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# Gendered discipline, gendered space: an ethnographic approach to gendered violence in India

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Why are Indian women's lives at fatal risk in the public sphere, when Indian democracy is inclusive in terms of gender? Addressing this question reveals a methodological and theoretical blind spot in political science scholarship – a blind spot which results in the reproduction and legitimization of gender-blindness. To understand how and why political science reproduces and legitimizes gender-blindness I reflect on a particularly horrific case of sexual and gender-based violence, the 2012 Delhi gang rape. This analysis is significant because it provides insight into the difficulty of understanding gendered violence in political science and achieving gender equality within democratic societies.

**Keywords:** feminism; political science; political ethnography; public sphere; violence against women (VAW); sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

## Introduction

Feminist scholars have for decades intervened in all subfields of political science as a corrective and transformative force.[1] Feminist scholars of methods and methodologies have demonstrated that "objective" observations, theories and methods of inquiry are political, and therefore what is required is an epistemology that acknowledges the role of politics in the production of knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986; Harstock, 1983; Hawkesworth, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Similarly, feminist international relation scholars have challenged and expanded international relations by demonstrating that international politics is constructed as thoroughly masculine, thus resulting in women's pervasive exclusion from international relations and foreign policy-making. (Ackerly, Stern, & True, 2006; Enloe, 1990; Tickner, 1992, 2006, 2015; True, 2015). Feminist political theorists have intervened in and forced a rethinking of political theory by demonstrating that the western philosophical and theoretical canon is incomplete in its omission of women and is biased in its refusal to acknowledge that concepts such as reason, freedom and objectivity are gendered (Alanen & Witt, 2005; Okin, 1979; Pateman, 1988, 1989). Lastly, gender and politics scholars have intervened in and expanded the subfields of American and comparative politics by including women in current analytic categories, examining political activities traditionally seen as outside the scope of political science, and studying the gendered structure of social and political organizations (Paxton, 2000; Tripp, 2013; Waylen, 2007; Waylen, Celis, Kantola, & Weldon, 2013).

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The longstanding critiques and interventions made by feminist scholarship make the case of violence against women (VAW) in India particularly troubling. On the one hand, Indian democracy has been consistently rated as a successful, consolidated democracy. In addition, Indian democracy has embedded gender equality into its political institutions since the creation of its modern constitution. On the other hand, rising VAW in India has the practical consequence of cutting off women's access to the public spaces required to support that democracy. I reflect on the 2012 Delhi gang rape as a way to highlight the contradictory situation where democratization scholars claim that India is a consolidated democracy and Indian women are full citizens, yet Indian women experience pervasive sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in public spaces.[2] I find that research dedicated to proving that Indian democracy is consolidated and Indian women are full citizens often neglects evidence of everyday forms of VAW even though feminist scholars have provided the methodological and theoretical tools to make sense of this violence. This methodological and theoretical failure results from a narrow definition of politics as the study of formal governmental institutions, political elites and electoral politics, which enables democratization scholars to ignore gender, especially as it relates to SGBV. I turn to interpretivist methodology, in particular political ethnography, to ask what and who gets left out of traditional definitions of politics, and argue that the definition of what is political is an issue of power.

At its core, my analysis seeks to shed light on a paradox in the lived experience of Indian democracy and, in so doing, highlights a serious shortcoming in traditional scholarship. I ask why women's lives are potentially at fatal risk in the everyday sites of public participation, when the institutions of Indian democracy are inclusive and progressive in terms of gender equity and parity. Addressing this question reveals a methodological and theoretical blind spot in some political science scholarship – a blind spot which results in the reproduction and legitimization of gender-blindness.[3] I share the story of the Delhi gang rape victim to demonstrate the gap that exists between Indian law and women's everyday lived experience. This paper is not intended to be an ethnographic study of the gang rape, but rather a sustained argument for ethnographic analysis. I examine this case of SGBV to demonstrate that conventional understandings of democracy and democratization cannot adequately explain such cases and see them as bizarre anomalies, insolvable paradoxes or intractable problems. I draw on political ethnography because it has the ability to broaden our understanding of the political, make visible the gendered nature of political science and public space, and open up new forms of knowledge. According to Mary Hawkesworth, the replication of gender bias in political science "impedes the discipline's ability to explain the political world … [and] reproduces and legitimates male power and gender injustice" (Hawkesworth, 2005, p. 152). This analysis is significant because it provides insight into the difficulty of understanding gendered violence in political science and achieving gender equality within democratic societies.

