

AN 'OTHER' WOMAN'S RAPE

Abjection and Objection in Representations of War Rape Victims in the DRC

by

Amanda Lea Victoor

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## Errata Statement

As of February 20, 2011 this thesis has been revised in order to rectify a series of unfortunate errors in citation and in the misrepresentation of the article, *Battles on women's bodies: War, rape and traumatisation in eastern Democratic of Congo* (Trenholm, Olsson & Ahlberg 2009).

Footnote 50, previously located on page 97 of this thesis, has been removed as it contained false information regarding the identity of the Trenholm et al. research participants. The footnote claimed to list community leaders who participated in the study; however, this was incorrect as those named were NOT participants of the study but rather research colleagues of the authors. This error was my own misreading of the article's acknowledgements and I must assert that at no time was I made aware of the names or identities of the study participants. I extend my sincerest apologies to the misnamed individuals, study participants and the authors for this unfortunate error.

The main paragraph on page 31 has been completely revised due to an extensive citation error from the Trenholm et al article. This includes a rewriting of the main paragraph with the addition of a reference to Harmon-Snow and Barouski (2006). A reference to Bryant & Zillman (2002) at the beginning of the following paragraph has also been added. These sources have been included in my References.

In addition, the statement on page 33 regarding the ICTR's expanded definition of crimes against humanity was originally attributed to the Trenholm et al article and has been replaced with a direct reference to the Statute of the ICTR.

## **ABSTRACT**

The growing global awareness of sexual violence as a weapon of war has been accompanied by the strategic and pervasive inclusion of women's personal stories of war rape. This representational strategy of Western media, academia and humanitarian policies was critically examined in order to understand how war raped women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are discursively situated as "Other." Drawing on the theoretical concepts of abjection and objection, the study did not question the truth of women's experience but rather examined whether the pervasive inclusion of war rape stories constituted a true feminine subjectivity. A Foucauldian notion of discourse provided a method to expose meaning and dominant discourses, which make certain identities and stories of war rape more visible than others. The purpose of this study was to critically engage with dominant Western discourses of war rape and provide a more complex understanding of how diverse power structures, identities and representational practices impact the struggle of Congolese women to open self-determined pathways of empowerment.

A qualitative method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to examine the textual and visual processes of representation. Samples of text were taken from three main areas: media coverage (print, television, web based magazines, and films), feminist academic literature (journals, reports and books), and humanitarian policies (UN mission reports, Security Council resolution, mandates and reports).

The results revealed that war rape victims, the DRC and acts of war rape were all positioned as "Other" and as a media spectacle that was further consumed

by Western audiences. It was also found that certain war rape identities and social factors remained invisible, including the West's complacency in the DRC conflict. Ultimately, the study finds a tension between discourse as a tool of liberation and a tool of power and control. This thesis recommends that anti rape activists must examine their own dominance over war rape victims and consider new strategies—beyond the simple act of storytelling—that will position rape victims as the subjects (not objects) of their own struggle to end war rape.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am incredibly indebted to my fellow graduate students, particularly my officemates and members of the Feminist Discussion group, whose relentless support, friendship, and extraordinary talks were a constant inspiration and source of support. A special thank you must be expressed to all the residents of 26 Hamilton for whom it has been a joy and a privilege to share brilliant ideas, good food and much laughter over the last two years. I would like to acknowledge a

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## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

He followed me and then forced me to lie down. He said he would kill me. I struggled with him hard; it went on for a long time. Then he went for his rifle, pressed it on the outside of my vagina and shot his entire cartridge into me. I just heard the voice of bullets. My clothes were glued to me with blood. I passed out.

Alfonsine, raped by a soldier in the DRC  
Interviewed by Eva Ensler in *Glamour Magazine* (2007: 5)

Sexual violence in war is ubiquitous; it spans time, place and culture. Despite this, the torturous cost of being a woman during wartime has been systematically silenced by governments, armies and—until recently—the media. Extraordinary advocacy by feminists to end the silence of war rape has initiated a recent and pivotal shift in the global awareness of war rape; it has been dragged from the obscure shadows of war to be named, studied, reported and criminalized as a violation against humanity. The issue of war rape is no longer relegated to the individual as more women, like Alfonsine, are talking about their experience of war rape. These growing voices have contributed to raising global awareness and reducing the stigma of war rape while making women’s personal stories available to be told and retold through various mediums—media outlets, feminist theories, and humanitarian work and policies. For the first time, we have terms for this profoundly complex issue and the explicit stories of the brutality that women experience to go along with those terms. The pervasiveness of women’s personal stories and the focus on specific acts of rape point to the potential ways in which women’s experience may be appropriated, objectified and used to deny a true feminine subjectivity. But despite the recognition of rape as a war crime and

expressions of outrage from journalists, academics and politicians--the war on women's bodies continues to be waged. How can women voicing their stories of suffering not enact change? To explore this issue I will focus on women's experience of war rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and ask three main questions: Does the media, feminist and development policies pervasive representation of women's stories of war rape truly represent a feminine subjectivity? How do these representations discursively position women as "Other"? What identities or social actors are rendered invisible through the act of representing women's stories of war rape?

The ubiquity of war rape narratives has certainly raised awareness about the long silenced issue of sexual violence in war; however, the consistent focus on the extraordinarily brutal acts of rape and the simplified construction of victimhood (in what is a very complex war) raises questions about the network of power relations and processes of representation that construct these narratives. To contextualize the politics of representation, I will utilize Michel Foucault's (1978) notion of discourse to explore the breadth of material, social actors and institutions involved in the processes of representing women's stories of war rape. Incorporating Thiven Reddy's (2000) notion of resistance, I will explore the contradictory role of academics, journalist and policymakers in both opening discursive space for victims of war rape and using representational practices that deny women's subjectivity and agency. Using a theoretical framework of 'discursive Othering' will provide a space to critically engage with the frequently unquestioned representations of women's war rape. The attempt of this thesis is not to question the truth of women's

narratives, but rather to explore the construction of meanings and the ways in which individuals and institutions discursively (re)produce the victims and violence of war rape as Other. Specifically, the analysis will explore how this form of ‘storytelling’<sup>1</sup> situates certain identities and stories of war rape as discursively visible, while others remain invisible. In addition, the fascination with war rape by Western audiences will be examined to understand how this may contribute to the overall objectification of women and the rampant lack of political will and action from the global community. The purpose of this study is to highlight the complexity of systematic sexual violence in armed conflicts and expose potential inequalities within dominant Western depictions of victimhood that obstruct DRC women from being subjects in their own emancipation from sexual violence.

To contextualize the phenomenon of sexual violence in war, Chapter Two will explore the key role that feminist intellectuals have played in raising public awareness of war rape and the shift from theorizing sexual violence in peacetime to the context of war. Peacetime theories have informed the most widely accepted understanding of ‘rape as a weapon of war,’ used to shame, silence and terrorize enemy communities. In addition, feminist theories of representation regarding victimization, media and international laws will provide an important context for exploring women’s subjectivity.

In Chapter Three, the theoretical underpinnings of discursive Othering will be defined by combining a Foucauldian approach to power as discourse with a

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘storytelling’ is not used to demean or suggest any untruth in women’s narratives, but is intended to point to the fact that women’s stories are always *told* through processes of representation controlled by a network of other social actors (journalists, policy makers, feminist academics).

selection from the postcolonial literature on the 'Other' and Kristeva's (1980) notion of "abjection". As my methodology, I will engage in a Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the frequently unquestioned processes of representing women's war rape stories. This method provides an avenue to destabilize dominant discourses while exploring both the explicit content and the implicit construction of meaning in storytelling war rape.

Chapter Four will critically examine how development policies, feminist texts, and media coverage make visible certain aspects of war rape. Three main themes will be explored. The first theme will investigate the discursive Othering of women and the DRC. The second theme will focus on the media's formation of the 'spectacle' of war rape and the consumption of that spectacle by a largely Western audience. The last theme will expand on the first two sections by understanding how the spectacle of violence and practices of Othering have made certain identities and systems of war rape invisible.

Chapter Five will conclude with a discussion on feminine subjectivity, the global nature of war rape, the West's role in the production and consumption of violence and the importance of working to make women's voices not only present but operative.

#### **CASE STUDY: WAR IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was chosen as the case study for this thesis because it represents one of the most contemporary examples of sexual violence in armed conflict. In the forth chapter, we shall explore the nature

of the DRC conflict, the political actors involved and the use of sexual violence to contextualize the complexity of both the war and women’s experience of violence over the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> Warfare in the DRC cannot be understood without understanding the impact of neighboring conflicts. After the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Hutu refugees--including the Rwandan Interhamwe militia--flooded the Eastern Congo, and conflict quickly ensued (HHI & Oxfam 2010). In 1998, President Kabila’s order for Rwandan and Ugandan militias to leave the DRC sparked a second war involving “eight African foreign armies”(HHI & Oxfam 2010: 4), rebel militia and Mai-Mai (Congolese resistance fighters) (Longombe, Claude & Ruminjo 2008). This second conflict has been named “Africa’s World War” as the death toll—an estimated 5.4 million—was the highest since WWII (HHI & Oxfam 2010:4). The war officially ended with a peace agreement in 2003; however, to date the fighting wages on in the eastern region of the country (HHI & Oxfam 2010). In 2009, the DRC and Rwanda agreed to work together to disband the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR)<sup>3</sup>, a group often suggested to be mainly responsible for the ongoing violence (HHI & Oxfam 2010). The attempt to disband the group instigated more violence and the region remains unstable (HHI & Oxfam 2010).<sup>4</sup>

The political situation in the DRC has improved with democratic elections held in 2006 and continuously strong ties with neighboring states; however, the

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<sup>2</sup> The DRC conflict involved many actors, motives, and details that are outside of the scope of this project. This brief summary is intended to help contextualize this project, not to provide an exhaustive history or analysis of the war.

<sup>3</sup> The FDLR’s leadership is suspected to be responsible, in part, for the Rwandan genocide (HHI & Oxfam 2010).

<sup>4</sup> The other armed group suggested to be “responsible for much of the fighting and displacement of civilians is the Congolese Tutsi rebel group, Congrès National Pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP)”; However, it should be noted there are a number of armed groups and militias that enter into the “fray” of the Congolese conflict (HHI & Oxfam 2010:5)

instability in the Eastern region continues with periodic outbreaks of violence that are not easily defused by the state (UN Security Council 2010). The continued violence has been largely connected to issues of ethnic violence, impunity, and disputes regarding the control of mineral resources; namely, coltan, gold and diamonds (HHI & Oxfam 2010). The years of fighting and war in the DRC have led to total socioeconomic collapse and major human rights abuses--particularly rape (Longombe, Claude & Ruminjo 2008). "The true extent of the sexual violence in the DRC is not known" but the most recent estimates place the number of rapes to be in the "tens of thousands of women" who have been raped (HHI & Oxfam 2010:1). Along with the communal, psychological and social issues that accompany mass rape, the specific brutality of rape has been well documented by the Human Rights Watch (2002). The brutality of rape in the DRC means that many victims suffer from many physical traumas including fistulas and sexually transmitted illnesses like HIV/AIDS (Longombe, Claude & Ruminjo 2008). Despite minor progress over the last few years, the issue of sexual violence in the DRC remains widespread. Chapter Two, will now explore the feminist theoretical underpinnings of rape as a weapon of war and women's victimization in both peace and wartime sexual violence.

## CHAPTER 2: SITUATING RAPE AS A WEAPON OF WAR

“Violence against women has been part of every documented war in history” (Brownmiller 1975; Milillo 2006:196) and is not limited to certain militaries, states or regions of the world (Brownmiller 1975; Seifert 1994; Niarchos 1995). The most recent civil conflicts of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have epitomized this shift in warfare tactics; from war being fought on the front lines to being fought on the bodies of women through systematic and widespread rape.

To better understand the phenomenon of war rape<sup>5</sup>, further definition of the problem and theories of sexual violence in armed conflict is necessary. Teresa de Lauretis’ concepts of the “rhetoric of violence” and “violence of rhetoric” (1987) are useful to contextualize the ways that language has produced violence and situated (or erased) certain actors and identities. Moreover, examining theories of sexual violence means, “speculating on traumatic experiences [which] has always been a contentious agenda” (Mardorossian 2002: 747). In a testament to the complexity of war and sexual violence, there is no one agreed-upon theory, definition or approach to war rape among scholars.<sup>6</sup> Despite this lack of agreement certain theoretical

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<sup>5</sup> There is little consensus about the terminology of sexual violence in armed conflict. For the purpose of avoiding wordiness I will use the term “war rape” to describe the sexually based acts of violence that occur during and after an armed conflict by militia and armed groups. This will be contrasted by the use of the term “civilian rape” to describe those acts of sexual violence that do not involve militia or armed groups. (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 2)

<sup>6</sup> The approaches discussed are primarily from a Western feminist perspective. While an examination of global feminist perspectives is beyond the scope of this paper, it would add greater

concepts are often used to explain the purpose, role and motivation of rape as weapon in armed conflict. While these theoretical concepts were largely founded in feminist advocacy to end peacetime rape--as the awareness of the issue of rape in war increased--these basic tenets were expanded and applied to the context of rape in wartime. This development--from theorizing on peacetime to wartime rape--marked a critical shift in feminist literature, as rape became theorized and understood as a weapon of war. This literature review will also discuss the expansion of the feminist analysis of representations of victimization and the media. Finally, the United Nations role in enacting war rape in international humanitarian law will be briefly discussed. One key conclusion to be drawn from this literature review is that war rape must be understood as “motivated and perpetuated by a complex mix of individual and collective, pre-meditated and circumstantial reasons” (OCHA 2008: 1). In terms of complexity, the case of war in the DRC is no exception.

## **I. THEORIZING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: A SHIFT FROM PEACE TO WARTIME RAPE**

War rape is not a new phenomenon; however, the growing awareness and coverage of war rape in the media, academia and international humanitarian law does constitute a new and important shift in how war rape is both understood and theorized. Historically<sup>7</sup>, sexual violence has been viewed simply as an unfortunate outcome of war rather than a weapon or humanitarian crime (Koo 2002). Implicit in this assumption is a denial of the specifically gendered nature of victimhood.

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depth to the theoretical knowledge and key debates. It should be asserted that there is no one definitive theory or solution within the feminist understanding sexual violence in war.

<sup>7</sup> This is in reference to disciplines outside of feminism and largely before World War I.

Therefore, everyone's experience of war was treated the same, and this gender-neutral language systematically erased the unique ways women are specifically discriminated and violated in war (Turpin & Lorentzen 1998)

Feminists recognition of the unique ways women are victimized has been critical to the project of increasing awareness of sexual violence in peacetime and later transformed the way that war rape was understood. Feminist anti rape advocates have been particularly focused on advancing the theoretical and practical understanding and definition of peacetime and wartime rape. In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist theories focused on peacetime sexual violence, and understood rape in terms of unequal power relations, discrimination and misogyny in patriarchal societies (Daly 1973; Brownmiller 1975; Dworkin 1987). These foundational works of Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* directly contrasted with the long prevailing sociobiological theories of rape.<sup>8</sup> These earlier feminist theories on sexual violence emphasized that rape was not a sexually motivated act, but a violent expression of power and domination (Millo 2006). Brownmiller made the (now common) "patriarchal association [between] the female body and territory," in which "raping one and conquering the other" becomes metaphorically identical (Allen 1996: 88). Susan Griffin (1977) elaborated on Brownmiller's perspective by defining women's constant fear of rape as a social condition arising out of living in a "rape culture" (Cahill 2001: 4). Likewise, the work of Catherine MacKinnon (1989) also contributed a unique perspective regarding sexuality, as she argued the compulsory

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<sup>8</sup> Theories such as Thornhill and Palmer (2000) link the motivation for rape to presumed natural biological and sexual urges that, without the restricting legal and social norms, would cause men to rape.

nature of heterosexuality and the eroticization of male dominance were responsible for sexual violence (Cahill 2001). According to MacKinnon's theory, "rape was not an exception to heterosexual sexuality...but rather its logical extension" (Cahill 2001:3). These theories of sexual violence were paramount in making visible the location of rape within masculine sites of power and oppression.

While public awareness of sexual violence has increased, the terms "sexual violence," "sexual assault," and "rape"<sup>9</sup> continue to be hotly debated by feminist scholars (Kelly 1988; Seifert 1994; Jacobson et al 2000; Salzman 2006). This contention exists because the social problem of sexual violence is in constant flux and so deeply complex that even naming the phenomenon remains problematic. Earlier works, such as Liz Kelly's (1987) *Continuum of Sexual Violence*, redefined sexual violence based on a woman's own definition of abuse and expanded the definition beyond stranger rapes to include a much broader range of experiences of violence; sexual violence encompassed all forms of violence, including abuse, coercion and force by men against women.<sup>10</sup> While Kelly's definition emphasizes the psychological and social, others feminists focus on the physical to define sexual violence. In these more technical terms, rape is often broadly understood as the "penetration of the vagina and/or anus with a penis without consent" (Horvath and Brown 2009: 5). However, other definitions, such as sexual assault, expand on this

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<sup>9</sup> Though focusing on sexual violence, it is important to note that this is "but *one* of the many experiences of women in war" and this concentration on the DRC conflict is not intended to "marginalize, or prioritize, some cases of war rape over others, nor does it deny that men and children are victims of war rape and sexualized violence" (Koo 2002:527)

<sup>10</sup> These contributions from the feminist movement has led to crucial advancements in both the public and political recognition of sexual violence and its "systematic nature perpetuated by gender inequality" (McMillan 2007: 17).

basic definition to include any unwanted sexual contact. This broader definition includes “a range of behaviors from unwanted touching or kissing to penetration with an object” (Horvath and Brown 2009: 5). Katrina Koo accounts for the unique violence of rape in war by defining it as, “any unwanted penetration of the sexual organ or anus of a person with the perpetrator’s sexual organ, body part, or foreign object as well as forced oral sex” (2002: 527). Koo (2002) expands on common peacetime definitions of rape to include the unique acts of violence and torture, such as the use of foreign objects that often occur in armed conflict.

As discussed earlier, the push by feminists to politicize rape and define it in largely patriarchal terms, opened discursive space and increased the visibility of rape victims (Zarkov 2007). Yet, despite the increased awareness of sexual violence, the patriarchal approaches were commonly critiqued for being essentialist and not accounting for power complexities (Cahill 2001). Indeed, both Brownmiller and MacKinnon’s theories were critiqued by postmodern feminists for failing to account for the complexities of social and political power (Cahill, 2001). Such critiques from postmodern theorists have, in turn, problematized the presumed universality of sexuality while also deconstructing terms like “sex” (Seidman 2008: 177).<sup>11</sup> In addition, these theorists have pointed out that the treatment of women as a coherent group also ignores the intersection of identities (race, sexuality, class) that have an impact on women’s victimization (Zarkov 2007). The discussion of victimization will be expanded later in this chapter, but it is important for now to note that these contributions mark a key shift in feminist thinking that brought to

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<sup>11</sup> For further critiques see Michel Foucault (1978) and Judith Butler (1987).

light previous forms of oppression and essentialist notions that served to exclude various groups and identities.

