how this influences individuals beliefs and behaviour. However, I believe that this is very deterministic to imply that individuals beliefs, which then influence behaviour, are solely created through the influence of the media. Therefore research could be conducted using focus groups to investigate individuals personal opinions when looking at a specific rape cases. This would provide in-depth perception and reasoning for specific beliefs and behaviours.

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