The horrific case of gang rape underscores that lives are at stake in this analysis. The way we define politics, the way we categorize democracy, and the way we count public space matters because we can define these concepts to either illuminate or overlook gendered space and gendered violence. Do mere definitions save lives? Can a shift in one's perspective truly save lives? Perhaps not, but it can significantly alter the way democracy is understood, and reveal the gap between institutional indicators and the lived experience of democratic spaces. Through the use of interpretive approaches political science can bring everyday practices back into examination, it can widen the vision of the political, and it can make gender and gendered space central to its analysis.

I do not claim that political ethnography creates knowledge that is representative of all women's experience of the public sphere. I acknowledge that ethnographic data may be limited in terms of generalizability, yet it succeeds in revealing realities with a scope and precision

that standard academic analyses simply cannot. I find that ethnographic data provides an entry point for mapping the intersections between religion, ethnicity, caste, class and gender, especially as it relates to Indian women's experience of SGBV in the public sphere.

This special issue of *Space & Polity* is dedicated to *digesting the public sphere*, with careful attention to everyday practices of power, performance and place. Some contributors to the issue approach the public sphere as the study of participatory art, which gives rise to new, partial publics (Tippler and Chang, this issue). Others approach the theme through the study of natural-ization ceremonies as a public spectacle of citizenship (Harper, this issue). Still others examine the public sphere as the study of a mobile public sphere, such as cicLAvia (Johansson and Liou, this issue). The contributors adopt a range of possible interpretations of the public sphere, and demon-strate that the public can be visualized, experienced and contested through artistic expression, cer-emony and community activism. My intervention in the issue has taken on a more horrifically literal character – the digestion of female bodies as a means of aggressively gendering public space.

On 16 December 2012 a 23-year-old female physiotherapy student[4] and her friend, a 28-year-old software engineer, were attacked on a bus[5] in Delhi, the capital city of India. The attack lasted for 40 minutes, during which time six men beat the engineer unconscious and gang raped the female student.[6] In addition to sexually assaulting her with an iron rod, they slapped her in the face, kicked her in the abdomen, and bit her lips, cheeks and breasts. Ram Singh, one of the assai-lants, confessed to police that he and the other men burned the victims' clothes, washed the bus and removed flesh from the seats following the attack (Sharma, Agarwal, & Malhotra, 2013). According to Badri Nath Singh, the victim's father, "They [the perpetrators] literally ate my daughter. There were bite marks all over her" (Sharma, 2013). Ultimately, the perpetrators dumped the victims, naked and bleeding, on the side of the road and attempted to run them over. The woman died a few weeks later from massive internal injuries, while her friend survived.

In this instance, the gang rape victim experienced the public sphere as a highly violent space in which she was sexually assaulted, gang raped, mauled, chewed up and spit out by fellow citi-zens. I ask: how does the experience of being eaten alive in public space influence our understand-ing of the public sphere? What are the implications of this horrific violence for women's citizenship rights in democratic India?