The awareness of sexual violence in armed conflict has increased dramatically in the last twenty years, and Nancy Farwell (2004) suggests that the growth in public response to war rape can be attributed to two crucial changes. First, the growing public recognition of the widespread use of rape as tactic of war--experienced on every continent--by militaries and insurgents. This increased recognition of rape has subsequently shifted the understanding of rape as a military "policy based attack" rather than simply an inevitable "by-product" of war (Farwell 2004:390). As I suggested earlier, feminists' attention to the issue of war rape has been paramount in achieving an increased focus on war rape on the part of international policy, the media and the public.<sup>12</sup> However, most feminist theories of rape that have been used to analyze war rape were developed to explain peacetime rape. According to these theories "all rape is related in that it derives from a system of dominance and subjugation that allows, and in fact often encourages, precisely the violent crime of rape as a way of maintaining that system" (Allen 1996: 39).<sup>13</sup> Therefore within the broader feminist understanding of rape, there is a focus on the commonality rather than disparity between peacetime and wartime rape.

The inherent focus on the commonality between peacetime and wartime rape has sparked a debate within the literature about the ability of peacetime

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<sup>12</sup> Outside feminist academia, the "extent to which women's bodies are understood as the sites, both metaphorically and literally" of armed conflict is not well documented (Koo 2002:527).

<sup>13</sup> Allen (1996:39) warns Western feminists to not forget that rape does not only happen "there" only in war, only to 'them.'" She argues that "rape can happen wherever fear and insecurity are joined with power and immunity from prosecution...It happens in U.S. living rooms as well as in Serb rape/death camps" (Allen 1996:39)

theories of sexual violence to be transferrable to the unique nature of war rape. For instance, Carine Mardorossian (2002) has critiqued feminist academics for their severe lack of original theorizing about sexual violence in armed conflict and their unawareness of the fundamental differences between peace and wartime rape. For example, it has been found that instances of rape are higher during times of war and armed conflict (Stiglmayer 1994), and women are often violated in public spaces to ensure that the community witnesses rape--a situation that blurs important distinctions between "public and private" (Kelly 2000: 56). Impunity is often cited as another fundamental difference between the experiences of rape in peaceful times versus during the chaos of war (IRIN 2004). A lack of legal protections during war equate to a veritable free-for-all on enemy women and children, while the tolerance of sexual violence in peacetime is replaced by a culture of violence that condones or even produces a policy of rape (Kelly 2000). These examples highlight the unique nature of war rape that some feminist constructions of sexual violence have overlooked.

Some peacetime definitions of sexual violence have been useful for understanding how war rape occurs on a mass scale. Beverly Allen suggests, war rapes "are different from other, 'ordinary' rapes...[because] they have become a system of femicide" (1996: 39). Expanding on Mary Daly's (1973) term "Gynocide," which focuses on the eradication of women, "femicides" are described as a kind of "sexist terrorism" driven by hatred and contempt for women (Radford 1992: 15). Allen argues that "mass rape in war is the systematic annihilation of another people by means of rape, death and pregnancy in a process psychiatrically designed to

destroy an entire culture – the people, their places, their history, their future” (1996: 90-91). The term femicide works to remove “the obscuring veil of nongendered terms such as homicide and murder” and expands on the definitions of the violence against women to include “mutilation murder, rape murder, [and] battery that escalates to murder” (Radford 1992: 15). This expansion has provided important insights into the ways mass rape as a weapon of war has (and can be) used to eradicate women through reproduction, humiliation and terror (HHI & Oxfam 2010). While femicide is useful to explore the mass and systematic nature of rape in war, it cannot account for the complexity of war. In war women are raped not only because they are women but because of their location, class, ethnicity and affiliation with warring groups.

## **II. RAPE AS A WEAPON OF WAR**

The strategic use of rape as a weapon of war is considered by many feminists to be the most accepted theory because it situates sexual violence as a weapon to achieve the aims of war (Stiglmeier 1994; Allen 1996; Leaning & Gingerich 2005; Eisenstein 2007; Zarkov 2007; OCHA 2008). Zillah Eisenstein argues that rape is “an integral form of war rather than an effect of war,” and therefore the female body becomes the battlefield on which war is waged (2007:28). Although there is no scholarly consensus on a theory of war rape, there are a number of key concepts frequently used to explain its purpose, role and motivation. Some of these concepts include the phenomenon of using war rape as military strategy, a method of terrorizing communities, a tactic of controlling men and women through terror and

shame and at times a strategy to eradicate populations through genocide. The following sections provide an overview of these concepts.

#### **A) RAPE AS AN EFFECTIVE MILITARY WEAPON**

Systematic rape is “murderous misogyny” transformed into an integral military policy (Eisenstein 2007: 28). War rape functions as an attack on the sexual integrity and reproductive capacity of the woman, as well as an attack on the strength, honor and survival of an entire community (Enloe 1998). In war rape women undergo the “ultimate invasion” in that they are totally occupied by the enemy, reduced to an object, a “body vessel” that can be put to use in any way by the military (Eisenstein 2007:28). From a political economy perspective, Meredith Turshen (2000) suggests that when enemy combatants abduct women, their actions go beyond intimidation and become an act of commandeering “non-human objects”, that can be put to work as “additional resources” for the military (809).

As the preceding discussion suggests, the military often perpetrates acts of sexual violence. Militarized rape is differentiated from other forms of rape – even in war – “because it is perpetuated in the context of institutional policies and decisions” (Enloe 2000; Turshen 2000; 808). The normalization of rape on the part of soldiers has been theorized as having its roots in hyper masculine military culture (Eriksson-Baaz and Stern 2009). In her book *Maneuvers*, Cynthia Enloe (2000) “describes rape of women held in military prisons by male soldiers serving as guards, rape by a group of invading soldiers with the aim to force women of a different ethnicity or race to flee their home regions, and the rape of captured

women by soldiers of one national group...aimed at humiliating the men of an opposing group" (Turshen 2000; 808). Meredith Turshen (2000: 808), agrees that these examples demonstrate how "militarized rape is directly related to the functions of a formal institution, such as the state's national security or defense apparatus or an insurgency's military arm."

The following examples provide insight into the ways that rape might "function as a performance of masculinity" among combatants (Price 2001:216). "Many feminists (Brownmiller 1975; Tompkins, 1995; Niarchos, 2006) note that a high proportion of sexual violence in war is gang rape" (Price 2001:216). It is proposed that soldiers and paramilitary fighters "may use gender violence as a cohesive in-group norm to support a national or group identity" (Milillo 2006: 201). Milillo goes on to suggest that "derogating female members of the out-group through rape and assault serves to keep their male identity intact by suppressing the power of the out-group's women" (2006: 201). In addition, "dissociation from a personal identity and identification with the group induces many to behave without concern for others' harm and in ways that run counter to social norms and values" (Milillo 2006: 202). In fact, "deindividuation has been found to decrease self-awareness, decrease inhibition, and increase aggressive behavior, especially in a large group" (Milillo 2006: 202). There is an interesting resemblance between gang rapes in war and Peggy Sanday's analysis of fraternity gang rape (Price 2001). For instance, "Sanday conceptualizes 'pulling train' (the serial rape of a woman by a group of men) as a bonding ritual whereby fraternity brothers are brought together as 'virile, heterosexual, loyal comrades'" (1990: 133; Price 2001: 216). These war

tactics not only serve to strengthen the solidarity amongst combatants but also serves the purpose of terrorizing enemy communities (Amnesty International 2004).

## **B) RAPE TO TERRORIZE WOMEN, MEN AND THE COMMUNITY**

It is widely accepted that war rape is an effective strategy for terrorizing and destroying enemy communities (Allen 1996; Turshen 2000; Seifert 2002; Farwell 2004). The destruction of a community, ethnic group or nation is achieved through rape because women (their bodies and their sexuality) are often symbolically and materially equated with group identity (Zarkov 2007). Jennifer Leaning and Tara Gingerich (2005) suggest that “as an effective tool for achieving military objectives, rape creates a sense of fear in the civilian population,” causes civilians to flee from the land, and demoralizes women, men and their communities through public assaults (OCHA 2008:3).

War rape “is a weapon which attacks women’s physical and emotional sense of security while simultaneously launching an assault, through women’s bodies, upon the genealogy of security as constructed by the body politic” (Koo 2002: 528). It is understood that victims of rape suffer multiple traumas that range from the psychological and social to enormous physical trauma. For these reasons, Allen argues, “the fear of rape is the universal element of identity of anyone gendered as feminine under patriarchy” (1996: 39). It has been suggested that this fear of rape functions as a kind of Foucauldian panopticon; the fear of violence manifests itself as “an internalized, self-policing norm” among women (Milillo 2006: 202). Even

women in conflict zones who haven't been personally victimized "are forced to regulate and monitor their behavior in ways that they believe will lessen the potential of an attack; thus, they apply self-protective strategies to navigate their way through everyday life" (Milillo 2006: 202). The pervasiveness of fear and threat is also inextricably linked to the potential shame that is inflicted on women and men through war rape.

### **c) RAPE TO INFLICT SHAME ON WOMEN AND MEN**

A core purpose of war rape is to intentionally inflict shame and guilt on the enemy communities – communities comprised of both men and women (Milillo 2006). Rape is effective in war because women play a major role in protecting "the honor of their community through marriage and cultural practices that maintain pure lineage and pure ethnic cultural identity" (Farwell 2004: 395). Therefore, sexual violence can become a way to destroy or infiltrate these cultural or ethnic boundaries (Farwell 2004). "Often women are deliberately raped [and abused] in front of their families and neighbors" to intensify and communicate this shame (UNECA 2008: 3). The infliction of shame is particularly acute "when virginity and chastity before marriage is cherished, rape then renders the victim unsuitable for marriage or motherhood" (Fisher 1996; Diken & Laustsen 2005: 117). Therefore, rape is understood to destroy communities in that it "devalues the women and thus the wealth of the men" (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 117).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Allen (1996:99-100) argues that there is an over-emphasis on the reaction of survivor communities as casting away all victims of rape. She suggests that this is only a partial picture: "There is often no community reaction and no family reaction whatsoever because there is quite

“Many of the female rape victims interviewed by Human Rights Watch, and similar organizations, reported fear that their husbands will reject them or that they would be killed if their abuse was discovered” (Stigelmayer 1994; Diken & Laustsen 2005: 117). These comments suggest that rape not only functions as an attack on women’s bodies, but it also serves as an attack “on men’s honor and their ability to protect ‘their’ women” (Card 1996; Diken & Laustsen 2005: 397).<sup>15</sup> “This demoralization of men through the rape of women is very political. It aims to shift the balance of power by weakening” the enemy men and “uses women’s sexuality and their communal value...to gain new ground in the conflict” (Gentry 2004:4). To seize the female body through rape is to claim victory over the enemy, and this action serves as a mechanism for communication (Snyder et al. 2006; Trenholm, Olsson & Ahlberg 2009). Eisenstein suggests that in this process “women’s bodies become the universalized representation of conquest, while male bodies are both masculinized in victory and feminized in defeat” (2007:29). In the process of war rape, both males and females are shamed (Eisenstein 2007).

The torture of women’s bodies through rape is frequently discussed in the literature. “In discussing what she refers to as sexualization of the political technology of the female body, Inger Agger suggests that that one of the functions of torture is to ‘disgrace the victim by disgracing her body’” (1990: 69; Price 2001: 214). Most victims in armed conflict are raped repeatedly and suffer severe genital

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simply no more community or no more family to react. The towns have been destroyed. The families have been slaughtered.”

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that men can be targets of rape as well as women may be perpetrators of violence (Farwell 2004).

trauma and reproductive damage (Trenholm et al. 2009). Tamara Tompkins (1995) says, “sometimes, the nature of the specific acts inflicted on women when they are raped are cruel in such a biologically specific way that one literally feels the loathing of women” (1995: 873). Lisa Price (2001: 214) concurs with the notion that the descriptions of torture and genital mutilation are not “just rape” (sexual intercourse by force) or “just torture” (inflicting pain to extract information); rather, something far more complex is at stake: shame and erasure of the enemy. As Price puts it, “in shaming her he makes her complicit in that negation” (2001: 214). This negation is both a strategy of war and an indication of the palpable loathing for women because they are women (Tompkins 1995; Price 2001).

#### **D) RAPE FOR THE PURPOSE OF GENOCIDE**

Allen defines “genocidal rape” as “a military policy of rape for the purpose of genocide” (1996:vii). A number of scholars have argued in a similar vein that rape and gendered violence is commonly used as an instrument to eradicate a specific group through methods such as forced pregnancy (Brownmiller 1975; Stiglmayer 1994; Carpenter 2000; Salzman 2006). This use of rape can be better understood by considering the findings of the Commission of Experts in the former Yugoslavia which declared ethnic cleansing to be a “purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas” (Allen 1996: 44). In addition, genocidal rape is useful as it produces “children of the

perpetrator's ethnicity" (Allen 1996:77).<sup>16</sup> The logic of using rape as a method of genocide is that it threatens the "reproductive potential" of an enemy group in a similar way in which a mass killing would threaten the reproduction of a group "by limiting the number of reproducers" (Allen 1996:96). As Allen points out, "any rape threatens reproduction because it makes survivors damaged goods in a patriarchal system that defines woman as man's possession and virgin woman as his most valuable asset" (1996: 96). According to the logic of genocide, various groups "must be displaced and/or destroyed", and this goal is accomplished by reproduction (Allen 1996: 139).<sup>17</sup>

Even amidst the chaos of war, not every woman is prone to systematic sexual violence. Instead, only certain "women's bodies are appropriated, conquered, and destroyed" through rape (Eisenstein 2007:28). Thus, "focusing solely on the patriarchal aspects of war rape tends to essentialize women as victims because they are women" (Farwell 2004: 395). In the case of war, "women are targets not simply because they 'belong to' the enemy, [but also] because they too are the enemy" (Lorentzen & Turpin 1998: 71). Women are attacked also because of their reproductive and sexual power and because of their vulnerability as women (Lorentzen & Turpin 1998). In many conflicts, women are selectively targeted according to and "in combination with 'ethnic' and religious identities, sexual and gender identities" (Allen 1996: 26). War has material consequences, and many

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<sup>16</sup> There is evidence of genocidal rape in Rwanda (Stigmayer 1994)

<sup>17</sup> Allen (1996) takes this argument one step further and suggests that the UN International war crimes tribunal should enforced pregnancy as biological warfare. Allen's reconceptualization is meant to "emphasize the universalizing specificity of the crime: it attacks one biological system of the victim in order to destroy a population" (1996:138).

theories of sexual violence tend to ignore the materiality of war rape by privileging “the body as metaphor” (Davis 1997: 15; Zarkov 2007). The intersection of multiple identities is more than metaphor; this interplay determines who is raped and, subsequently, who may live or die (Allen 1996).

### **III. REPRESENTING RAPE VICTIMS**

The literature on sexual violence is useful for exploring the discursive representations of women as this “reveals the operation of hierarchies, the polarization of values and the powers of an authoritative monologue which pretends to universal truths necessary to seduce and capture the reader” (Young 1995: 130). The discursive representations of war rape victims consistently reiterate the image of the silent and shamed victim, “unsuitable for marriage or motherhood” (Fisher 1996; Diken & Laustsen 2005: 117), rejected by her community and husband, destroyed and powerless in the face of the patriarchal norms of her culture (Stigelmayer 1994; Zarkov 2007). For this reason, the “rhetoric of violence” (de Lauretis 1987) is useful for deconstructing the ways in which these discursive representations of war rape victims can erase women’s experiences, deny their subjectivity and render them as passive (Zarkov 2007). An exploration of how the representations of women in the DRC accomplish these tasks requires a short summary of the main feminist debates on victimization.

#### **A) TERMINOLOGY: VICTIMS VS. SURVIVORS**

The most controversial terms are those used to describe people who have been raped. As Miranda Horvath and Jennifer Brown argue in *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking*, “rape victim is a very emotive and pejorative term which can label an individual with a social stigma they are likely to carry all their life and face the consequences” (2009:5). The most often-used terms are “‘victim’ and ‘survivor’, but the term survivor may also imply the woman has recovered from the trauma, whereas the term victim implies she is still suffering” (Horvath & Brown 2009: 5). Horvath and Brown go on to emphasize that there is no “preferred term”; instead, scholars and activists tend to use the ones deemed most appropriate for the context (2005:5). For the purpose of exploring the victimization of women who have been raped in war, this thesis will use the term ‘victim’.

## **B) FEMINIST DEBATES ON VICTIMIZATION**

Feminism has a rich history of theorizing on victimization (Brownmiller 1975; Griffin 1977; Ruddick 1989; Kelly 2000). Feminist literature on victimization has largely been concerned with the ways in which gender identity is linked to the subject and object of violence. Specifically, the subject is fused to masculinity, while the victim or object of violence is always feminine (de Lauretis 1987). For instance, Brownmiller suggests that a single act of rape breaks both the victim and communities spirit; if a woman survives she becomes little more than a “symbol of her nation’s defeat” (Allen 1996: 89). This perspective of victimhood denies women and communities the capacity for healing by their own nation and culture (Allen

1996). This approach also further entrenches the female victim as an object and the perpetrator as the subject.

In a similar vein, the postmodern feminist movement has argued that relying on victim/perpetrator dualisms does not account for the complex role of dominant discourse, power and resistance (Mardorossian 2002). In this respect, women's capacity to act or resist sexual violence is limited because "capacities to act are moulded via these [power] relations" (Bell 2007:22).<sup>18</sup> Based on this understanding, Sharon Marcus (1992) has critiqued anti-rape literature and activism for representing women as "already raped and always rapable" (Mardorossian 2002: 752). Even Brownmiller, whose text(s) are a foundation for most feminists, criticized her own "rape victim identity" concept of 1993 when writing about rapes in Bosnia" (Zarkov 2007: 176). "The inevitability of female rapability" at the core of this paradigm has consequences for women's subjectivity (Zarkov 2007: 127). The definition of women as "rapable" means that rape is then defined by femininity, and the subjective act of raping becomes an "essential male capacity" (Zarkov 2007: 176). Marcus (1992) argues that this definition reinforces the "rape script" that presupposes masculine power and feminine powerlessness (Mardorossian 2002: 752).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> There exists concern that this overemphasis on the victims' reaction to and prevention of rape serves to "pathologize[s] women and displace male agency" (Mardorossian, 2002: 758). Mardorossian argues in a Foucauldian manner that women are not passive because they are victims; "representations are not seen as reflections of reality but as reflections of particular discursive formations that determine...what counts as truth" (2002:766).

<sup>19</sup> Ann Cahill (2001:202) goes further and locates resistance and prevention of rape within the individual woman by suggesting that women should transform their "bodies into defensive weapons" (through self-defensive courses) as a strategy for countering victimization.

The mental health profession's awakening to the notion of rape as a clinical issue has also contributed to a psychological emphasis the treatment of rape victims (McMillan 2007).<sup>20</sup> In *Trauma Talk*, Jeanne Marecek (1999) argues that the language used by "feminist therapists constructs the victims of rape as "wounded" and "broken" (Mardorossian 2002:770). Victims "are represented as irremediably shaped by" trauma and "incapable of dealing with anything but their own inner turmoil" (Mardorossian 2002:768). If taken too far, the focus on psychological factors can deny the agency of victims and fuse their victimization with passivity (Mardorossian 2002).