Data on VAW reveals that rape is not a unique event or a bizarre anomaly, rather it is a routine form of violence perpetrated against Indian women.[7] A 2012 household survey by UN Women found that 95% of women and girls feel unsafe in public spaces in Delhi.[8] The survey also found that 51% of men self-reported perpetrating VAW and girls in public spaces. The survey also found that respondents perceive sexual harassment as the biggest risk for women's safety and identify roads (50%), public transportation (39%) and markets (22%) as most unsafe public spaces.[9]

An analysis of nationwide data on crimes against women reveal that on average, every hour in India, 2 women are raped, 4 are kidnapped, 1 dies in a dowry-related dispute, 4 are molested, 1 is sexually harassed and 11 experience an act of cruelty by their husband (Indian National Crime Records Bureau).[10] From 1971 to 2012, the incident of rape has grown by 900%, making rape the fastest growing crime in India (Indian National Crime Records Bureau).[11]

Are public spaces truly public if public roads, public transportation, and markets are experi-enced and perceived as unsafe spaces for Indian women? Is the public sphere actually public if the threat of rape keeps Indian women and girls out of the public sphere? To what extent is public space public if some citizens fear being eaten alive on public transportation and public roads?

In the following section, I examine the tension between institutional measures of Indian democracy and Indian women's lived experience of democracy. Next, I draw from scholarship on gender and politics to demonstrate the gender-blind nature of democratization scholarship

(Beer, 2009; Caraway, 2004; Paxton, 2000; Tripp, 2013; Waylen, 2007). In the following section, I draw from interpretive approaches to methodology and adopt a political ethnographic approach, which often explodes traditional definitions of the political (Forrest, this issue; Pachirat, 2009; Schatz, 2009; Shehata, 2006). I conclude by discussing the implications for understanding gendered violence in political science and achieving gender equality within democratic societies.

## Traditional methodological and theoretical frameworks

To understand Indian women's experience of violence in the public sphere, I initially turned to the democratization literature. Given the relationship between democracy and equality, one would expect this literature to provide insight on women's experience of violence in public spaces within democratic society. However, in reviewing this literature I found it to be part of the problem as it reproduces and legitimizes gender-blindness, fails to incorporate decades of feminist scholarship and excludes women and other minorities.

Democratization scholars rely on objective measures to characterize India as a free, fully institutionalized democracy.[12] According to these objective institutional indicators, Indian democracy is consolidated and Indian women are full citizens. Institutional indicators show that Indian democracy is a model of democratic transition and consolidation – India has adopted and maintained universal adult franchise, has had mostly free and fair elections, has viable political parties across the ideological spectrum, a vibrant press, a professional military and an independent judiciary. Institutional indicators concerning gender depict India as a model of democratic transition and consolidation – India has had a female prime minister, a female president, multiple female leaders of prominent political parties, many strong female state leaders, a reservation system guaranteeing women 33% of village council seats, a growing female representation in the *Lok Sabha* (lower house of parliament) and a growing female voter turnout.

Democratization scholars also point to gender equality clauses in the Indian constitution to characterize Indian women as free and full citizens. Indian law explicitly enshrines women's formal equality. Indian women won constitutional parity – including enfranchisement – prior to ratification of the Indian constitution.[13] India is a constitutional parliamentary democracy, with written Fundamental Rights containing extensive equality provisions: Article 14 guarantees equality; Article 15 restricts the state from sex-based discrimination; Article 16 guarantees equal opportunity; Article 39.d guarantees equal pay for equal work and Article 19 guarantees freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, freedom of travel, freedom of residence and freedom to form labour unions.[14] The Indian Constitution protects gender equality, while also retaining a plural system of personal law that protects cultural differences.[15]

Democratization scholars rely on institutional indicators to prove that Indian democracy is consolidated and Indian women are full citizens. This methodological and theoretical focus on institutional indicators results from a narrow definition of politics as the study of formal governmental institutions, political elites and electoral politics, which often enables democratization scholars to ignore gender and gendered space, especially as it relates to SGBV. A narrow definition of politics assumes that power operates only in the formal institutional spaces of government and fails to consider how power operates in public spaces. This particular case of gang rape demonstrates that relying on institutional measures while neglecting the public sphere makes researchers horrifically blind to the ways institutional indicators do not align with lived realities, produces erroneous classifications when it comes to questions of democracy and citizenship, and fails to fully analyse the relationship between public space and gendered violence.