Expanding this complexity, Diken & Lausten note, "most studies of war rape rely on simplistic dualisms that focus on either the woman as victim or on the soldier as aggressor;" However, most instances of war rape present a more "complex picture" (Diken & Lausten 2005: 112). The concept of victimhood is further complicated by the fact that there are many accounts of family members being forced to rape each other or to watch as a family member is raped (Diken & Lausten 2005). "On the side of the aggressor, there is evidence to suggest that rape is used as a rite of initiation and soldiers are forced to rape or face severe punishment" (Diken & Lausten 2005: 112). An essentialist understanding of women, often connected to peace building, excludes "women as perpetrators and

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<sup>20</sup> The term 'victim' "immediately invokes suffering, passivity and interiority"; However, this immediate entrenchment of "powerlessness as an identity" results in women's victimization immediately being suspect "without ever scrutinizing what it encompasses and how it operates historically" (Mardorossian 2002: 766). Therefore, Mardorossian argues that the category "victim" did not always mean powerlessness but was "ideologically redefined to support the depoliticization of gendered class relations" (2002: 767).

supporters of violence (Kelly 2000:46) but it must be recognized that women do perpetrate violence in war (Eisenstein 2007).

These simplistic understandings of violence and gender situate women in one coherent social category and overlooks how bodies are “the mobile and changeable terms of cultural production” (Grosz 1994: xi). Thus, static representations do not account for the ways that politics and cultures discursively position and affect the material lives of women (Mohanty 2003) and do not account for the complexities of rape in war. In war, everyone can be raped, but not everyone is raped systematically. To explore how women’s subjectivity is denied and discursively positioned requires an examination of the ways in which women’s victimhood is made both visible and invisible.

### **C) THE SILENT AND INVISIBLE VICTIM**

Cultural norms about war rape “affect the visibility of the victims by providing (or withdrawing) the discursive space within which the victim can speak, or be spoken about” (Zarkov 2007: 174-75). War rape exists in “public memory but has largely been kept out of history” (Koo 2002: 532). That is to say that while the knowledge of war rape exists the victims of sexual violence have been all but invisible within the discourse of war. Historical accounts of war rarely contained accounts of women’s personal experience of violence and the acts of rape were explained as a natural and inevitable consequence of war (Koo 2002). Just as “violated female bodies” are made voiceless, there “exists a lack of discursive space”

for which war raped men can share their experience of sexual violence and still be considered heterosexual and masculine (Zarkov 2007:175).

Zillah Eisenstein argues that the “silencing of the racial, sexual and gendered body is vital to the persistence of war” (2007: 30). “The social control of women largely functions in the mass silencing of women collectively or interpersonally” and through this process, “women become a stigmatized majority, always vigilant and alert to what could happen” (Milillo 2006: 202). Milillo suggests that “the fear or threat of terror induces most women to live a life of silence” about their own victimization and suggests many are also “reluctant to help other women, mainly because of their fear of future re-victimization and the shame involved in dealing with the attacks” (Milillo 2006: 202). While the act of silence may appear passive, Koo (2002) critiques this notion for ignoring the way that silence can function as a strategy – a form of victim agency. There are numerous reasons why women might choose to remain silent, including to ensure protection from future trauma, shame or future violence against themselves and their families (Milillo 2006). Therefore, the notion of silence as a passive act of oppression is not so straightforward.

Feminist anti rape advocates have worked to open “discursive space and political platforms” to make the rape of women visible; this advocacy has led to victims gaining “visibility, voice, and meaning” (Zarkov 2007: 176). In particular, narratives of rape have been largely understood as useful for placing a personal testimony alongside the all too “often-depersonalized theories” of sexual violence and war (Milillo 2006: 198). “Victims’ narratives illustrate the range of women’s lived experiences and highlight similar themes of shock and devastation” (Milillo

2006: 198). However, there is a contentious debate among feminist theorists regarding the discursive power of victims voicing their experience of sexual violence (Brown 1995; Mardorossian 2002). Not all scholars agree on the political and emancipatory power of sharing one's experience of sexual violence. Wendy Brown (1995) has challenged the previously unquestioned authenticity of women's voiced experience of sexual violence. Drawing an analogy between voicing one's experience and Foucault's genealogy of confession, Brown (1995) argues that "speak outs" are public forums that "entrench the categories of representation"--such as gender--"instead of denaturalizing them" (Mardorossian 2002: 762). According to Brown, the act of truth telling does not deliver the person from the binds of silence but creates the very victim identity that it's trying to subjugate (1995). In contrast, Carine Mardorossian (2002) suggests that speak outs do not entrench categories of representation; they are instead sites of "collective enunciations" about external realities, not the confession of personal sins or truth telling (764). In Mardorossian's view, the act of collectively voicing one's experience of rape makes visible how "linguistically contained, socially constructed, discursively mediated, and never just individually 'had' women's experiences are" (Brown 1995; Mardorossian 2002: 764). It serves to politicize rape but examines the terms women use to talk about their experience of rape (Mardorossian 2002). Mardorossian also argues that, "empowerment is not derived from a prediscursive sense of self" but by the act of narrativity itself (2002: 764). By voicing the experience of sexual violence, "the speaker can manipulate and gain control" of the crowd's attention while making the fluctuating and confusing experience of rape intelligible (Mardorossian 2002: 765).

Mardorossian's theory directly contrasts with Michel Foucault's (1977a) notion that rape should not be defined as an act of sexuality in the law but as simply another act of violence (Cahill 2001). This neutral language is necessary to avoid reifying the very identity of 'victim' that anti-rape activists have tried to subvert. However, Foucault's theory on rape laws points to the potential "violence of rhetoric" that can serve to erase the gendered component in these acts of violence (de Lauretis 1987). Allen argues that in Bosnia, women voicing their experience of rape may not be the solution to end rape but it does provide important pathways to healing (2002). Therefore, as Brown (1995: 40-41) advocates that "dispensing with the unified subject of 'woman' does not mean" an end to women's capacity to speak collectively about their experiences of sexual violence but rather provides an opportunity to question those experiences as discursively constructed (Mardorossian 2002).

In terms of legal recourse and international attention, speaking out certainly does not equate to justice for victims of war rape. Julie Mertus (2004) is skeptical of the emancipatory potential of tribunals and the ways women's experiences of rape are appropriated by the legal system (Zarkov 2007). Mertus argues that both sides--prosecution and defense--focus on the acts of violence and body parts of the perpetrators, while reducing women to "dismembered and passive victims" (Zarkov 2007: 177). Mertus concludes that the visibility of a victim's testimony does not necessarily mean that there will be recognition for that victim (Zarkov 2007).<sup>21</sup> Zarkov (2007: 177) supports these concern by noting that in South Africa and

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<sup>21</sup> Instead of the formal legal system Mertus (2004) suggests that alternative avenues of justice such as truth commissions provide another avenue for witness's to voice their experience but stay in control their own narrative (Zarkov 2007).

Rwanda “public witnessing and prosecutions had to be replaced by special closed hearings in order to protect women from [further violence and] intimidation”. Therefore the very act of women expressing their agency through public testimony reproduces and becomes another form of victimization (Zarkov 2007). “The overwhelming visibility and presence of women as rape victims in public discourses” could serve as another form of violence as it entrenches the label of victim within the female body as a powerful metaphor and collective identity (Zarkov 2007: 178). Yet, despite the criticisms, few activists have called for the legal remedies to be abolished (Zarkov 2007).

#### **IV. A MEDIA DISCOURSE OF (RE)VICTIMIZATION**

The media’s silence on war rape began to shift in 1992 with the war in the former Yugoslavia, which received unprecedented media coverage (Zarkov 2007). While dramatically raising the public awareness of war rape the media coverage almost entirely “featured the tear-stained face of raped Muslim women” (Zarkov 2007:116). As this example suggests, media reports on the violence against women have been largely one-dimensional representations of destroyed victims (Zarkov 2007). Russell (2002) has also found that there is a great deal of gender-neutral language used in the law and media, which obscure the gendered nature of wartime sexual violence. Furthermore, as Zarkov argues, “media representations of rape and sexual assault against women treat the female body as the map on which the new, sexual, geographies of ethnicity [are] drawn--this time in discursive terms” (2007:116). Thus, representations of rape victims reproduce violence against

women; the public is fascinated by the spectacle and the violence becomes obliterated (Burfoot 2006).

Beyond problematic representations of victimhood, media coverage of war rape also obscures the systemic roots of violence in the DRC. Despite raising awareness of women's suffering, the global media's limited focus on warring regional factions provides an effective shield for underlying global political and economic interests; namely, a complex network of Western states and multinational corporations exploiting the conflict in order to plunder the DRC's natural resources (Harmon-Snow and Barouski 2006; Harmon-Snow 2007; Trenholm et al. 2009). The gendered violence is supported by business partnerships between multinational mineral corporations and regional militias suspected of committing rape atrocities (Human Rights Watch 2005; Trenholm et al. 2009). Trenholm, Olsson & Ahlberg aptly suggest "this practice of maintaining crises while simultaneously exploiting economic and political resources could be viewed as what Naomi Klein (2007) describes as 'disaster capitalism'" (2009: 2).

Ultimately, the media has the ability to set the public agenda by its representations of social issues (Bryant & Zillman 2002; Trenholm et al. 2009). The Western media needs to be examined when deconstructing the dominant discourse of war rape as journalist coverage of armed conflicts and representations of women's victimization plays a powerful role in shaping the public's perception of the crisis of war rape. In addition to the media, another powerful indicator and tool of political will is the role of international justice and Humanitarian law in ending rape in war.

## V. RAPE IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

“Seeking justice for the crimes committed against women’s bodies during war has traditionally and predictably fallen to states” (Koo 2002: 530).<sup>22</sup> Despite this state responsibility there has been “a long history of unprosecuted violence against women in war” that has been “naturalized” and become an “acceptable practice” such as the case “in the aftermath of the First World War and during the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal” (Koo 2002: 530). However, this silencing of women’s testimonies by their governments and the international community began to shift with emerging conceptualizations of war rape as a crime in International Humanitarian Laws (IHL) (Farwell 2004; Koo 2002). This shift has afforded victims and anti rape advocates with “the opportunities and tools to counteract widespread denial of rape” and increase the public voice of victims (Farwell 2004: 390). Legal definitions of war rape are significant as they are often integrated into both policymaking and war crime tribunals (Snider 1985; Oosterveld 2005; Niarchos 2006).

Legal definitions of rape vary widely, as does the agreement on these definitions by feminist scholars. There has been a “slow evolution toward the partial recognition of gender-based crimes in IHL” and only recently has there been a dramatic shift in the international community’s attention to war rape, reflected by changes in IHL (Erturk 2009: 16). Particularly critical to the inclusion of rape as a crime against humanity was the establishment of war crimes tribunals, such the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal

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<sup>22</sup> It should be noted, “the state is one of the main abusers of women’s rights, particularly in times of war when rape has been used as a form of attack” (McMillan 2005: 38).

Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The ICTY's proceedings established an expansive definition of war rape that includes "five elements of an attack "and determined that the rape of a civilian population must be "widespread or systematic' [so] that it can be prosecuted as a crime against humanity" (McHenry 2002; Farwell 2007: 393). Taking this definition further, the ICTR Statute declared "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, [and] enforced pregnancy" as additional violations that could be prosecuted as crimes against humanity (UN Security Council 1994: Article 4e). Moreover, after the war in the former Yugoslavia, a report for the UN Commission on Human Rights recognized the genocidal nature of war rape by defining it as "a deliberate and strategic decision on the part of combatants to intimidate and destroy 'the enemy' as a whole by raping and enslaving women who are identified as members of the opposition group" (McDougall 1998: 4-5; Farwell 2004: 392). Overall, the report defined rape in "gender-neutral terms" but noted that women were at a higher risk of rape than men (McDougall 1998: 8). This important policy work has provided clearer legal parameters around the international prosecution of war rape (Farwell 2004).<sup>23</sup> "Although these new legal parameters may not actually suffice to prevent future occurrences of war rape, their presence suggests that the international legal community will be less likely to ignore such acts" (Farwell 2004: 393). The inclusion of war rape in these new laws calls into question what kinds of action will prevent rape and what international legal parameters are necessary to ensure the end to violence against women in war.

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<sup>23</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the various legal parameters of what constitutes crimes against humanity.

The increased media coverage since the former Yugoslavia war and the recognition of systematic rape as crime against humanity has contributed to ending the silence and increasing the political and public awareness of war rape. Feminists have a rich history in examining the representations of women's victimhood (in peace and in war) and these theories will be crucial to exploring how the media, development policies and feminist literature are discursively constructing and representing war rape victims. Feminist theories of peacetime sexual violence have directly informed theorizing war rape; the most commonly accepted theory being that rape is a weapon of war. This theory provides a better understanding of the motives and purpose of war rape, used to shame, torture, and terrorize communities, and even commit genocide. This understanding will provide a foundation for Chapter Three, where I will explore postcolonial notions of the "Other" (Said 1978; Mohanty 2003) and Julia's Kristeva's (1980) "abject" as my theoretical and methodological framework.

**CHAPTER THREE – FRAMING AN “OTHER” WOMAN’S RAPE:  
FEMININE SUBJECTIVITY IN WAR RAPE DISCOURSE**

Beatrice...was found in the forest after a soldier shot a gun in her vagina. She now has tubes instead of organs, or Lumo who was raped by over 50 men in the course of one day and has had nine operations and still has fistula, ... or Sowadi who watched the soldiers choke and smash the skulls of her children then was forced to watch her best friend’s child cut from her pregnant belly and after they were forced to eat the dead cooked baby or die. It goes on and on.

Eva Ensler, Testimony to US Senate May 13, 2009a

This powerful, disturbing and increasingly common mode of ‘storytelling’ about women’s experience of rape reveals crucial points about the nature of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the representations of war rape, and the way in which these acts of violence are constructed within a greater discursive, geopolitical framework. Eva Ensler’s testimony exemplifies how interpersonal experiences like rape can extend far beyond the time and space of a single experience in the DRC all the way to a US Senate hearing: in the case of war rape, the personal truly is international (Enloe 1989). Ensler’s statement also suggests that this kind of rape is something ‘new,’ as it points to the recent attention war rape has been given in feminist theory, international humanitarian policy and the media. But the brutality that Ensler describes also alludes to how the acts of war rape are something else, something not seen on a mass scale in peacetime rape.

The modern western feminist movement<sup>24</sup> was paramount in politicizing sexual violence as a social – not an individual – problem, naming it discursively, and bringing sexual violence to the public consciousness. Much of this politicization of peacetime sexual violence centered on including women’s voice and personal narratives and ending the invisibility of women’s experience of sexual abuse through speak outs, public debate, and – eventually – legal and policy changes (Mardorossian 2002). Following a similar formula, Ensler uses women’s personal stories of rape in her testimony to the US Senate subcommittee, a committee that could have a critical impact on the US foreign policy for intervention and aid in the DRC. The narratives of women’s experiences of war rape are told, retold, and (re)presented within the media and feminist literature, which in turn informs global development policies that have expansive material impacts on the lives of DRC women. Exploring these increasingly common (re)presentations of women’s lived experience of war rape within the complex and discursive channels of the media, global development policies, and feminist literature will shed light on the nature of a feminine subjectivity within women’s stories of rape in the DRC. In particular, I explore the ways in which women are being discursively positioned as the Other through the telling and retelling of their experiences of rape. Utilizing a theoretical framework of ‘discursive Othering’ will provide a space to critically engage with the frequently unquestioned representations of war raped women’s experience.

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<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of discussing a broad theoretical perspective, the phrase “modern feminist movement” includes what was termed the so called ‘second-wave’ feminist movement, beginning in the 1960’s to the present day (Seidman 2008)

## **I. A DISCOURSE OF VIOLENCE: FEMINIST IN THEORY, FOUCAULDIAN IN PRACTICE**

The nature of the war in the DRC is not one of inter-state military battles, with clear frontlines and professional soldiers; it is messy and complicated and the ensuing violence has a distinctly civilian focus. As discussed in the previous section, much of the feminist literature on sexual violence focuses on the role of patriarchy as a single site power and control over women. However, power relations in the DRC are more nuanced than such a dichotomous framework allows.

To move away from these static patriarchal notions of power, Michel Foucault's theory of discourse provides a more suitable framework. Foucault (1978; 1980) theorizes that power is relational, strategic and cannot be escaped. As a result, power cannot be derived from an exterior position or from one top position but is rather exercised from many, constantly shifting points (Foucault 1978). The case of the DRC epitomizes this process of fragmentation and reconsolidation of power; as Mbembe notes, "against a background of armed violence...alliances are constantly made and unmade...everywhere, lines emerge and vanish" (2001: 48). Foucault's notion of discourse accounts for the "asymmetric" nature of warfare (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 1) in the DRC where even locals speculate on the origins of militias and splinter groups that are virtually impossible to trace (Smith & Mantz 2006). These unintelligible architects of war and dominant discourses of war rape points to Foucault's (1980) notion of power as strategic and intentional in nature. It is therefore important to examine as many of the diverse channels of power as possible—in this case feminist literature, geopolitical development policies and

Western media--to trace how these power relations and discourses may be linked to larger strategies.<sup>25</sup>

Foucault emphasized the relational nature of power; where power exists, so does resistance to that power (1978). This constant flux “problematizes the traditional dichotomy between power and freedom and suggests that freedom does not displace power, but rather redefines its terrain. In a sense, power comes up against resistance and redefines itself in another form, endlessly” (Reddy 2000: 223-224). While Reddy (2000) highlights the inescapable nature of Foucault’s notion of power, it is also suggested that some forms are more acceptable. “Dominant discourses are constructed with the interests, desires, and prejudices of the dominant at the forefront and because of this they only partially and in a fragmentary way represent subaltern groups” (Reddy 2000: 221). This conception of power suggests, then, that formal organizations or intellectuals cannot (and should not) speak for those who struggle and must avoid playing the role of a mediator between power and resistance (Foucault 1977b; Reddy 2000). This implication is particularly problematic for feminists who have taken on the role of anti rape activists. It also limits the ability of the international community and humanitarian policies, legal frameworks and advocates for an end to the violence against women in the DRC. These practical issues, stemming from the application of a Foucauldian notion of resistance, has led many feminists to disagree with Foucault

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<sup>25</sup> Despite the focus on representations and discourse, I recognize it is crucial not to lose sight of the fact that—particularly in the case of war—there are very material consequences for being a woman (Mardorossian 2002).

in theory, but to utilize his notion of discourse as a method (Braidotti 1993; Mardorossian 2002).

A strict Foucauldian understanding resistance is problematic both for this project as well as other feminist projects of empowerment and change. Some feminist notions of empowerment focus on interpreting power as a potentially positive force that can enable an agent (women or groups) to have the capacity and ability to create change (O'Reilly & Porter 2005).<sup>26</sup> This position is exemplified in the debate on the use of narrative and the inclusion of women's voice as a form of resistance to sexual violence, and activists using feminist discursive politics will attempt "to reinterpret, reformulate, rethink, rewrite the norms and practices of society" whose mainstream discourse often perpetuates harmful myths about sexual violence (Martin 2005:121). However, this process has been critiqued for keeping anti-rape organization at the margins because resistance to power requires working within a dominant discourse, not outside of it (Ackelsberg 1996). Foucault has made it clear that power is more complex than formal and informal power (Ackelsberg 1996). But Foucault's privileging of "spontaneous" forms of resistance renders activists "weak" in the face of repressive geopolitical and neoliberal systems (Reddy 2000: 238).<sup>27</sup> If sites of power and oppression interact simultaneously, then there is potential for discourse to be a "strategy for social change" (Ackelsberg, 1996: 166).

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<sup>26</sup> Allen (1999) suggests three such expressions of power: the power over (oppression or the patriarchy), power to (resistance and creates empowerment), and power within (to gain equality) (O'Reilly & Porter 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Reddy notes that Foucault does not account for important differences between developed and developing economies (2000).

To foster social change to end war rape against women in the DRC, an alternative interpretation of Foucault's notions of resistance is necessary. Thiven Reddy (2000) provides such an interpretation. Since collective action almost always requires some organization and intellectuals are commonly positioned within the structures of dominant institutions, Reddy (2000) suggests that these individuals are well situated for activist roles. This concept gives activists space to be allies with women in their fight to end war rape. Although calling for an active engagement in the struggle, Reddy warns that attention must be paid to Foucault's criticisms that "intellectuals can (and have) constituted themselves as another layer of domination over the subaltern" (2000: 239). Reddy's warning is paramount to the framework of this thesis, as it highlights a critical point of analysis: the potential layer of domination of DRC women by Western feminist, activists and policy makers. Nonetheless, Reddy does provide an alternative to a strict Foucauldian understanding of resistance and allows me to explore women's subjectivity using a Foucauldian method of discourse, while also examining how development organizations and intellectuals may be acting as additional layers of domination for Congolese women. It is important to note that the focus of analysis is not on the reality (or unreality) of women's experience of war rape but with a particular discursive climate that renders certain war rape identities and experiences more visible than others.

## II. DISCURSIVE “OTHERING”: MATTER OF VISIBILITY

Discourse has the capacity to define and produce violence by constructing certain experiences and identities as visible while obscuring others. This capacity for discursive Othering--through visibility and invisibility--is best understood by exploring the work of two theorists. First, Teresa De Lauretis (1987) provides a critical lens to view the discursive production of women’s experience of rape: the “rhetoric of violence” and “violence of rhetoric”. The rhetoric of violence serves as a discursive strategy that positions the object of violence as feminine and the subject as masculine (de Lauretis 1987). This notion of a gender dichotomy, fused to the subject/object, provides a tool for tracing the objection (and potential abjection) of women through the ‘storytelling’ of their victimization. In contrast, the violence of rhetoric provides a model for understanding how certain experiences and identities are made invisible through the discursive erasure and denial of gendered violence (de Lauretis 1987). In addition, I propose that the violence of rhetoric could be extended to include the erasure or denial of women’s subjectivity in their experiences of sexual violence in armed conflicts. This methodological and theoretical framework will be used to trace these relations of power and determine those bodies and acts of violence that are made both visible and invisible through the process of discursive Othering.

Feminist theories have contributed a vast amount of literature <sup>28</sup> on the construction of the “Other.” The feminist theories of Othering emphasize “the importance of borders...and, in more general terms, the importance of difference”

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<sup>28</sup> This thesis is not an attempt to provide a literature review or a critique of the vast amount of theorizing on the ‘Other’ but to simply note some of the academic weight behind the term “Other”.

(Diken & Lausten 2005: 126). As Simone de Beauvoir notes, “no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself” (1989: xxiii). In the context of war, rape is particularly useful because “bodily margins cannot be understood in isolation from other margins,” such as territory or property (Douglas 1966; Diken & Laustsen 2005: 126). As enemy troops penetrate borders, they also penetrate the body (Diken & Lausten 2005). Thus, as Eisenstein notes, “war demands opposition, differentiation, and the othering of people. The privileging of masculinity underscores all other processes of differentiation” (2008: 25). The key process of othering in armed conflict is that groups can clearly define and determine ‘us’ in opposition to ‘them’.

In war, women are discursively and materially situated as either victims of sexual violence or “put in the service of violence” or the justification of war (Enloe 2000; Zarkov 2008: 69); both require that women are constructed as the Other. In the case of war rape, the enemy situates victims as Other by depicting the raped woman “as a whore, an object of disgust” (Price 2001: 214). Erick Ericsson echoes this kind of objectification in what he refers to as the “pseudospeciation” or “the human tendency to classify certain individuals or groups as less than fully human” (Scheper- Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 21). “Carefully honed during the unremarkable peacetimes”, this process of dehumanization “precedes the sudden, ‘seemingly unintelligible’ outbreaks of mass violence” (Scheper- Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 21). Understanding how the invisible processes of dehumanization can lead to an escalation of violence is mirrored in Slavoj Zizek’s (2008) division of “subjective” and “objective” violence. Subjective violence refers to the pervasive and “visible”

("evil") acts of an individual or agents, (Zizek 2008:1) such as the specific act of rape in war. Zizek (2008) further divides the less visible objective violence into two areas. "Symbolic" violence reproduces social domination through language, while "systemic" violence is "the catastrophic consequence of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (Zizek 2008: 2). Zizek (2008: 6) suggests that focusing on the subjective--the specific acts of rape and the "urgency" of ending these acts through humanitarian intervention--renders invisible the larger picture of symbolic and systemic violence of the neoliberal capitalist system. Zizek (2008) concludes that the underlying forms of objective violence contribute to the 'building up' of tensions and violence through a process of Othering. Ultimately, "violence and degradation" ensue and are "necessary conditions" for the annihilation of the Other (Price 2001: 213). Therefore, shifting our focus to the objective forms of violence may help understand how the 'shocking' acts of subjective violence are made possible in war. Understanding what forms of violence are rendered most visible will provide a critical understanding of the contributing factors that allow the maintenance of a social order that condones and supports the continuation of rape as a weapon in war.

### **III. EXPLORING ABJECTION: A MATTER OF REPULSION AND FASCINATION**

The construction, dominance and maintenance of the Other can be explored through two important concepts: the abject and the object. The Other is "a set of discourses through which the dominant group defines itself" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 9). That is, "We' use the Other to define ourselves", both in terms of what we

are and are not (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 8). Jacques Lacan (1977) developed a theory of subjectivity that suggests an infant develops their own subjectivity or “a sense of self through differentiating itself from Others,” specifically their Mother (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 9). Drawing from Lacan, Julia Kristeva’s (1980) notion of the ‘abject’, is particularly useful for understanding the Othering of women who experience war rape. The paramount characteristic of the abject is its formlessness, meaning the abject “disturbs systems” and disregards “borders, positions, and rule” (Kristeva 1982: 4). Using an example of “the shameless rapist,” Kristeva discusses how crimes are abject because they cross the well-defined boundaries and draw our “attention to the fragility of the law,” order and rules (2002: 232). The abject is defined, much in the same way as “postmodern’ warfare” by its propensity for asymmetry and “the blurring of inside/outside divides” (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 126). “First World countries get to make distinctions between militarized life and war more readily” (Eisenstein 2008: 23) while places like the DRC do not have the luxury of that distinction. This formlessness of the abject makes it “taboo and dangerous” (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 117); therefore, in Western “cultures that celebrate order, hierarchy and guarded borders, abjects tend to be perceived in a negative light, as disgusting, ugly, anxiety-provoking, sick, or unhealthy” (113). But the abject is not simply a taboo object to be avoided.

Kristeva (1982/2002) posits that all abjection is actually a reflection of the lack or want in one’s self and is the foundation of all sense of being and meaning. Abjection can be viewed as “a kind of narcissistic crisis” (Kristeva 1982/2002:240) in which the abject upholds the “I” by constructing the opposing Other (241).

Therefore, the abject stands in opposition to the subject but is not a true object because it simultaneously draws one toward it through fascination but the otherness of the abject is inevitably repelling (Kristeva 1982/2002). While Kristeva's notion of the abject focuses on the interior constructions of the subject, it is helpful for understanding how the process of Othering can be more than simple avoidance and dominance. The notion of the abject as both fascinating and repelling will be used to examine how certain acts of war are consistently seen, heard and sensationalized in the media as potentially fascinating while simultaneously reacted to as reacted to as horrifying (repelling). To move beyond the abject's psychosocial focus; postcolonial theories of the Other will provide a context to examine the geopolitical nature of war rape representations.

#### **IV. OBJECTION IN REPRESENTING THE OTHER**

Colonialism creates the dominant (subject) and, inversely, the subordinate (object) not only through economic and political exploitation but also through language, by discursively representing the subordinate as "inferior Others" (Aziz 1992: 291). Beyond economic or material exploitation, this thesis will focus on the discursive representation of the Other when examining global policies, the media and feminist scholarship. Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* provides a preliminary framework for understanding the West's need to dominate and possess authority over the colonized Other. Said argues that the ideas about the exotic Other are stereotypes and cultural assumptions (1978) that serve to reinforce the dominance of the West and maintain "control over the processes of representation" (Kitzinger

& Wilkinson 1996: 6). This power over representations means the Other is dismissed, silenced or delegitimized by hegemonic discourses (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996). In the case of the DRC, the hegemonic discourses that prevail in the academy, media and policy play a critical role in how representations of the Other are depicted as victimized or violent.

Constructing the Other as an object maintains the dominant hegemony, and, more importantly, perpetuates the dominant collective identity (Reddy 2000). The dominant identity is “accomplished in opposition to the Other” by creating a gulf that obliterates any recognition of common humanity (Price 2001: 213) in what Michael Ignatieff calls the “narcissism of minor differences” (1998: 48). The Western identity is a useful lens when examining the function of humanitarian policies and interventions. Ignatieff (1998) suggests that humanitarian policies, driven by a moral purpose--such as saving women--are also “often driven by the West’s narcissism. Hammond (2007: 37) calls this the “humanitarian spectacle” whereby the West searches for a sense of meaning through humanitarian causes and intervention.<sup>29</sup> Driven by a “preoccupation with its own self-image” (Hammond 2007: 51), the West intervenes in humanitarian crisis “not only to save others”, but also to construct an image of itself as “defenders of universal decencies” (Ignatieff 1998: 95). This suggests that humanitarian interventions are set up to ensure that “the exploitative dominant side can sustain the illusion of moral distance between

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<sup>29</sup> Hammond (2007: 37) uses the example of former US president Ronald Reagan, who suggested at a speech at Oxford in 1992 that, with the end of the Cold War, the US needed a new ‘common purpose,’ a new cause to rally people around. To this end, Reagan pointed to the crises in Africa and Bosnia.

itself and the evil – ‘out there’” (Falk 2008: 161).<sup>30</sup> Therefore, similar to the abject, a construction of the Other both maintains difference and defines the dominant subject.

Women are often put in the service of these discourses of humanitarian intervention, which have been successful in constructing women as both the victims and causes of war that soldiers can defend (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). “In this way, states perpetuate a gendered ‘protection racket,’ which marginalizes women while appearing to foreground their interests” (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007: 4). This combination conjures the image of Hegel’s (1977) “Beautiful Souls”. As victims women are “fragile, removed from reality and in need of protection”; in turn, the successful protection of these beautiful souls gains honour for the protector (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007: 4). These kinds of “saving and/or protecting women” tropes have been consistently used by state and paramilitary groups to legitimize intervention and violence in armed conflict (Fluri 2008: 143). Orfeld suggests that the practise of international law is an excellent example of the way in which authority is manifested as an ability to speak for those who are simultaneously “constructed as in need of ‘our’ help” (2003: 79).

The increasing preoccupation with the prosecution of war rape also constructs the conflict zone as “a place of sexual deviance,” used to justify the “colonial impulse to mobilize” international humanitarian law (IHL) and legitimize foreign intervention (Philipose 2008: 112). Interestingly, the prosecution of sexual

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<sup>30</sup> However, Orfeld (2003) suggests that both the international community and perpetrators of violence (rapists) share the same foundational practice of Othering; both marked by ethnicity, race, and gender (Falk 2008: 160)

violence and the war crime laws are only applied to those “war-makers” that are deemed “Other”, (“and constructed as racial Others”) and directly contrasted with the construction of Western identity as presumably lawful, civilized and modern (Philipose 2008: 112). These prosecuted “deviant masculinities” are framed as the “barbarous, violent...‘Other’” requiring “assimilation and education the superior enlightened [Western] lawmakers” (Philipose 2008: 112). Philipose (2008) does not raise this point to suggest that war rape should not be prosecuted, but rather to highlight how the colonial foundations that may support the imbalance of the application and persecution of IHL.

This thesis attempts to explore the complexity of the stories that ‘they’ as well as ‘we’ tell (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996). Intellectuals cannot simply imagine that by enabling the Other to be heard will automatically translate into unproblematic political and social change (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996). Discourses of Othering can come from diverse points, including feminist anti rape advocates attempting to open discursive space for women to voice their experiences. The common practise of representing victim’s stories in their “pure or authentic form”– free of contamination from the author–is problematic (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 15). Presenting narratives under a guise of objectivity and realism erases the author’s involvement in the construction of these stories and actually reinforces, rather than weakens, the authority and subject position of the academic (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996). For this reason, researchers “using women’s narratives as the source of explanation rather than what requires analysis” risks further obscuring these diverse power relations and entrenching dichotomous categories of

victimization whose origins and impacts should be the focus of analysis (Mardorossian, 2002: 745). "In speaking 'about' or 'for' Third World woman" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 6) it is crucial to examine the ways that Western feminists may be acting as an additional layer of domination that could be denying women's subject position in their own struggle.

## **V. OTHERING THE THIRD-WORLD WOMAN**

The concern expressed for non-white, Third World women is often problematic when it disregards the complex "role of racism, colonialism and economic exploitation in shaping [women's living] condition" (Chew 2008: 82). As Celie Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson argue, "representations of 'women', which imply a homogenous category of Otherness, render invisible the different experiences of women of varied ethnic, sexual and class locations" (1996: 5).<sup>31</sup> Cynthia Enloe (1990) "uses 'womenandchildren' as one word to demonstrate the tendency of leaders," development politics and militaries to fuse "women, children and women with children as a group" (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007: 228). This group is subsequently stripped of their agency and enveloped as victims in need of protection, whose helplessness is used "to justify violence" (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007: 228). Similarly, Mohanty (2003) has critiqued some feminist texts for "discursively colonizing the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the Third World"

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<sup>31</sup> This tendency is not only an issue for western white feminists. Western black feminists participation in global "hierarchies of knowledge and power", also continue "to speak for women from the 'third world'" as authentic representatives of "all indigenous women from their countries (or even continents) of origin"; thus ignoring the exclusion of non-Western women in Western feminist dialogues (Liddle and Rai 1993; Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 6).

(51). These notions contribute to the (re)production of the homogenous and “average Third World woman”--rooted in her geography, defined by poverty, lack of education and political power (Mohanty 2003: 53). Western feminists (as presumably modern, sexually liberated and educated) present themselves as the ideal, emancipated subjects and Third World women, in contrast, “never rise above the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status” (Mohanty 2003: 67). Although these images and representations often appear arbitrary they sustain and carry the authority of a well-established “Western humanist discourse” (Mohanty 2003: 51). Recognizing that all feminist practises are not the same, the case of storytelling women’s experience of rape in the DRC requires further analysis to determine how women may be represented as Other through the practise of denying the heterogeneity of rape victims and positioning them as inferior to so-called emancipated Western subjects.

## **VI. RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR INTERSECTIONALITY**

As all of the preceding theoretical material suggests, “the story of the victimized female body is hardly ever straightforward” (Zarkov 2007: 85). In war, it is not simply gender that makes women targets for rape; “it is also the intersection of gender with the multiple and varied identities of religion, nationality and ethnicity that allows certain groups of women to be distinguished between ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’” (Koo 2002: 528) for the purpose of victimization and protectionist tropes. As Yakin Erturk points out in her special report, “there are multiple layers of discrimination that combine to heighten the vulnerability of women and their

experience of violence, and that most typically results in a continuous chain of violence for marginalized women” (2009: 42). For example, Stephanie Urdang’s (1983) study on colonization discourses suggests that African women suffer “double colonization” in the form domination by both European and African men (Oyewumi 2006: 256). However, treating these forms of oppression as distinct ignores how they are impossibly intertwined, since “both manifestations of oppression are rooted in the hierarchal race/gender relations of the colonial situation” (Oyewumi 2006: 256). Presenting women as idealized, vulnerable victims ignores critical intersections of identity, and removes the important differences among women’s oppression in war; the social context of violence must be taken into consideration (Zarkov 2007).<sup>32</sup>

It is “the symbolic value of the violated female body” that makes it so useful “in the production of collective identities” (Zarkov 2007: 172). Zarkov further notes that violence is engraved on women’s bodies; “they became the respective country, indelibly imprinted by the Other” (2007: 172). Koo notes, “masculinity (and femininity), militarism and nationalism are all aggressively gendered and, as such, assist in creating the stark dichotomy (regardless of...accuracy) which promotes man/protector/fighter and woman/protected/victim” (2002: 530). But this symbolic representation is inextricably linked to the material body (Zarkov 2007). Davis has been critical of feminists’ “ambivalence towards the material body and a tendency to privilege the body as metaphor” (1997: 15). The gap created between “social and cultural representations of the body” and “the concrete social, cultural

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<sup>32</sup> Cynthia Enloe insists “women are not just rape victims” or “one-dimensional cartoons but [are] actors in their own complexly gendered” socio-political and economic spheres (1998: 223 – 224).

and historical context” of its material existence needs to be bridged (Davis 1997; Zarkov 2007: 9). Overcoming this gap means acknowledging that the female body and its symbolic representations are all produced through a multiplicity of social actors, relations and socio-political contexts like racism and colonialism (Zarkov 2007).

The analysis of both sexual violence in conflict and the visibility of the victims reveal how war rape gains meaning through diverse channels. These form almost innumerable intersections beginning with dominant notions of gender, norms of sexuality (masculinities and femininities), and relations of race, class and other social identities (Zarkov 2007). These channels are further contextualized through specific economic and political projects (such as humanitarian policies, global organizations, and neoliberalism). These various contexts all require analysis based on their particular time and space (western, non western) and impact the visibility of victims by expanding or limiting the “discursive space in which victims can speak or be spoken for” (Zarkov 2007: 174). An analysis of this complexity “marks a departure from the flat narratives of gender-based violence that tend to homogenize the diverse experiences of women, as well as from approaches that tend to fragment the experience of each individual woman” (Erturk 2009: 42).

## **VII. WAR RAPE: A CASE FOR CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

The method of critical discourse analysis was chosen because it is primarily concerned with unequal social relations (Lazar 2005) such as the Othering. Further, it suits my main purpose of deconstructing dominant and hegemonic power

relations that deny Congolese women's agency and stall action that could end their experience of war rape. As a qualitative method, critical discourse analysis examines the overall discourse of a topic, and will encompass the breadth of global identities and relations of power involved in constructing representations of war rape in the DRC.