What are the alternatives to the methodological and theoretical flaws in the democratization scholarship? Can better research be conducted to fully comprehend VAW and girls in democratic societies? Can this research help combat sexual and gender-based violence in public spaces?

I argue that there are several ways to be more systematic in our accounting and understanding of VAW in the public sphere, but all of them require a more expanded definition of the political. By adopting an expanded definition of the political, we can make intelligible, and perhaps action-able the reality that political science is a gendered discipline that is blind to gendered violence. By adopting an expanded definition of the political, we can also make sense of, and perhaps combat the horrific reality that some citizens experience the public sphere as a gendered space in which they are vulnerable to gang rape, sexual assault and being eaten alive. To avoid the trap of gender-blindness, I draw on gender and politics scholarship.

## Feminist methodological and theoretical frameworks

Gender and politics scholars have for decades explained why democratization literature rarely considers women's inclusion and participation in democratic transitions and consolidations. This is an acknowledged and longstanding problem in the field of comparative politics, yet demo-cratization scholars continue to see India as a free and fully institutionalized democracy and Indian women as free and full citizens.

According to gender and politics scholarship, democratization scholarship – historically and currently – excludes women and other minorities.[16] This gender-blindness within mainstream democratization literature is a result of narrow definitions of democracy, one-dimensional measurements of women's democratic inclusion and participation, and highly flawed operationa-lization of democracy. Democratization scholars rarely consider the role played by women in tran-sitions to democracy and rarely consider the question of whether women's ability to access citizenship rights – political, civil and social – should be part of the criteria for a functioning democracy.[17] These kinds of questions are not raised, in part, because of the way democratization scholars define politics and categorize democracy.

Contemporary debates on democratization have been influenced primarily by three con-ceptions of democracy.[18] At one end is a narrow Schumpterian approach: a one-dimensional pro-cedural definition focused on competitive electoral systems, which characterizes a large number of systems as democracies. Next is Dahl's polyarchy: a two-dimensional definition focused on universal adult franchise and electoral contestation, which characterizes fewer countries as demo-cratic. Last is a more robust, multi-dimensional definition of democracy: requiring that citizens enjoy political, civil and social rights, which characterizes most countries as undemocratic. When it comes to questions of gender, Waylen (2007, p. 16) finds that "women's suffrage is not absolutely essential to a narrow definition and although mid-range definitions include women's civil and political rights, only the more utopian definitions can accommodate women's social and economic rights."

Even when democratization scholars use definitions of democracy that incorporate minimal gender rights, they often operationalize these definitions in ways that exclude women.[19] Paxton (2000) finds that leading democratization scholars' commonly use male suffrage as the sole indicator of a country's transition to democracy. Similarly, Beer finds that most democratiza-tion scholarship relies on Polity IV data set, which does not incorporate women's suffrage (2009, p. 221).[20] As a result, Switzerland, for example, received a perfect Polity IV score of 10 on democracy even when women were not permitted to vote. Paxton (2000, pp. 104–105) demon-strates that changing conventional measurements to include women changes dating of democratic transitions, sometimes by more than 50 years, challenges our understanding of democracy as orig-inating in the West, and enhances our explanatory power. By omitting gender and race as key ana-lytic categories, democratization scholars skew and bias our understanding of democracy.[21]

Democratization scholars primarily conduct institutional analyses detached from the context and space in which women find themselves. These scholars often assume a simplistic, one-to-one

correlation between formal institutions, such as constitutions and quotas, and gender equality. This assumption fails to take into account how dimensions such as religion, race, ethnicity, caste, class and gender intersect to construct the material circumstances of women's lives and their experience of violence in the public sphere. As a result, this literature cannot fully acknowledge and explain the intractable problem of women's integration into formal democratic institutions and their pervasive experience of gendered violence. This literature cannot acknowledge and explain the face-to-face practices by which some citizens literally eat other citizens within the public sphere.