In terms of the strategies used in this method, Carroll notes "the advantage of discourse analysis is that it reframes the object and allows us to treat it not as truth, but as one 'truth' held in place by language and power" (2004: 261). By reframing the representations of women's experience of war rape, I will be less concerned with the truth of women's stories. Instead, I will explore feminine subjectivity in war rape and analyze "the way power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk 2003: 352). Through my analysis of war rape discourse, I will explore both the explicit content of the representations to understand Othering and expose the social inequality implicit therein. This method will provide a more "complex analysis of power and materiality that underlie the dominance" of representations of women's experience of war rape (Erturk 2009: 34). To do this, I will examine how women are made visible as Other and the ways that dominant discourse serves to fortify disempowering stereotypes of victimhood. In addition, the analysis will trace how the process of discursive Othering masks certain identities and power relations. The material for analysis will be drawn from texts in three areas that commonly represent women's experience of war rape. First, global humanitarian policy will include United Nations reports, NGO reports, Security Council hearing and

resolutions. Second, feminist scholarship will encompass feminist academic journals, books and interviews. Third, global media coverage of DRC war will include online and print news articles, magazines, television clips and films. This analysis is designed to expose the degree to which policymakers, academics and journalists align war raped women with stereotypical and simplified depictions of victimhood. The aim is to understand how female bodies are victimized and potentially revictimized by these discourses. Using the method of critical discourse analysis, Chapter Four will now examine how both the content and the construction of meanings discursively reproduce both the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric within media coverage, feminist texts and policy documents.

**CHAPTER FOUR: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN'S STORIES OF  
WAR RAPE IN THE DRC**

The women ask WHY? Why such atrocities? Why do they fight their war on women's bodies? It is because there is a plan to put fear into the community through the woman, because she is the heart of the community. When she is pushed down, the whole community follows. We also ask, Why the silence of the developed countries? When a gorilla is killed in the mountains, there is an outcry, and people mobilize great resources to protect the animals. Yet more than five hundred thousand women have been raped, and there is silence. After all of this you will make memorials and say "Never Again." But we don't need commemorations; we want you to act now.

Chouchou Namegabe,  
Testimony to the US Senate on May 13, 2009b

Chouchou Namegabe's testimony before the US Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs makes a powerful impression. In her testimony to the US Senate, Namegabe told stories of her countrywomen's vaginas being lit on fire with gasoline or their children being brutally murdered. Namegabe's testimony highlights the frustration and futility of advocates attempting to enact change for women in the DRC. Examining various texts—academic literature, media coverage and development policies and reports—opens a space to investigate how war rape narratives position women as the 'Other'. The theories of abjection and postcolonial Othering discussed in the preceding chapter provide a theoretical framework to engage critically with selected discourses of war rape and to explore how the acts of violence and the social actors involved are rendered simultaneously "invisible and visible in otherness" (Zarkov 2007: 175).

Three core themes will be illustrated in the following sections. The first theme explores the "rhetoric of violence" (de Lauretis 1987) or how the experience

of war rape is discursively constructed through storytelling. Specifically, I will probe the ways in which victims of war rape, the conflict in the DRC, and the subjective acts of war rape are made discursively visible through their construction as Other and/or abject. This notion of visibility by otherness is crucial to the second theme: the global media's selective attention to certain acts of violence as a form of spectacle to be consumed by a largely western audience. This spectacle simultaneously renders some aspects of war rape (some identities, some acts, some causes) explicit while it silences others. Drawing from the rhetoric of violence and the making of a spectacle of war rape, or the "violence of rhetoric" (de Lauretis 1987), which despite sustaining a gender discourse that inhibits agency and empowerment of women in their own right, holds the potential—through its discovery and display—to effect change in these directions.

#### **THEME I: OTHERING WOMEN, THE DRC, AND THE VIOLENCE OF WAR RAPE**

A complex war is waged through and on the bodies of women in the fields, forests, villages and urban landscapes of the DRC. The nature of warfare in the DRC epitomizes foucauldian discourse, as multiple social actors and identities are constantly fragmented and shift complex power dynamics that impact women. The raped woman's subjectivity is intimately connected to the way her stories (representation) and her body (material) are constructed as Other. The storytelling of war rape is discursive, and, despite the fact that such rape is an intimate personal violation, its representation is never limited to this personal aspect; the specific acts of sexual violence are often witnessed by the victim's family and community

(Amnesty International 2008; HHI & Oxfam 2010). It is also experienced as one case in a more widespread epidemic of war rape in the DRC that is then retold and consumed by the global public through the media, policy community and academia. By connecting the theories of abjection and colonial objection--discussed in Chapter Three--to these processes of storytelling, space is opened up to explore how certain war rape identities are discursively constructed in the "rhetoric of violence" (de Lauretis 1987). The critical part of this analysis is to explore how identities (race, gender, sexuality, etc.), global processes (post-colonialism, neoliberal politics and economics) and social actors (victims, rapists, communities, governments, journalists, and activists) intersect; these are simultaneously affected by and impact both the acts of rape (to perpetrate or intervene) and the processes of storytelling (to determine whose voices will be heard and how). These multiple layers of experience hold a great opportunity for illustrating and possibly disrupting the violence of war rape while also helping us to understand the ways that processes of representation can further perpetrate violence through Othering. In order to explore how women's subjectivity is constructed (and denied), the discussion that follows will focus on how women's victimhood is discursively constructed in terms of authenticity, destruction, shame and silence.

#### **A) CONSTRUCTING THE RAPED WOMAN'S VICTIMHOOD**

In the case of rape in war, De Lauretis' (1987) "rhetoric of violence" can be applied to understand how the subject of violence is masculine ("man/protector/fighter") and the object of violence is feminine ("woman/protected/victim") (Koo

2002: 530). This dichotomy constructs woman's dominant identity as the object of violence, or, more commonly, 'the rape victim'. By positioning women as passive victims, void of agency contrasted directly with the active and all-powerful violators (Kelly 2000), narratives of rape in the Congo reflect this stark dichotomy:

They find us in the fields as we plant. They find us by the river as we fetch water. They find us in the forest as we collect wood...They abuse our bodies, take our souls, empty our guts. Then throw us away. We are the trash they leave behind in their wars. (IRIN 2004)

I was raped by three men and my [four-year-old] daughter was raped by the other three at the same time, lying next to me on the ground. While one raped each of us, the other two would point their guns and hold us down with their feet. (IRIN/OCHA 2005: 200)

In these representations, women are found, they are used, they are thrown away; they are objects of violence that are acted on but never appear to act. In these brief 'snapshots' of rape, agency strictly lies with the aggressors and their victims are relegated to the role of the passive objects.

The construction of this subject/object dichotomy requires that rape victims be contained as a coherent monolithic group. Mohanty (2003: 53) critiques some feminist texts for glossing over the heterogeneities of women's lives by constructing an "average Third-World woman" who is distinctly defined by her poverty, lack of education and constrained sexuality. This categorization of all Congolese women as a monolithic/homogenous group defined by her Third-World status is a common representation in discourses of war rape. For example, the report *Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams* (IRIN/OCHA 2005: 5) contains a section entitled "Grasping the Context of Gender Based Violence" that reflects Mohanty's (2003) criticism of the West's presentation of the Third World woman. The report's chapter explores the

“context of gender-based violence” by listing four major indicators of violence: women’s poverty, lack of education, legal rights, and social privileges (IRIN/OCHA 2005: 5). Thus, according to the report, these four key factors lead directly to gendered violence. Moreover, the report also claims to focus on gender-based violence “*worldwide*” (IRIN/OCHA 2005:1); however, the case studies focus solely on the Third-World, despite the fact that the issues discussed – intimate partner violence, sexual abuse of children, and sexual assault – also exist in First World nations. This report homogenizes the Third World woman’s identity as poor, uneducated, and suffering from a lack of rights while fusing that identity to being an object of violence. The Third World rape victim is further Othered as she is identified as the sole object of violence in contrast to Western women, who are implicitly represented as free of such gender violence.

A common experience of oppression is often the focus when categorizing war rape victims. State leaders and global policies often tend to fuse “womenandchildren” (Enloe 1990) together as a coherent group, when they are actually referring to “women, children and women with children” (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007: 228). For example, UN Security Council resolution 1906 states that the appropriate measures should be in place “to protect civilians, including women and children, from violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses” (UN Security Council 2009: 4). Also the United Nations Organization Mission in DRC (MONUC) – mandated by the UN Security Council resolution 1291 – also focuses “particular attention to vulnerable groups including women, [and] children”(2000: 4). This protectionist language denies the diverse needs of women,

children, and women with children, while enveloping them as one powerless group: the “vulnerable”. These representations reinforce “Third World woman as the authentic victim” (Erturk 2009: 35), whose victimhood is the defined and represented as being destroyed, shamed and silenced.

## **B) CONSTRUCTING THE DESTROYED RAPE VICTIM**

Victims of war rape are consistently framed in a discourse of destruction; they are left hopeless and beyond repair psychologically, physically and spiritually. This framing of victimhood has serious implications for the subjectivity of war rape victims as destruction negates any agency for the women or community to heal and rehabilitate. When authors declare, for instance, that “Rape survivors... often become living-dead people” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 1) who are “left too psychologically damaged to be an effective care-taker of those around her” (Millo 2006: 200), suggests that women cannot heal from war rape or be empowered. Women are rendered unable to care for themselves or others and are relegated to a kind of purgatory from which they cannot return. Another example of this totalizing discourse occurred in *The Times* online article, which describes the rape of a thirteen-year-old girl. The article carefully depicts the girl’s childish innocence by describing her “wide eyes, neat cornrows and stick thin legs that dangled from a chair, not quite reaching the floor” and juxtaposes this innocence with the violence of being raped by four men when she returned from the market (McConnell 2010). In the article the young girl states: “I have been raped by four men so I’m not a girl anymore, anyone can have me” (McConnell 2010). The statement reiterates the

destruction of this girl's innocence, and the journalist Tristan McConnell (2010) continues by stating that the perpetrators' ability to evade arrest has "left the young girl hopeless." To further reify the total destruction of this young victim, the article ends by McConnell stating that the young girl also has HIV (2010). McConnell's focus and framing of this young girl's experience renders her forever physically and mentally broken. These representations of women objectify the individual and pander to Western audiences who want to know how bad things really are 'over there'.

While most depictions emphasize the destructive effects of rape, there are some representations that contain traces of women's agency and ability to heal. In an interview with Dr. Denis Mukwege, Director of the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, DRC, he concludes that:

For some women their bodies will heal and maybe one day the psychological damage of their ordeals will gradually fade. This girl was forced to become a sex slave for a rebel army group for two years when her village was destroyed and her family killed. For her, such hope is impossible. (IRIN 2004)

There are two notable points from this quote. First, Dr. Mukwege's makes a crucial and rare acknowledgement of some victim's capacity to recover from the violence of war rape. This acknowledgement is quickly followed up by a second observation, in which Dr. Mukwege denies a young girl's ability to overcome the experience of sex slavery. This suggests that while *some* acts and victimization can be healed, others leave the rape victim completely destroyed and beyond repair. War rape absolutely causes tremendous trauma for individuals who experience it (along with their communities and nations). Nonetheless, these common depictions of destruction

negate a woman's agency; both she and her community are denied the capacity to recover, heal and rebuild.

### **C) CONSTRUCTING THE RAPE VICTIM'S SHAME**

Stigmatization commonly shapes stories of war rape, particularly in terms of the media's focus on the shame experienced by women after war rape. At times, women express their personal sense of shame from rape in their own stories: "We were hiding among the banana trees. The soldiers found us there and raped me in the presence of my children. Since then, I feel ashamed when I am around my children" (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 23). The shame of rape is not only fused to personal accounts, but also in the retelling of stories by those with power over the processes of representation; particularly the global media, who often attempt to portray the raped victim as shamed and destitute.<sup>33</sup> Photographer Sherrilyn Borkgen's retelling of a young girl's experience of rape to CNN (Drash 2009) highlights how shame can also be assumed and projected onto rape victims:

The young girl whispered in a hushed tone. She looked down as she spoke, only glancing up from her dark round eyes every now and then. She wanted to tell more, but she was too ashamed. (Drash 2009)

In Borkgen's retelling, the young girl is denied a sense of subjectivity within her own experience of rape and becomes an object to be observed. The description is filled with assumptions about the young girl's supposed feelings of shame. For instance, when the girl lies about her age, Borkgen assumes that "she probably wanted to say she was 15 because it's more *acceptable* [italics added] than to say, 'I was 9 when

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<sup>33</sup> My purpose here is not to interrogate the truthfulness of these statements but to examine the ways in which they are framed by the media.

they raped me” (Drash 2009). This assumption clearly imparts shame onto the victim and begs the question: at what age is rape *more* acceptable? It also implies that the shame of war rape is somehow inherently different from or ‘Other’ than the shame experienced in peacetime rape. In these ways, this type of representation of shame serves to further the process of Othering both of the victim and her reported victimization.

#### **D) THE RAPED WOMEN AS ABANDONED AND STIGMATIZED**

The totalizing stigma of rape and the abandonment of women by their community and families is a common theme. At the beginning of the film *Our Bodies...Their Battleground* (IRIN 2004) a poem states, “We are the ones discarded by husbands. We are used up, defiled by other men, dirty, unwanted, unseen, unheard, **UNDONE**” (IRIN 2004). This poem exemplifies how women are deeply shamed and rejected by their husbands, families and communities after rape. The concept of abjection is useful for exploring the ways that shame is used in representations of war rape to discursively stigmatize and make outcasts of victims. As the situation has been constructed in the literature, women in a patriarchal society are considered precious objects in need of protection (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). Thus, when rape occurs, the woman is considered polluted by the outsiders; rape devalues the social capital of the enemy community (Diken & Laustsen 2005). Shame therefore denigrates the person in question and women – polluted and shamed – are rendered abject and, therefore, taboo (Diken & Laustsen 2005). The most common representations of shame come in the form of storytelling about

women's rejection or abandonment by their partners. For example, the shame of war rape is emphasized in a report by Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) and Oxfam, in which one rape victim declares, "I was at home with my husband and children when we were attacked. The assailants took turns raping me in the presence of my family. My husband and children abandoned me because of the shame caused by this rape" (2010: 23). The stigma of rape does not only occur to adult women but can also be imposed on children if they are raped:

For Marie Donatienne life will never be the same again. Her husband blamed her for what happened and has recently cast her out of their home leaving her financially destitute, and with their six children to raise on her own. Having watched his 8 year old daughter being gang raped by 4 men, he has cut off her school fees as he sees her as unmarriageable and therefore unworthy of further education. (IRIN 2004)

Along with such instances of spousal and familial abandonment, a concern with communal stigmatization is also common within women's narratives:

Six men took turns raping me. They let me leave after one week. Now the whole village knows my story. Can I have a fiancé? Can I continue with my studies? I am in terrible despair. (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 28)

Three of them raped me and pillaged everything in the house. When he returned, my husband asked me what had happened and I explained. He abandoned me, taking another woman who had two children. Now I live alone with my four children and the village stigmatizes me because I am a woman of rape. (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 31)

The issue of women being community outcasts or suffering from the dissolution of intimate relationships is crucial to examine as these experiences can intensify the trauma of rape. However, these common representations deny both the manner in which the community members themselves are also victimized and, moreover, the ways in which communities can and have united in support of victims.

## E) SHAMING WOMEN INTO SILENCE

For the victims of rape, shame “resists translation into language and thus cannot serve as the basis for the formation of a social bond,” (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 120) and therefore women are further traumatized by their social isolation. Shame is then fused to the issue of silence, as the pollution of rape fuels a destructive cycle of objectification and abjection. As the report *Beyond Victimhood* notes, “the stigma attached to rape means it is severely underreported. The broad patterns of violence have had a chilling effect on the ability of women to be effective peace builders” (International Crisis Group 2006: 9). This quote combines stigma and silence while rendering both as passive actions in opposition to the active (and implicitly positive) role of peace building. The fusion of stigma and silence is not relegated only to the media as it is frequently described in feminist literature:

The fear or threat of terror induces most women to live a life of silence. Women often remain quiet about their own victimization. Many are also reluctant to help other women, mainly because of their fear of future revictimization and the shame involved in dealing with the attacks. Women become a stigmatized majority, always vigilant and alert to what could happen. (Milillo 2006: 202)

This quote highlights the role of fear as a potential silencer that “induces” women to remain passive and quiet amidst their victimization. Development workers who research and assist war rape victims are keenly aware of the way in which terror can work to create silence. As Anneke van Woudenberg, senior researcher with Human Rights Watch has stated, “My hope is that the women and girls of—of the eastern Congo—will continue to speak out. I think we've seen immense courage from those women and girls to say, 'No, we've had enough'” (Lerner 2009). The juxtaposition of these two quotations demonstrates the complexity of shame and

speaking out, for while acknowledging the strength and courage required to speak, the researcher also negates any victim's choice to remain silent. The researcher's statement thus implies that living in silence does not take strength or courage.

There is a critical difference between victims of war rape "being silenced *by* discourse" and victims "choosing to be silent *in* discourse" (Koo 2002: 531); that difference comes down to agency. Pointing to the mass silence of rape victims is an important area of feminist research, but it also ignores how the "choice" of silence could be considered a form of agency and even "a conscious decision not to engage with a particular narrative" or avoid personal risk (Koo 2002: 530).<sup>34</sup> Reasons to remain silent about one's victimization can go beyond commonly cited shame and trauma to include a lack of trust, desire to avoid bad memories,<sup>35</sup> and fear of reprisal from violators (Allen 1996). Journalist Wairagala Wakabi's provides a description of the situation in Kivu and a MSF staffer highlights some of these complex reasons behind women's decision to remain silent:

There is a lot of violence going on and victims do not report it because it is considered social death. A raped woman is often victimized and shunned by her husband and the community. And in Kivu the victims are afraid of the perpetrators because they are still around and most of them are armed. We only see the tip of the iceberg. (2008: 16)

This is a rare acknowledgement of the risk involved in women testifying and speaking about the violence of rape. While there is great power in collectively voicing individuals experience of violence and ending the silence of rape, there also

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<sup>34</sup> I am not attempting to suggest that women should be silenced, but instead pointing to some of the complexities of these issues and feminist involvement.

<sup>35</sup> There are important psychological reasons to refrain from telling one's story. Women repeatedly interviewed by the media have reported feelings of exploitation, and health care providers have expressed concern about the psychological damage that may be inflicted by recounting experiences "without adequate psychological and social support systems in place" (Allen 1996: 95).

needs to be enough protections in place to ensure women can speak *and* live. For example, domestic violence activists would not encourage a battered woman to press charges against her partner and continue to live in the same house as her abuser. In the situation of war rape, women face grave risks including the fact that perpetrators of rape typically remain in women's communities, their location thus providing ample opportunities for revictimization. Furthermore, lengthy, sometimes "nonexistent" judicial (Economist 2008) and war crimes tribunal systems often fail to protect victims and witnesses, leaving women particularly vulnerable to further violence (Andric-Ruzicic 2003).

The majority of texts focus on women's mass silence; however, women are bearing witness on a large scale. In fact, recent research conducted by the humanitarian news and analysis service of UN Office for the Coordination of Affairs (IRIN/OCHA) found that in "South Kivu, 492 women--79 percent of whom had been sexually assaulted by between two and 20 attackers--shared their experiences of rape, mutilation and torture" (2005: 178). There is such a focus on removing the silence of rape that women's testimonies of violence have been collected systematically. Archival testimonies now exist "under the conservatorship of the UN tribunal's prosecuting attorney's office", which has been compiling a database of sexual violence testimonies since the war tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (Allen 1996: 71). The collection of this information is no longer an ad hoc process among journalists or activists. Instead, it is now mandated by UN policies. In 2009, the UN Security Council resolution 1906 added a completely new provision: the UN now, "encourages MONUC to enhance its interaction with the civilian population...and to

collect reliable information on violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses perpetrated against civilians” (5). The collection of reliable information includes women’s stories of sexual violence along with statistical reports and information on armed groups.

War rape victims do exhibit agency and strategies of resistance to sexual violence, but these are rarely discussed or, if mentioned, are framed as failures. For instance, some strategies for safety were listed briefly in a Human Rights Watch report (2002: 75): “Some families have sent women and girls to safer locations,” frequently people travel in larger groups, they send elderly women instead of young women to markets, or have men accompany women to the markets and fields. In terms of individual women’s strategies when being attacked, the article goes on to note that “some women and girls wear an extra layer of clothes...to make it more difficult for assailants to get at their bodies”, some women flee or physically fight back, and others use “their wits...to shame or persuade the assailants to leave them alone” (Human Rights Watch 2002: 75-76). However, the report concludes that ultimately sending men or elderly to travel simply puts them at risk and “given the disproportionate power in the hands of the assailant” few are successful (Human Rights Watch 2002: 76). Despite the final dismissal of the strategies success rate, this text is still important because it reminds us that women’s expressions of resistance and agency in the oppressively violent context of war are often ignored or downplayed. The salient point from this report is that women do possess agency and are resisting.

## **E) RAPE VICTIMS AS PEACE BUILDERS**

The one identity that grants women at least some agency is the construction of women as peacebuilders. As a 2006 report by the International Crisis Group points out:

It is in these difficult circumstances that Congolese women have been engaged as peacebuilders...Congolese women have been able to mobilize collectively and individually, at grassroots level and higher, nationally and internationally. But their organizations face very high male resistance. (8-9)

The peacebuilding model is suggested as a form of empowerment for women; however, it is not without challenges from a largely male political system. In an effort to overcome this opposition, UN Security Council resolutions 1325 in 2000 and resolution 1820 in 2009 were two steps taken by the international community to increase women's participation and leadership in peacemaking, post-conflict rebuilding and protection from sexual violence in war zones (Erturk 2009). One human rights advocate stated, "We expect UN member states to follow through to empower women as peacemakers and to stop rape in war" (Reinl 2010:2). To this end, the UN Security Council resolution 1325 includes mandates to "mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations" and reiterates the "special needs of women and children" in war (UN Security Council 2000). The efforts to empower women by expanding their roles as peacebuilders does provide an important and positive shift but it still limits women's pathways to empowerment as being only either victims or peacebuilders. This limited choice does not only construct a dichotomy of agency (passive vs. active) but also denies any alternative and self-directed pathways to women's empowerment.

## **F) THE DRC AS SUBJECT: A COLONIAL LEGACY**

Othering and abjection can also manifest as part of a broader colonial legacy (or ongoing development project) of Western domination over the racialized and previously colonized population of the DRC. Those in control of representations construct stereotypes about the “warmakers” in the DRC as “the barbarous, violent “Other,” who are presented as inferior to Western lawmakers (Philipose 2008: 112). Therefore humanitarian interventions are undertaken by the West to maintain “the illusion of moral distance between itself and the evil “out there” (Falk 2008: 161).

The West’s response to the violence in the DRC is “undergirded by the Africa synonymous with excess and irrationality, which is imagined to exist in a dimension separate from the north” (Smith & Mantz 2006: 76). Specifically, the plentiful resources of the DRC are often idealized while simultaneously juxtaposed with the senseless irrationality of the state, the violence and the people. For instance, *New York Times* journalist Jeffrey Gettleman (2009) states that, “for years, the thickly forested hills and clear, deep lakes of eastern Congo have been a reservoir of atrocities” and “it is often a death march through one of Africa’s lushest, most stunning tropical landscapes.” Gettleman’s literary emphasis on life—the lush growing forests—is simultaneously contrasted with total destruction and death that implies a kind of senselessness or abnormality to the DRC. Eva Ensler also utilizes this literary tactic:

Eastern Congo, where Panzi Hospital is located, is wildly fertile. You can almost hear the vegetation growing. There are banana trees and cartoon-colored birds. And there is Lake Kivu, a vast body of water that contains enough methane to power a good portion of the sub-Saharan—yet the city of Bukavu on its banks has only sporadic electricity. This is a theme in the Congo. There are more natural

resources than almost anywhere else on the planet, yet 80 percent of the people make less than a dollar a day. More rain falls than one can imagine, but for millions, clean drinking water is scarce. The earth is gorgeously abundant, and yet almost one third of the population is starving. (2007: 2)

This depiction contrasts immense violence with the idealized utopia of natural resources and sets the DRC in opposition to the West, as some far-away dangerous place where things are not as they seem. These representations implies a taboo boundary crossing—as if this kind of violence should not occur where there are such lush natural resources to be harvested. There is a formlessness to these descriptions that lends itself to abjection; the DRC is at once a utopia of abundance and a land of starvation.

The abjection that occurs in representations of the DRC depicts the conflict as a kind of formless chaos defined by its lack of order.<sup>36</sup> For example, Jan Goodwin from *The Nation* magazine writes, "The country is in an utter state of lawlessness; it's complete anarchy" (2004). Goodwin implies a certain inevitability to this kind violence and lawlessness in the DRC. This suggestion is echoed by other journalists; Gettleman declares that the "Eastern Congo is going through another one of its convulsions of violence" even though "the days of chaos in Congo were supposed to be over" (2007). Another example from *The Economist* (2008) links the representations of both the DRC's lawlessness and its lack of modernity, "The Congo has long had a culture of violence and an almost non-existent judicial system" and describing "sprawling, hellish camps" the article questions how the UN "can hope to put an end to violence in so vast a region that is barely accessible by road or air?"

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<sup>36</sup> It could be argued that this kind of abjection occurs with other African conflicts, but this would require further analysis of those specific case studies.

This description goes beyond pointing to a backward and underdeveloped nation by implying that the peace process in the DRC is hopeless.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Julia Kristeva has theorized that crimes are abject-- and therefore taboo – because they draw our attention to the “fragility of law” and order (1982/2002: 232). The example of the “shameless rapist” that Kristeva used to illustrate the abjection of rule breaking is particularly relevant to this case given the common depictions of rampant raping and chaos in the DRC. For instance, Ensler quotes an aid worker as stating -- rather simplistically -- “All of them are raping women. It is a country sport.” (2007: 7). According to this statement, DRC perpetrators are not only pervasive but are shamelessly raping women in the DRC to such an extent that it is likened to a thing of leisure--the ultimate denial of rules of law and order. This supports the further abjection of the lawlessness of the DRC but also its population: all men are raping, and all women are raped.

A critical characteristic of both abjection and objection is the emphasis on difference in constructing the Other. As noted in Chapter 2, expanding on Lacan,<sup>37</sup> Kristeva suggests that abjection is really a reflection of the lack in one’s self—“a kind of narcissistic crisis”—that is the foundation of all sense of being and meaning (2002: 240). In a broader colonial context, Michael Ignatieff (1998) echoes this theme of narcissism, whereby the West constructs its own sense of meaning by over emphasizing a difference between itself and those it is attempting to dominate. In the case of the DRC, this emphasis on difference is evident within UN Security

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<sup>37</sup> As I discuss in Chapter 2, Lacan (1977) suggests that the self is constructed by contrasting oneself with Others (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996)

Counsel Resolution documents. In early resolutions, the West's role is constructed as one of guidance, advisory and assistance for the DRC in the proper and necessary ways of conducting state affairs. This guidance is in accordance with a Western focus on "good governance and respect for the principle of accountability and...in strengthening the capacity of the judicial and correctional systems" (UN Security Resolution 2008: 6). This emphasis on guidance and advice shifts to an authoritarian tone in the 2009 Security Council resolution. In this case, the UN Security Council expressed it is "deeply concerned that some militias and armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have not yet laid down their arms and continue to *prey* [italics added] on the population" (2009: 1). The strong language and dramatic representation of a militia group that hunts the population are rare for this kind of legal document. Moreover, there is also a shift in that the UN is now demanding action from, not just assisting, the DRC government. The document goes on to declare that the UN Security Council "Demands that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in furtherance of resolution 1888 (2009), immediately take appropriate measures to protect civilians" (2009: 4). This shift in legal discourses regarding the DRC is interesting for two reasons. First, the conflict has gone on for over a decade, and it is only now that this strong language is being used. Second, the tone of this language is one of authority and dominance over a post-colonial, Third World state.

Abjection causes the marked person or thing to be taboo and therefore repellent and must be avoided. This function of abjection is clearly apparent in the international community's representation of the DRC. Zizek points to this repellent

quality of the abject by stating, “the Congo today has effectively re-emerged as a Conradian ‘heart of darkness.’ No one dares to confront it head on” (2008: 3). He expands on this point further by arguing that the lives of anyone else, Americans or Israelis, are simply worth more than the death of a “nameless Congolese” (2008: 3). This avoidance of the abject could be a reason why Western bodies continuously “count more” than the bodies of the Other (Hyndman 2008: 205). This point was illustrated by a European UN Forces Major:

The DRC is the size of Western Europe. We're supposed to have 8,500 troops here, but we've only got 5,000! I was in Bosnia, which is a fraction of the size of the Congo, and we had 68,000 NATO troops, and even that wasn't enough...I've never seen anything like this, when war has become this horrible, and human life so undervalued (Goodwin 2004).

The international community’s avoidance of intervention in the DRC encroaches on the absurd. Zizek (2008: 3) highlights this abjection by noting the lack of “humanitarian uproar” after *Time* magazine made the DRC war its cover story on June 5, 2006. Zizek cynically notes, “Time picked the wrong victim in the struggle for hegemony in suffering” (2008: 3). This lack of public outcry points to the grave chance of inciting political will to end war rape in the DRC. Essentially, if the war and the nation of the DRC are Othered, then the women--who are part of that Other war, in an Other nation--are even less likely to be considered subjects in their own right.

## **THEME II: THE SPECTACLE OF WAR RAPE: ‘SHOCK AND AWE’**

The Othering of Congolese women and the DRC is linked to the abjection of the violent acts of war rape. War rape is rendered formless by the intimate internal

and external border crossings (in terms of women's body and women's community) that occur through the invasion of war rape coupled with the chaos that characterizes postmodern warfare in the DRC; all of these aspects undermine (a specifically) Western need for boundaries, distinctions and order (Diken & Lausten 2005). Therefore, war rape becomes abject in its representation, and the response – as with any form of abjection – is at once repulsion and fascination (Kristeva 2002). By tracing the ways in which representations of violent acts of war rape produce both shock (repulsion) and awe (fascination), this section will further illuminate how the response to the abjected war rape is one of both dismissal and consumption of the violent acts and how, by association, women's experience of war rape is also potentially consumed and dismissed.

#### **A) THE SHOCK, HORROR AND REPULSION OF WAR RAPE**

A UN World Food Program spokesperson stated that, "The nature of sexual violence in the DRC is grotesque, completely abnormal" (Goodwin 2004). This comment exemplifies how war rape in the DRC is regarded as both shocking and repulsive. As abject, war rape poses a threat to perceptions of normality and is therefore "disgusting, ugly...[and] sick" (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 113), or, as the Goodwin interview suggests, "grotesque." The violence of war rape is frequently constructed as something abnormal, never seen before, and therefore Other in its novelty. Wairagala Wakabi suggests, "There is no precedent for the insensate brutality of the war on women in Congo. The world has never dealt with such a

twisted and blistering phenomenon”(2008: 15). The focus on the abnormality of war rape, however, does not fully explain its abjection.

The reaction to war rape is similar to that of any object: it is repulsive and sickening. For example, Goodwin writes, “I, too, was sickened by what I saw and heard. In three decades of covering war, I had never before come across the cases described to me by Congolese doctors, such as gang-rape victims having their labia pierced and then padlocked” (2004). The response of repulsion to this form of violence often gives way to reactions described as ‘shock’ and ‘horror’. Rape is frequently discussed as occurring on a “shocking scale” (IRIN 2005: 197), and there is a tendency to express war rape in terms of horror, as in the Amnesty International report (2008), a chapter heading entitled “The Continuing Horror of Rape...” In another example, Eva Ensler refers to rape as “horror” twice in one CNN opinion article (2009b). The horror of rape is also intimately linked to the brutality of the acts described to support this reaction:

The brutality of rape in South Kivu has been one of the conflict’s defining characteristics and our results again speak to the horrific nature of the crimes...But the brutality extends beyond the sexual violence. Within this dataset, women also describe forced cannibalism, being forced to drink bodily fluids such as urine, the slaughter of infants and young children in front of their mothers and the burning alive of family members. (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 36)

These passages not only use the term horror, but also highlight acts of violence, such as baby killing and cannibalism, that are considered abnormal even in the context of war. These responses, although common and seemingly natural, are not necessarily

productive for the purpose of ending violence as they have the potential to shut down comprehension and the ability to mobilize action against this violence.<sup>38</sup>

The abject is “beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable” (Kristeva 2002: 229). The common response to the ‘shock’ and ‘horror’ of the violence of war rape is “incomprehension” (Price 2001:211), that it is “unspeakable” (Allen 2002: 778; Leaning & Gingerich 2005: 3) and “unimaginable” (IRIN 2004). The storytelling of the most brutal acts of violence moves outside the realm of possible violent acts, and incomprehension follows. Indeed, headlines for news articles and reports often allude to this theme. For instance, one article in *The Economist* is entitled “Atrocities Beyond Words: A Barbarous Campaign of Rape” (2008), while another report suggests that rape is “almost inconceivable in its scale” (IRIN 2005: 2). These constructions of shock and horror have the potential to lead to an overall dismissal of this violence due to the audience’s inability to comprehend such brutality (Price 2001). When confronting this kind of violence, the response “is empathy, a sense of loss, and a desire to help, but there is also a recognition of powerlessness and an attitude of disgust. Helplessness ... impinge[s] on any sentimentalized or purely empathetic response to violence”(Coulthard 2006: 133). Therefore, when activists use women’s stories of war rape in order to raise funds or awareness, their tactics may be doing more harm than good.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> There is absolutely no doubt about the brutality of war crimes and rape. It is crucial to note that the purpose of pointing out these responses to abjection is not meant to suggest that the world shouldn’t be outraged but rather that the choice of response be a productive one that leads to action to end these and all human rights abuses.

<sup>39</sup> Žižek (2008) suggests that there is “something inherently mystifying in a direct confrontation with [violence]: the over-powering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims inexorably functions as a lure which prevents us from thinking”(2008: 4). Also, in order to ignore the traumatic

Eva Ensler attempts to explore this combination of grief and helplessness: “Nothing I have heard or seen compares with what is going on in the Democratic Republic of Congo... What I witnessed in Congo has shattered and changed me forever. I will never be the same. None of us should ever be the same” (2009b). Ensler was “shattered” by the shock and horror of this violence, yet she continues to do her work to attempt to mobilize resources and political will to end the violence. However, would the general public’s response be the same? Could everyone be motivated by a personal sense of being “shattered” and move past the inability to comprehend this violence? Such a general response is doubtful, and therefore the potential dismissal of the acts and victims of war rape could exacerbate the lack of action to end the violence of war rape.

In the discourse of war rape, perpetrators of sexual violence are consistently represented as something inhuman and inherently “evil” (Zizek 2008: 1). This is a problematic representation because when perpetrators are depicted as mad, evil, or crazed, the responses to these acts are also ones of “dismissal and alienation” (Price 2001: 211). For instance, the media has coined rape in the DRC as “murderous madness”(OCHA/IRIN 2005: 181), and Hilary Clinton described the situation as “evil in its basest form” (McConnell 2010). Perpetrators have been referred to as “mad militiamen”(Ensler 2007: 1), “monsters” (Armstrong 2009), and “savage beasts” (Gettleman 2007), and their crimes have been labeled the work of “evil disposed men” (IRIN 2004). Framing the acts of violence and the perpetrators in this manner dismisses the acts and actors without further analysis. It also hinders a broader

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impact, a dispassionate conceptual development is necessary; however, “there is a sense in which a cold analysis of violence somehow reproduces and participates in its horror” (Zizek 2008: 4).

reflection on the root causes of war rape and origins of all torture and violence, including our own (Western) complicity. Despite the increasing public awareness of gender violence, “most of us do not consciously feel the wars in the sense that we do not walk around experiencing a constant aching and fear” (Eisenstein 2008: 23). This dismissal means that the observer need not struggle to understand either the act or the actor, and this strategy is effective because “humans have an uncanny ability to hold terror and misery at arm’s length” (Scheper- Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 26). Ensler seems to be aware of this potential for dismissal among her audience as she makes a point of asking her readers to move beyond it:

I am going to tell the stories of the patients...so that the faceless, generic, raped women of war become Alfonsine and Nadine—women with names and memories and dreams. I am going to ask you to stay with me, to open your hearts, to be as outraged and nauseated as I felt sitting in Panzi Hospital in faraway Bukavu. (Ensler 2007:1)

Despite her attempt to ask the reader to “stay with her” and not to dismiss the acts or women despite the potential incomprehensibility of this situation, Ensler still manages to engage with abjection. She anticipates that her audience’s—and her own—reaction will be one of horror, of disgust and of nausea. She still pleads with her readers to stay focused and engaged, but she is also asking them to stay fascinated by the stories of “faraway Bukavu.”

## **B) WAR RAPE AS SPECTACLE; FASCINATION WITH THE SUBJECT**

In the documentary film *Scared Sacred* (2007), filmmaker Velcrow Ripper sets out to tour the “Ground Zeros” of the world; he explores the darkest, most traumatic locations of human history, including Rwanda, Hiroshima and Auschwitz.

At one point during his journey, he concludes that his voyeurism has made him a “tourist of darkness”—a dabbler in human suffering (Ripper 2007). This voyeuristic tendency points to the ways in which the fascination with war rape—as Other and abject—has become a media spectacle that is then consumed by a Western public through various forms and formats of media.

The abjection of war rape is repellent because of its Otherness, its radical exclusion from the self; however, it still serves to lure one “towards the place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva 1982: 2). The abject also fascinates because it is taboo (Diken & Lausten 2005). This fascination remains focused on something that repels us; therefore, the spectacle of violence relies heavily on the directly visible constructions of rape victims and the evil acts of subjective violence with little to no focus on the deeper, “systemic” or symbolic violence (Zizek 2008: 9). A study of media coverage in Rwanda and Bosnia illustrated this media tendency “to find linear and simplified explanations to complex situations” in war; clearly defined violators and victims were set in extreme contrast to one another in representations that were largely unreflective of the real situations (Musa 2009: 58). The case of the DRC also appears to follow this pattern. As the following passages demonstrate, there is frequently an emphasis on barbarism and a tendency to highlight the most extreme forms of violence, such as mutilating body parts, cutting children and eating babies:

She tells me how one of the soldiers forced her to drink his urine and eat his feces, how the soldiers killed 10 of her friends and then murdered her children: her four-year-old and two-year-old boys and her one-year-old girl...“One after another they raped me. From that my vagina and anus were ripped apart...One of the soldiers cut open a pregnant woman,” she says. “It was a mature baby and they killed it. They cooked it and forced us to eat it.” (Ensler 2007: 4)

According to victims, one of the newest groups to emerge is called the Rastas, a mysterious gang of dreadlocked fugitives who live deep in the forest, wear shiny tracksuits and Los Angeles Lakers jerseys and are notorious for burning babies, kidnapping women and literally chopping up anybody who gets in their way. (Gettleman 2007)

These examples point to the fascination of abjection in terms of both the kinds of violent acts chosen and the ways in which they are represented. There are clearly defined actors – aggressors and victims – in each of these stories, and who are clearly chosen for their dramatic effect in framing the ‘horrific’ otherness of war rape. The representations of violence construct a scenario of senseless, unrepentant chaos.