What I find jarring and disturbing is the fact that, for decades, gender and politics scholars have demonstrated that democratization scholarship is gender-blind and have provided the tools necessary to overcome this blindness (Beer, 2009; Caraway, 2004; Paxton, 2000; Tripp, 2013; Waylen, 2007). Some gender and politics scholars respond to the gender-blindness of traditional democratization scholarship by adopting more robust and sophisticated indicators of gender inclusion, participation and equality, rather than one-dimensional indicators (Tripp, 2013). Still others respond by expanding the study of democracy beyond formal institutions of democracy to include public sphere and civil society (Htun & Weldon, 2010; Walsh, 2012). Yet, we still find continued and pervasive use of traditional methodological and theoretical tools that lead to this very blind spot.

Given the gender-blind nature of democratic scholarship, are there any alternative ways of accounting for Indian women's experience of violence in public spaces? Are there any alternatives to more fully comprehend all forms of violence? In light of these continued problems, political ethnography can illuminate both the gendered nature of political science and Indian public sphere.

## Political ethnography and an expanded definition of politics

I argue for the use of political ethnography because this approach can broaden our understanding of the political, make visible the gendered nature of political science and public space, and open up new forms of knowledge. By requiring an awareness of and sensitivity to embodied lived experience, meaning-making processes and self-reflexivity, political ethnography can also demonstrate "conclusively that the politics of embodiment is epistemically, morally, and substantively relevant to academic research" (Hawkesworth, 2013, p. 52).

Political ethnography is a methodological approach that relies on immersion or participant observation; it is a sensibility that goes beyond face-to-face contact to glean the meanings that people attribute to their social and political reality (Bayard de Volo & Schatz, 2004; Forrest, this issue; Pachirat, 2009; Schatz, 2009; Shehata, 2006). Ethnographic knowledge is shaped in shifting, contextual and relational ways depending on the researcher's positionality (gender, race, class, sexuality and other axes of social difference)[22] with respect to research participants[23] (Nagar & Geiger, 2007; Pachirat, 2009; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Shehata, 2006). According to Shehata (2006, p. 246), "in ethnography, the ethnographer's self becomes a conduit of research and primary vehicle of knowledge production". As such, ethnographers must theorize the role of the researcher in all phases of the research process (Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p. 102).

Most research strategies in political science draw upon positivist conceptions of the scientific method (Finifter 1983; Geddes, 2003; Greenstein & Polsby, 1975; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Seidelman & Harpham, 1985; Somit & Tanenhaus, 1967). According to positivist methodologies, political scientists can capture objective reality because adherence to rigid procedures – in the context of systematic experiments, logical deductions and statistical analysis – controls for the researchers' subjectivity (Hawkesworth, 2006b). Consequently, positivist methodological approaches claim to be "neutral", and deny any political dimension to scientific inquiry. Positivist

political scientists evaluate research studies based on the standards of validity, reliability and replicability.[24] Political ethnography, however, does not meet these evaluative standards, and therefore, most political scientists positively characterize political ethnography as the summer intern to the senior partners of formal and statistical analysis or pejoratively characterize it as unscientific, biased and invalid (Pachirat, 2009; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Shehata, 2006).

Ethnography can be traced to multiple sources.[25] One source is interpretive scholarship in political science, which through close, person-to-person contact reveals details and conveys realities with a scope, and precision that standard, positivist academic analyses cannot match (Campbell, 2014; Cohn, 1987; Fenno, 1978; Pachirat, 2011; Scott, 1985; Soss, 2002). These scholars use extended participant observation and sustained immersion to emphasize human agency and lived experience, capture meaning-making processes, and underscore conflicting interpretations. Timothy Pachirat (2009, p. 160) finds that "attention to the politics of embodiment [associated with ethnographic research] is capable of generating insights about politics and power that might otherwise be missed". Similarly, Louise Campbell (2015, p. 1043) finds that intimate ethnography makes visible for her "the real ramifications of many aspects of policy design that [she] had 'known'" … but the implications of which [she] had never truly understood.'

There is no single ethnographic approach and many scholars combine multiple analytic tools in a single analysis.[26] What is common to all *political* ethnography, however, is that it makes power central to the analysis because political ethnography keeps the researcher in touch with those affected by power relations. According to Pachirat (2009, p. 144), "political ethnography is *political* precisely because of its unique potential to both illuminate politics and challenge established conceptions of its boundaries, [and because] fieldwork inevitably locates the ethnographer within networks of power". Similarly, Forrest (issue) finds that "the public value of political ethnography lies in its exceptional ability to advance political science … as a project aimed at disrupting forms of power". The benefits of such an approach, according to Schatz (2009, p. 4), is that it "helps ensure an empirically sound, theoretically vibrant, epistemologically innovative, and normatively grounded study of politics".[27]

Political ethnography's capacity to capture lived experience and meaning-making processes through embodied research generates insights about gendered space that would otherwise be overlooked. Political ethnography's insistence that the embodied experience of the ethnographer and research participants be part of the research process is a productive form of analysis. In particular, political ethnography can bring attention to informal institutions, unwritten rules, and gendered and raced norms, which are in tension with formal institutions and laws. As such, ethnography enables a dual analysis of political science and public space as gendered because it allows the researcher to "weigh those made-in-the-academy concepts and techniques against the situated, specific, and beautifully complex lived experiences of the actual social worlds" (Pachirat, 2012).

An ethnographic approach opens up research questions and topics that would otherwise be overlooked. When it comes to sexual and gender-based violence, some ethnographers ask why structural violence in a Mumbai slum contributes to domestic violence and prevents women from leaving abusive marriages (Ghosh, 2015). Others ask why women in Kenyan refugee camps experience two forms of violence – intimate-partner violence and structural, bureaucratic violence (Wirtz, 2015). Still others ask why contemporary Western responses to violence fall short of meeting local needs with respect to SGBV in different contexts (Wies & Haldane, 2015).

By making categories of difference central to their research questions, ethnographers often force a rethinking of key concepts: Some ethnographic scholars force a rethinking of democracy by asking if there can be democracy without women (Ackerly & True, 2013). Some ethnographers intervene by asking if the Indian experience of democracy can reveal the ethnocentrism of Western political theory (Das & Randeria, 2014). Other scholars force a rethinking of

citizenship by asking how marginalized people enact citizenship through everyday acts that invent new ways of becoming citizens (Isin, 2012; Rocco, 2014). Still others force a rethinking of inclusion by asking why some forms of inclusion result in murderous inclusion – erasure, violence and abandonment – of queer citizens (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, & Posocco, 2013).

By asking such questions, scholars also demonstrate that research processes are themselves political: Can knowledge be produced across multiple divides of power without re-inscribing the interests of the privileged (Nagar & Geiger, 2007)? Can we intervene in the global politics of knowledge production to create knowledge that is more accountable to people's struggle for self-representation and self-determination (Sangtin Writers and Nagar, 2006)?

## Conclusion

How might political ethnography help make sense of and explain the 2012 Delhi gang rape victim's experience? How might ethnography help make visible the gaps between Indian law and Indian women's lived experience? Ethnographic approaches open up the possibility of *seeing* and *understanding* the gang rape victim's experience as horrifically painful and potentially radical. The horror is clear in what the victim experienced at the hands of fellow citizens and the pain her family, friends, and loved ones felt and continue to feel. What is perhaps radical is the insistence that the victim be seen as an equal, rights-bearing citizen who deserves state protection and equal protection vis-à-vis fellow citizens. What is also perhaps radical is the insistence that we shift our focus from women's presence in and exclusion from institutions to understanding the gendered structures of those institutions, thus combating women's differential experience of public space in democratic India and beyond.