Pointing to the sensationalism of these stories is not to suggest that this kind of violence is not rampant or that these stories are untrue. Rather, I am questioning the selection of these particular versions of violence and how this choice aids in the construction of a media spectacle that elicits a fascination in the abjection of war rape. In regards to media representations, it would appear that the more visibly shocking a story or person is, the more appealing it will be for the purpose of creating a media spectacle.

We can see this tendency at work in the case of Marta, who was raped and then badly burned after a militia set her house on fire (ABC 2008; ‘Marta’s Story: Update’ 2010). In 2008, the actor Ben Affleck travelled to the DRC to report on the war for a ABC *Nightline* special news report. The special featured only one interview with a woman, Marta (ABC 2008). Moreover, Marta’s story was also featured on the website of a not-for-profit organization called *Heal Africa*. The website posts portraits of Marta’s burned and disfigured face, the caption beside the photos invites

viewers to compare those images of Marta (after two of five surgeries) with her improved appearance on *Nightline* (“Marta’s story update” 2010). Her wounds and story are likely chosen as they demonstrate the horrors of the war. However, Marta becomes a (media) spectacle and an object of suffering through the *Nightline* special, which potentially uses her story because of the ‘visibility’ of her suffering; then, she is objectified a second time when the Heal Africa website uses her visible improvements as a testimonial to the good work they are doing.

The tendency towards sensationalism is also evident in the media’s choice of front cover images, which often showcase war rape victims in poses that conjure up notions of trauma and shame (see Appendix 1). Interestingly, each front cover photo depicts a strikingly similar pose. There is an undercurrent of shame within all of these photos and their prominence (on front covers and at the beginning of articles) makes their use of this particular imagery all the more interesting. As images, they are already subject to the gaze of the viewer, but their particular choice of framing—the women as faceless (presumably shamed and silent as their mouths are covered)—further denies the women’s subjectivity.

Certain headlines also reflect the theme of spectacle. When the UN’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict described the DRC as the “rape capital of the world,” the phrase became a topic for many news sites, including Amnesty International (2010) and the BBC (2010). On April 16, 2010, a *Time* article combined the use of iconic victim images and sensational headlines. The article, entitled “Sexual Violence ‘becoming normal’ in Congo” opens with a large picture of a shamed young girl hiding her face in her hands (Appendix 1: Fig.3) and the article

proceeds to claim that rape is now “normal” in the DRC (McConnell 2010). The article includes dramatic wording to describe the mass rapes and highlights the “scandalous” and “most shocking” examples of rape (McConnell 2010). The headline and front cover placement of these representations underscores the media’s focus on subjective acts of violence and how these are central to the construction of a spectacle war rape; it appears that knowing women are raped is not enough, it is important to consume all the ‘horrifying’ details.

The making of the spectacle of war rape is often concentrated on the specific acts of violence, which are then summarized in a kind of sound/text bite, as *The Economist* excerpt suggests:

Rape [is] committed in front of families or whole communities; male relatives forced at gunpoint to rape their own daughters, mothers or sisters; women used as sex slaves forced to eat excrement or the flesh of murdered relatives. Some women victims have themselves been murdered by bullets fired from a gun barrel shoved into their vagina. Some men, says a worker for the UN's Children's Fund (UNICEF), have been forced to simulate having sex in holes dug in the ground, with razor blades stuck inside. (2008)

The violent acts are listed with limited contextual or personal information about the victims or their circumstances. The acts are disconnected from their storytellers and amalgamated as a fusion of narratives that furthers the abjection of violence and the denial of the subjectivity of the victims; through this process of representation, there are no victims, only acts of violence. This further constructs the DRC as a country in chaos with no apparent rhyme or reason for the violence. These representations are aided by press releases that tailor their information to this kind of quick and simple text bites. For instance, located at the bottom of a press release (Oxfam International 2010) for the most recent HHI and Oxfam report on the sexual

violence in the DRC, there is a bullet-point list of stories of rape with a note that states more are available from the Oxfam media unit. The bullet points are short and concise experiences of rape that have no reference to the individual victims, no pseudonyms or information to contextualize the violence; they are merely objects to be cut and pasted. Media outlets can then use these bullet points repeatedly if there are certain stories that are well suited to constructing the spectacle.<sup>40</sup> For instance, the same story about a woman, whose lips and ears were cut off after she was raped, was used in a number of news reports (Goodwin 2004; IRIN 2010; “UN relief chief speaks out...” 2010). In a similar form of repetition, Ben Affleck’s trip to the DRC became a *Nightline* special (2008), an editorial piece in the Italian *L’Uomo Vogue* magazine (Affleck 2008), and was featured in various news bites, including coverage on the Heal Africa website (“Marta’s Story: update” 2010).<sup>41</sup> There is a serious lack of context that occurs with the repetition of media bites that risk further objectifying and commodifying women’s experiences of war rape.

A largely Western audience consumes the spectacle of war rape. The consumption of these spectacles relies heavily on sensationalized and simplified representations, which is a well-known tactic of the media. The extensive consumption of spectacle is exemplified by the numerous formats and examples of

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<sup>40</sup> There are consequences to the media’s construction of war rape as a spectacle that is beyond the scope of this thesis. For instance, Andric- Ruzicic (2003) notes that in the former Yugoslavia there were reports of rape victims committing suicide after their stories were published in the media; despite giving their interview voluntarily, these women may not have been aware or prepared for the potential retraumatization of seeing their photograph or testimony on paper.

<sup>41</sup> An important area of future research would be an examination of how the consumption of celebrity has important implications for the subjectivity of war rape victims whose stories are being told by or through celebrities; for example, UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman was central to the organization’s Stop Rape campaign, and Ben Affleck’s trip to the DRC was, as we have seen, transformed into various forms of media.

women's stories of war rape that are 'packaged' for a largely Western audience. For instance, a number of full-length feature documentaries, including *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo* (Jackson 2007) and *Lumo* (Perlmutter & Walker III 2007), along with a recent Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Ruined* (Nottage 2009), all explore women's experience of violence in the DRC. Even fashion magazines, including *Chatelaine* (Armstrong 2010), *Glamour* (Ensler 2007), and *L'Uomo Vogue* (Affleck 2008), have produced features on war rape in the DRC. The report *Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams* (IRIN/OCHA 2005) is another excellent example of how gender-based violence is packaged in a number of formats for consumption. This material has been released as an online report, as a book and as a film. Similarly, the news report from HHI & Oxfam (2010) has also been presented as a film, a special web report and a photo journal. The combination of text and images appears to be growing in popularity as the *Congo/Women* art exhibit was launched in 2009 and is currently touring. It contains pictures by famous photographers (Lynsey Addario, Marcus Bleasdale, Ron Haviv and James Nachtwey) and is intended to tell women's stories of life in the Congo through images and accompanied essays (Art Works Project 2009). The packaging and marketing of women's experience of rape is useful for raising awareness of the issues of violence, but also lends itself to the consumption of that violence. With so many modes and mediums—film, photo, text, art—there is an almost endless combination of ways for the global public to consume DRC women's sensational stories.

The aesthetic of the spectacle of war rape calls into question the subjectivity of women's storytelling. Having one's story taken and formatted, framed and edited

into all these forms of media for various purposes (selling magazines, raising funds for NGO's, reporting on policies, raising awareness) can appropriate women's experiences and erase them completely from their own narrative. The inundation of media on war rape serves to raise awareness, which could reduce social stigma for women, but it is more likely that the voicing of the raped woman's experience is less her own personal story and more that of the authors who are controlling the processes of representation. It is unlikely that a glossy magazine feature or highly produced documentary is focused on or capable of maintaining the integrity of each woman's personal story and experience in its authentic form.

Interestingly, the case of the DRC has moved from silence to spectacle. War rape is gaining increasing coverage due to recent media interest, policy shifts, and academic attention. However, conflict in the DRC had been ongoing for over a decade with minimal coverage (Michalski & Gow 2007). Even with the focus on war rape, there is still silence regarding other aspects of the conflict. The asymmetrical nature of the DRC war eludes capture in the simplified media coverage, which may (partly) explain the long media silence on the DRC conflict. Put simply, there are no clear-cut good guys and bad guys (Goodwin 2004), or, at least, they are not as clearly defined as in the cases of Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia. This ambiguity has led the DRC to become a veritable "black hole" of media coverage (Michalski & Gow 2007:165). Duska Andric-Ruzicic (2003) notes how the media whispers about atrocities in non-European contexts and others argue that Africa, overall, has received less attention by Western media "than other conflict zones despite being an entire continent with many parts" and stories of war and peace (Michalski & Gow

2007: 165). In a trailer for a *Nightline* special report intended to air in 2001, host Ted Koppel admits that he is “ashamed” of the three years of silence that the conflict in the DRC received from the media up to that point, but that the upcoming news special would correct that silence by finally shedding light on the atrocities (Michalski & Gow 2007: 166). Unfortunately, the special feature was set to air on September 11, 2001, and when the 9/11 attacks occurred, “Africa was forgotten again” for the presumably more important American coverage (Michalski & Gow 2007: 166). This provides a telling metaphor for the way in which issues and events in Africa are swept off media and government agendas (Michalski & Gow 2007).

### **THEME III: THE VIOLENCE OF RHETORIC - SILENCING THE OTHER**

While there is finally a growing awareness of this issue, this awareness is often confined to certain victims and to particular versions of violence, which can silence other identities, experiences and motivations of war rape and, therefore, render them as the Other and invisible. While some identities fall outside the strict notions of victimhood, at other times the representations of women’s experiences of war rape masks important differences in ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, and abilities.

#### **A) TRACING RACE AND CLASS**

UN Special Rapporteur Yakin Erturk rightly point out that “there are multiple layers of discrimination that combine to heighten the vulnerability of women and their experience of violence, and that most typically result in a continuous chain of violence for marginalized women” (2009: 42). However, notions of the “average

Third World woman” (Mohanty 2003: 53) in combination with the “authentic” victim (Erturk 2009: 34) serve to erase important issues of ethnicity and the economic status of women in the DRC. The assumption appears to be that all Congolese women share the same ethnicity and the same poverty, and therefore neither of these identities is examined further for the ways in which these differences could be putting *certain* women at greater risk. Race and class are two identities that are especially silent in the representations of war rape in the DRC.

Any trace of differences in culture or ethnicity is almost completely invisible in the media coverage, feminist scholarship and international policies regarding the DRC. Despite this the Congo is not an ethnically homogeneous state, nor is the conflict contained to the population of the DRC itself (HHI & Oxfam 2010). The HHI & Oxfam report (2010) was the only one to even reference the “ethnicity” of women and rape. Nonetheless, it states that women were not targeted for rape based on their ethnicity (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 56). However, if ethnicity remains invisible, it is not being studied and therefore important ways women are could be victimized is going unnoticed. Beyond that, there are diverse ethnicities living in the eastern DRC and there appears to be a whitewashing effect in representations, erasing any potential for ethnic difference among women in the DRC and, arguably, Africa as a whole.

The issue of class is rarely discussed in the texts, but the potential effects of socioeconomic status can be traced through comments on the rural nature of attacks and the occupational hazards of certain women’s labor in the DRC. Most representations of war rape suggest that the chaos of war is rampant everywhere;

however, Colonel Franck Molishu of the DRC points out that most acts of war rape occur in the more remote rural, not urban areas (IRIN 2004). The distinction between rural and urban occurrences of rape is largely ignored in policy and media discussions. In addition, certain occupations—particularly those linked to trade and agriculture—appear to put the female workers at greater risk of attack. According to Oxfam, “the majority of rape survivors are illiterate and rely on subsistence farming to support their families” (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 2), and Medecins Sans Frontiers reported, “over half of all victims are raped while working in the fields” (HHI & Oxfam 2010:7). According to Human Rights Watch (2002), participation in trade also makes women more vulnerable to rape: “Women and girls are the main local traders” (46), and therefore “they are the ones who go looking for wood, food, fruits and they are often attacked or taken while doing these tasks”(43). While rare, these quotes point to some recognition that women’s rural location or occupation is a risk factor.

Conversely, the HHI and Oxfam report suggests that the majority of women in the DRC are not attacked in the fields or on the roads, but “in their own homes... during the evening and at night” (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 35). This confusion points to a lack of understanding as to how occupation and location can impact women’s victimization. For instance, the UN attempted to reduce women’s risk of rape when getting firewood by supplying them with small stoves that did not require wood (Leaning & Gingerich 2005). But if the HHI and Oxfam report is correct, supplying stoves will do little for women if they are being attacked in their own homes. The silence and lack of attention to issues of class and race and the ways in which these

factors potentially victimize certain women (such as the rural poor) have consequences for interventions used to help combat violence and protect women.

## **B) SILENCE OUTSIDE THE AUTHENTIC VICTIM MODEL**

The tendency for the discourse of war rape to pit 'good' against 'evil' distorts the event of war and requires the omission of "inconvenient facts" that do not align with the villain and victim paradigm (Hammond 2007: 52). These results in the silencing of some social actors that falls outside of the authentic victim model and is therefore "considered unworthy of sympathy" (Hammond 2007: 52). In fact, there is a marked tendency to call women "victims" and ignore the violent crimes of rape that can be perpetrated by anyone regardless of sex (Zarkov 2008: 161). Although the rape of men is not committed on nearly the same scale as women, men are still victimized through assault, often murder and sometimes rape.<sup>42</sup> While male rape continues to be largely silenced, there are now some testimonies of male rape beginning to show up in texts. I was only able to find three examples, which are all part of the most recent reports (Gettleman 2009; Amnesty International 2008; HHI & Oxfam 2010). Amnesty International reported on male rape (one paragraph in a thirty page document), and, interestingly, chose to highlight a story of rape by a female soldier: "Jean-Baptiste...was returning home from his field in late January 2008 when a female *mayi-mayi* fighter stopped him and held a knife to his chest...and demanded sex, telling him '*If you refuse, I will kill you.*' Still holding the knife against him, she then forced him to have intercourse with her" (Amnesty

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<sup>42</sup> In addition to male rape, men's refusal to commit incestuous acts of sexual violence (such a son raping his mother or a father raping his daughter) "often led to death" (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 24).

International 2008: 12). While raped men face great social stigma, the number of men coming forward is growing. It is likely that a decrease of the social stigma associated with male rape might lead more male victims to report their experiences (HHI & Oxfam 2010).<sup>43</sup>

### **C) IGNORING THE EXPERIENCE OF EVERYDAY VIOLENCE**

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) suggests that violence exists “everywhere in social practice”; he argues “it is misrecognized because its very everydayness and its familiarity render it invisible” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 21). The main violence made visible in representations of war in the DRC is generally portrayed as rape, specifically the penetration of an object (penis or object) into a women’s vagina or anus (Koo 2002).<sup>44</sup> However, the “everydayness” of violence and coercion that women face is largely missing from these representations. For instance, often ignored is the fact that the violence of war rape has “gone beyond the conflict,” according to a researcher of militia groups in the DRC (Gettleman 2007). In the interview the researcher noted that “the number of women abused and even killed by their husbands seemed to be going up and brutality toward women had become ‘almost normal’” (Gettleman 2007). Women in the DRC experience acts of domestic and interpersonal violence—from coercion to civilian rape—on a daily basis but these are largely silenced or overshadowed by the spectacle of war rape (Erturk

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<sup>43</sup> Oxfam notes that “little has been documented about wartime rape targeting males and this is a topic requiring future study” (HHI & Oxfam, 2010: 36). Therefore it is difficult to know the severity and nature of male war rape without further research.

<sup>44</sup> At times there are representations of other forms of bodily harm, torture, and sexual slavery, which are likely included to contribute to the construction of spectacle.

2009). This silencing is problematic, as the recent study by HHI and Oxfam that found that acts of civilian rape are on the rise (2010). The report suggested that a climate of impunity has made sexual violence so ubiquitous that civilians are increasingly conducting acts of rape and other violence against girls and women. Young boys have been affected by this culture of violence, as the following firsthand account suggests:

I was getting ready to go to the market in Muhanzi. A neighborhood boy called out to me saying that he wanted to buy bananas from me. I sold him the bananas but he made me take them to his house. Once in the house, he closed the door and started to intimidate me. He hit me and I fell to the floor. I fought him but he still raped me. (HHI & Oxfam 2010: 27)

These acts of intimidation and rape are rarely accounted for, and it is unclear whether the research separates accounts of civilian rape from the acts of militias. Therefore this invisibility could be masking a larger social problem that may continue to confound attempts to build peace and end violence against women in the DRC.

While sexual slavery is often discussed in representations of war rape in the DRC, the existence or role of sex or prostitution for survival is rarely discussed. However, when it is noted, it appears that it is common for women to trade sex with men for shelter, money, or food (Human Rights Watch 2002). The Human Rights Watch report *War Within a War* briefly alludes to this fact, noting that, "One woman said she had no choice but to accept men who might leave her a bit of money...because she does not want her children to go hungry"(2002: 21). This phenomenon is not restricted only to the civilian population, as one young refugee mother told researchers, "I have to sleep with so many men to make 1,500 GNF (37

cents) so that I can feed myself and my child. [The locals] pay me 300 (7 cents) each time, but if I am lucky and I get [an aid] worker, he can pay me 1,500” (IRIN/OCHA 2005: 189). Economic deprivation has therefore become intrinsically linked to sex. In fact, one refugee declared, “In this community, no one can access CSB [a soy nutrient] without having sex first” (IRIN/OCHA 2005: 189). The economics of sexual violence in the DRC requires further examination in order to improve the lives of women; however, this process requires more than simply ending the violence. It also entails providing women with the resources and ability to provide for themselves and for the violence to cease in order to reduce their vulnerability to this kind of everyday violence.

#### **D) SILENCING THE ECONOMICS OF WAR**

The root cause of the war in the DRC is made almost completely invisible by the media, development policy, and, most surprisingly, feminist theorists. The tendency to focus solely on individual acts of war rape erases the underlying effects of systemic and symbolic violence (Zizek 2008); in other words, the ways in which dominant neoliberal discourses produce violence. Impunity is most often suggested to be the cause of war rape; in the chaos of war, men rape simply because they can get away with it. However, this suggestion neglects the ways in which war in the DRC is economically, politically and globally driven.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> One of the few attempts to theorize about the economic roots of violence in the DRC suggests that the Western states mask the economic practices of mineral extraction that supply technology systems by stripping these technologies of all social reference and silencing the ways in which this production is “grounded in real human terror, slavery, incarceration and world destruction somewhere” (Smith & Mantz 2006: 86).

It is not impossible to see the links between the neoliberal capitalist system of exploitation and the war. There are cracks and traces of these “systematically *invisibilized* system of production and consumption” by the North (Smith & Mantz 2006: 76). For example, on the MONUC website there is a one-page document entitled “Why the DRC Matters” (n.d.) that lists the reasons—according to the United Nations—that the world should care about the war in the DRC. The vast majority of the document focuses on the strategic, economic benefits of the DRC’s natural resources, framing natural resources as “untapped” or “exploitable” (“Why the DRC Matters” n.d.).<sup>46</sup> According to this UN document, the main driving force of global concern for the DRC’s should be economics not human rights.

Until very recently, explicit linkages between the economic roots of the DRC conflict and the prevalence of war rape were uncommon in the media, theories and policies. However, the most recent report from HHI and Oxfam (2010) suggests a need for further research on the connections between the global economic trade of minerals and war rape:

Little is known, however, about the relationship between sexual violence and the struggle to control these rich natural resources. Further research in these areas can shed light on the predatory behaviors of militias and promote strategies for the protection of women and girls in local mining communities. (HHI & Oxfam 2010:51)

This is one of the only academic findings that imply a need for future research, and the fact that it is also very recent suggests that there is perhaps a shift in the

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<sup>46</sup> The “Why the DRC matters” (n.d) outlines that the DRC contains “one third of the world’s reserves of cobalt,” eighty percent of the world’s Coltan, is “among the world’s largest producers of...diamonds”, and possesses “substantial gold deposit”. The document states, “if the DRC succeeds in building a stable state structure, it will attract the trade and investment for an open and lawful economy on the scale concomitant with immense untapped natural resources” (“Why the DRC Matters” n.d).

attention to this matter. Yet, out of numerous media articles, there are only three that explicitly link the mineral trade to the violence, and specifically to mass rape, in the DRC; it's telling that all are opinion pieces (Goodwin 2004; Ensler 2009b; Lezhnev & Prendergast 2009).<sup>47</sup> An article in *The Nation* (Goodwin 2004) is one of the few that not only directly addresses the role of the mineral trades but also points to some of the social actors involved in that trade: "The commerce in these 'blood' minerals...drives the conflict. The brutality of the militias...has routinely been employed to secure access to mining sites or insure a supply of captive labor." Later in the article Goodwin describes:

The lobbies of the two luxury hotels in Kinshasa, the DRC's capital, are full of elegant, \$5,000-a-day corporate lawyers from New York, London and Geneva, and scruffier diamond dealers from Tel Aviv and Antwerp, waiting for government ministers and senior representatives of armed groups to smooth their way...Rape is a crime of the war they are fueling with their greed. (2004)

While Goodwin uses much of the sensational language that has previously been discussed (i.e. "'blood' minerals"), the direct connections made between economic and political power and rape is rare. The US government has finally begun to acknowledge these connections. During her visit to the DRC in August 2009, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested that, "the international community must start looking at steps we can take to try to prevent the mineral wealth from the DRC ending up in the hands of those who fund the violence here" (Lezhnev & Prendergast 2009). The US Congress has begun to take an interest as well, and in

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<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, each of the CNN pieces contained a disclaimer at the bottom stating that "the opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of" the author (Ensler 2009b; Lezhnev & Prendergast 2009).

turn, some companies are reacting (Lezhnev & Prendergast 2009).<sup>48</sup> However, not much action has occurred to date

The role of the mineral trade has typically been completely silenced by policy makers, but this intentional oversight also appears to be changing. In 2000, the UN Security Council resolution made its first policy connection between the mineral trade and the continuation of the conflict by “noting with concern reports of the illegal exploitation of the country’s assets and the potential consequences of these actions on security conditions and the continuation of hostilities” (2000: 1). The potential connection between the mineral trade and violence was stated more explicitly in 2008, when the UN Security Council recognized that “the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the illicit trade in such resources and the proliferation and trafficking of arms as one of the major factors fuelling and exacerbating conflicts” in the DRC (2). It is important to note that despite this shift, the UN continues to remain silent about the international community’s involvement in the consumption and trade of these minerals. The policy documents only examine the “illegal exploitation” and do not define or make a connection to the so-called ‘legal’ global trade and its contributions to the violence.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The authors note that the US tin industry has been the most active as it has introduced a policy to “trace minerals on the ground in the DRC” while some electronics companies (Intel, HP, Dell, Motorola) are also examining supply chains. Lastly the US Senate introduced house bills on the issue of conflict minerals that appear to have strong bipartisan support (Lezhnev & Prendergast 2009)

<sup>49</sup> Instead of global industries the Congolese government is solely to blame: “The prolonged conflict and instability in various parts of the east, and the absence of effective State administration there, continue to perpetuate conditions that allow the illegal exploitation of natural resources to flourish” (UN Security Council 2010: 17).

## **A GENDER DISCOURSE WITH NO ACTION: WHO IS THIS SERVING?**

Attention to violence against women comes with a dramatic increase in attention to the gendered impact of war. “The rising popularity of gender mainstreaming policies” and the recognition that rape in war is a violation of international humanitarian law “make it appear as if gender subordination is on its way out in global politics” (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007:2). Yet, despite these important milestones, the politicization of wartime rape has not garnered significant material changes for women in the DRC. The “Battles on Women’s Bodies: War, Rape and Traumatization in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo” report found that community leaders felt there was a “total lack of political will and interest concerning the war in Congo” (Trenholm et al. 2009: 8). Where aid has arrived, the leaders suggested it is not always appropriate and “serves to divert attention from critical precipitating factors. Such aid was said to prolong the suffering rather than alleviate it” (Trenholm et al. 2009: 8). The researchers use the example of giving food aid to a country with rich natural resources and fertile, arable land when there is a constant flow of guns and weapons pouring into the DRC (Trenholm et al. 2009). In addition, the UN’s mission, aptly named the “rapid reaction mechanism for DRC,” admitted its failure “to prepare adequate programs for women and children associated with fighting forces and groups in non-combat roles” (International Crisis Group 2006:10). This failure has created a “critical humanitarian crises,” and, while remedies have been proposed, female peace activists suggest, “the damage has been done” (International Crisis Group 2006: 10).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)'s "community recovery program has made a commitment to change current strategies to include women more meaningfully, but this promise also has not been followed by concrete action" (International Crisis Group 2006: 10). But there appears to be a discourse of gender inclusion but little action. As one government worker stated:

Men discuss politics, security, the military, everything. They are all men, speaking to each other. But on the ground, where the conflict is, women bear the consequences of these men's decisions. There is a discourse on gender but no real progress. We are backward compared to the rest of Africa. (International Crisis Group 2006: 11),

The most salient issue is that global intervention does not necessarily lead to improvements for women. During a march against violence, one woman reported hearing men shout, "Whatever they say or do, all these women are nothing more than our vegetables [prey]" (International Crisis Group 2006: 9). Despite a global awareness of war rape and gender mainstreaming policies, there continues to be enormous challenges for enacting real change for women's lives in the DRC (International Crisis Group 2006). As Dr. Mukwege of the Panzi Hospital shared with Ensler, "Visitors come from the international community...They eat sandwiches and cry, but they do not come back with help. Even President Kabila has never put his foot here. His wife was here. She wept, but she has done nothing" (2007: 8). Ultimately, there is a pervasive awareness of war rape that is accompanied by a rhetoric of social change and gender equality, but impactful change to end the violence is thwarted by a lack of action: "People denounce the rapes but do nothing to bring the rebels to justice... There isn't the political will, domestically or internationally, to make it happen" (Goodwin 2004).

The women of the DRC are asking why there is a war being fought on their bodies, and the global community's response is one of Othering and spectacle. In this chapter, I explored the complexity of experiences told by both victims of war rape in the DRC and those who represent them; namely policy makers, activists, academics and journalists. Using a method of critical discourse analysis, I investigated three themes that reveal how representations of war rape are made both visible and invisible through a process of Othering. First, the rhetoric of violence (de Lauretis 1987) renders the victims, the DRC and the acts of war rape visible by emphasizing their discursive Otherness and abjection. In this context, the raped victim is consistently depicted as a passive object, and this representation of her as the destroyed, shamed, abandoned and silent victim denies the woman her status as subject and homogenizes the experience of the Third-World woman. Moreover, a nation represented as both a land of plenty and a land of destruction, the conflict in the DRC is also constructed as abject because it depicts a kind of formless chaos that reveals "the fragility of the law" and order (Kristeva 2002: 232). This Othering of both the rape victim and the DRC contributes to the discursive formation of a 'spectacle' of war rape and a simplistic, sensational media focus on the specific acts of violence produces an abject response of 'shock and awe' on the part of a largely Western audience. As abject, the repulsion engendered by war rape leads to its dismissal by this group of readers and viewers, but, because the abject is also fascinating, the acts of war are at the same time consumed through image and texts by this audience. This intense focus on the spectacle of violence and the Othering of victims leads to the invisibility of other identities, such as male rape

victims, and social factors, such as everyday violence and the economic roots of the war. Despite the international community's--and, in particular, the UN's-- construction of gender inclusive discourses, there is still a lack of political will to end the violence in the DRC. Chapter Five will explore some conclusions of these findings as well as some areas of future research and an overall need for action on the issues of war rape in the DRC.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION: “WE WANT YOU TO ACT NOW!”**

### **I. CONCLUSIONS**

#### **A) THE DENIAL OF FEMININE SUBJECTIVITY – WOMAN AS OTHER**

Using a discursive analysis, this thesis has explored the climate in which women tell their stories of rape and has shown the layers of complexity that are involved in these processes of representation. The application of theories of abjection and objection has indicated that women’s stories of war rape, and therefore they themselves, are rendered Other by the representations of them and their experiences. Thus, the Congolese women’s act of simply telling their story ultimately undermines the potential for a true feminine subjectivity. This is accomplished through situating women as passive objects of violence, and their subjectivity is further confounded by Western audiences voyeuristic tendency to consume war rape through a spectacle created by the media. These processes combine to both ignore and deny agency—not only to women but also to their communities, which are represented as incapable of healing themselves. This denial of women’s subjectivity is multi-layered. Women are rendered objects by the militiamen who rape them and by the dominant western policy-makers, journalists, and academics that study them.

#### **B) THE TENSION OF DISCOURSE: CONTROLLING AND LIBERATING**

Drawing on Teresa de Lauretis’ (1987) “rhetoric of violence” and the “violence of rhetoric”, I have exposed the potential for rhetoric to be both

controlling and liberating. Although the violence of rhetoric maintains a discourse that denies women's agency, it also opens (some) space for women to collectively enunciate their experience of violence, which upon further interrogation might be a key strategy to affecting the end of this violence against women. The tension between discourse as controlling and the revelation of discourse as liberating contributes to further complicating the practice of women voicing their experience of rape, and it is crucial to keep in mind that storytelling alone will not automatically translate to meaningful social change or empowerment for women.

### **c) WAR RAPE AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON**

The strength of this analysis lies in its examination of the breadth of representations of war and its encapsulation of the complex network of power and dominance that include many social actors, identities and institutional practices that construct the raped Congolese woman, local and abroad. Despite the fact that war rape occurs in specific geographic locales (in this case the DRC) the 'experience' has become a global phenomenon. The practice of transmitting women's stories of war rape across the globe through the spectacle of media, feminist activism, and international policymaking has made women's experience available for consumption by a largely Western audience. The global community is enveloped in the experience of war rape, despite the war not being waged on our land or on our bodies.

#### **D) FIRST-WORLD COMPLACENCY - OUR ROLE IN THE PRODUCTION OF VIOLENCE**

The West is complacent in the production of violence against Congolese women through systems of global capitalism and our own negligence to act. The dominant Western culture and politics—media, academics, policy-makers, and the public—are fueling the flames of the DRC conflict, which is in turn, being waged against women through acts of rape. Worse, the West is contributing to the production of violence both materially and discursively. Materially, the West is implicated in the sexual violence by systematically erasing our ties to the mineral trade (which contributes to our consumption) and the armed conflict (Smith & Mantz 2006). Discursively, the West is also implicated through the construction of representations of war rape and its victims as the Other, which leads to a lack of action to end the violence against women.

The global North is implicated in war rape in the DRC through the themes of Othering, spectacle and consumption. We literally consume the minerals that are fueling the war in the DRC, and I would argue that the fight to end the war against women has been focused for too long on the individual acts and not the systemic underpinnings of this violence. There is a deadly silence about the systems of capitalist production that has been successfully appropriating women's narratives as a source of explanation for the war while obscuring the diverse power relations that have led to the conflict (Smith & Mantz 2006). All of these serve to entrench dichotomous categories of victimization whose origins and impacts should be the focus of analysis.

## **E) FEMINISTS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVISM: ANOTHER LAYER OF DOMINATION**

The analysis has indicated that feminists and development activist are engaging in practices and processes that contribute to the representation of women as the Other, while also systematically ignoring important aspects of women's identity, the harmful affects of a war rape spectacle that objectifies women, and the global capitalist systems that fuels violence in the DRC. Feminists have disregarded the potential risks of projecting women's images and stories of rape around the globe when their countries remain in conflict; namely the risk of retribution for individual women and the risk of having the intense depictions of violence be dismissed as abject. An acknowledgement of the negative aspects of feminist projects, which my thesis has highlighted, requires feminists to continue to actively decolonize assumptions about 'Third World women' and to continuously reassess what the purpose of the war rape narratives is, how the stories may be appropriated, and what the consequences of this use might be for the rape victims themselves. There is a critical need for further examination of the ways in which development organizations and intellectuals have unwittingly contributed to women's oppression but also how they can be allies in the fight to open up discursive space in the power network.

## **II. CONTRIBUTIONS AND AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH**

Returning to the feminist literature discussed in Chapter Two, this thesis has made a number of contributions to that material. In reference to the crucial shift from feminist theories of peacetime rape being applied to war time rape, the

findings of this thesis has highlighted the intense complexity of the situations of rape in war, and how these are critically different from peacetime rape. Therefore, I argue that there needs to be more specific theorizing on sexual violence in the context of war that incorporates the expansive morass of social actors, relations of power and that provides a more nuanced approach to women's victimization and self determined pathways to empowerment. Further debate is also required on whether voicing experiences of rape is the only pathway empowerment and ending the violence against women. In addition, my analysis of the Othering of women points to the silencing of difference and the homogenization of Third World women (Ertuck 2009), all of which remain prevalent and must be given more attention in the specific context of war rape.

This thesis has attempted to show that simply ending the silence on war rape does not necessitate an end to the violence. While feminist literature on sexual violence largely focuses on how women are individually and collectively victimized, in order to encompass the complexity of war rape, there also needs to be a connected analysis of the ways in which various social actors (perpetrators, community members), nation states (DRC) and certain acts of violence are also represented as Other and how this impacts women and contributes to the overall lack of political will to end war rape. My analysis also underscores the need for further research in examining both war rape as a global phenomenon of spectacle and consumption. Most importantly, this thesis highlights the need for further investigation on how, through abjection or Othering, this violence at both the individual and state levels is dismissed by dominant global powers. Perhaps

feminist and anti-war rape activists need to shift their strategies in order to achieve meaningful global awareness and international political that will take effective and immediate action to end war rape in the DRC.

The findings of this thesis highlight a number of important areas for future research. First, there exists a need to further interrogate and determine new terms to encompass the complexity of war rape (such as how best to name it). Second, the media, policy-makers, and feminist scholars and activists need to account for the complexity of actors. Furthermore, they must examine the phenomenon of the consumption of war rape images, the Othering of perpetrators and communities, and the way in which this Othering can, in turn, deny women's subjectivity. To this point, it is crucial we ask ourselves, if we are Othering the subjects of violence, in what position does that place the women who are already Othered as the objects of violence? These complex layers of domination and oppression must be peeled back if there can be hope to both empower women of the DRC and to stop the violence perpetrated against them.

### **III. LIMITATIONS**

While contributing a breadth of analysis, this thesis is certainly limited. In attempting to encompass a wide array of material on representations of war rape, the details of each area of Othering and silencing cannot be fully explored; therefore, this research could miss conclusive ways in which women's subjectivity is denied—or perhaps even granted. Similarly, this thesis's reliance on largely textual representations without interviews with policymakers, feminists or media

professionals limits the further contextualization of the motivations and intentions of these groups. Likewise, without interviews with Congolese women, this research cannot know the unique ways in which they perceive their Othering or understand whether DRC women perceive the tensions of discourse as liberating or constraining them. Moreover, the focus on the global aspects of representation that are largely Western cannot account for the ways that women are Othered in the DRC and in the halls of the UN and NGO board rooms. While the purpose of my research is to engender significant change, this thesis is limited in its distribution and cannot be generalized outside the space and time of the DRC case study. The discourse on war rape is constantly shifting at a rapid pace; therefore these findings cannot be directly applied to the context of different armed conflicts.

#### **IV. FINAL ANALYSIS**

Despite the ubiquity of war rape in the media and international development policy, there is still a lack of political will regarding sexual violence. This systematic lack of action constitutes another layer of violence onto women in the DRC. This analysis supports the view that simply making women's voices and stories heard does not produce action but that these voices must be combined with a public and political will for change. Ultimately, feminists and anti-war rape activists must find a strategy that goes beyond the spectacle of war rape and a gender discourse that does not equate to positive changes for DCR women. Overall, my hope is that this work will raise the consciousness of its readers and provoke policy leaders, feminist theorists, and journalists to question how discourse positions the raped women in

order to present alternative subject speaking positions for women in the DRC. Our goal should not be to commemorate these acts of war or to gaze at their horror but to incite action to end war rape.

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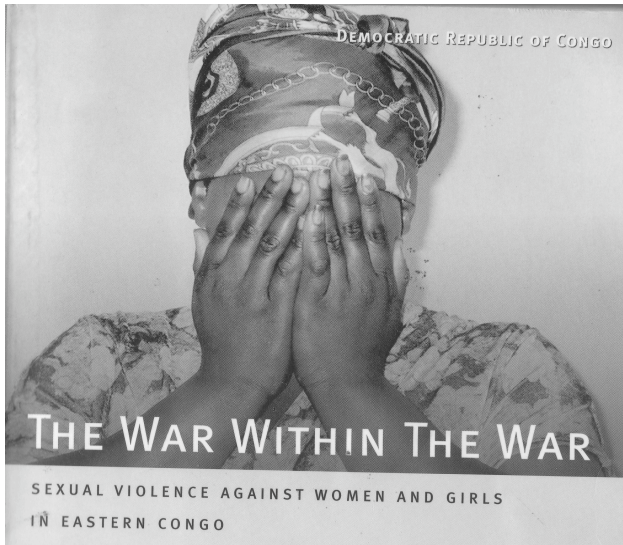
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## APPENDIX 1: COVER GIRLS – THE SHAMED AND SILENT RAPE VICTIM



**Figure 1: Photo by Jodi Bieber  
(Human Rights Watch, 2002: cover)**



**Figure 2: Photo by Rafael Jimenez  
(Medicines Sans Frontieres, 2004: cover)**



**Figure 3: Photo: Spencer Platt/Getty Images (McConnell, 2010)  
Headline image for The Times online article**



**Figure 4: Photo by Hazel Thomson for New York Times  
(Gettleman, 2007: cover)**