Ethnography holds out the promise of epistemological innovation by asking questions that remain unasked, by enabling the researchers to see differently and by rethinking traditional paths to knowledge production. Imagine, for example, scholarship that examines and incorporates a whole range of violent practices, which function to enforce and perpetuate female subordination, including but not limited to domestic violence, intimate-partner violence, dowry murder, female genital mutilation, battering, sexual assault, forced pregnancy, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, rape, marital rape, gang rape and stalking.[28] "Imagine datasets that count the continuum of violence such as intimate-partner violence prevalence in conflict-affected settings rather than just 'battle deaths'" (True, 2015, p. 564). Imagine research that incorporates complicated narratives of those who experience violence both as victims and perpetrators (Baaz & Stern, 2009). Imagine scholarship that examines gendered and raced violence perpetrated on the researcher in the research process (Behl, 2016). Imagine scholarship that incorporates the violence that researchers perpetrate on the researched (Dauphinee, 2010). By insisting that we weigh "made-in-the-academy concepts" with embodied lived experience, ethnographic research reveals the hidden stories of gendered violence, and makes actionable the invisible stories of gender-blindness.

I end this discussion with a significant question that remains unanswered: Given that political scientists have largely ignored decades of feminist research, is political science as a discipline willing to listen to new forms of knowledge production that come from political ethnography, especially when this knowledge is delegitimized as unscientific? Much is at stake in our capacity to be open to new ways of thinking. I fear that if we are not open to new forms of knowledge, then political scientists will fail to explain a political world in which some citizens are vulnerable to gang rape, sexual assault, and being eaten alive in public spaces. I fear that if we are not open to new forms of knowledge, then as a discipline political science will continue to replicate gender-blindness, which will impede our understanding of gendered violence and limit our capacity to achieve gender equality in democratic societies.

## Acknowledgements

## Disclosure statement

## Notes

1. The scope of the paper is limited to an analysis of political science as a discipline in the United States and how gender-blindness in this discipline creates biased knowledge about democracy and gender in India.
2. Some feminist scholars complicate the private/public binary and demonstrate that private sphere domestic violence is both a form of political violence and a precondition for more visible violence against women in the public sphere. This paper, however, limits its focus to Indian women's experience of gendered violence in the public sphere to meet the call of the special issue on *digesting the public sphere*.
3. Political science also valorizes objectivity and neutrality, which often enables the discipline to ignore gender and race. For a detailed discussion, see Behl (2016).
4. The young woman was the first in her family to pursue a professional career. In November 2008, she enrolled in a physiotherapy programme at Sai Institute of Paramedical and Allied Sciences in Dehradun, India. To afford her tuition, her father, an airport worker, sold most of his land in his village, borrowed money from family members, and worked 16-hour shifts handling luggage at the airport, while the young victim worked nights at a call centre, helping Canadians with their mortgage issues. In October 2012, the young woman returned to Delhi to look for a volunteer internship, a requirement of her physiotherapy programme (for a detailed discussion about the victim and her family, see Pokharel, Chaturvedi, Agarwal, & Lahiri, 2013).
5. The bus in question was a private bus. Delhi has a mix of public and private buses serving more than 7 million people everyday. According to the police, the assailants tricked the victim and her friend into believing that the bus was part of the city's public fleet. One of the perpetrators posed as a conductor, called out for passengers, and charged the victim and her friend bus fare (Mandhana & Trivedi, 2012).
6. For a detailed discussion of the six perpetrators of the gang rape in Delhi, see Sharma et al. (2013).
7. It is difficult to obtain reliable statistics for violence against women in India because rape within marriage is not counted as a crime, penile penetration is a necessary element of rape in Indian law, and women are deterred from reporting crimes.
8. In comparison, 55% of women in Kigali, Rwanda and 25% of women in Paris, France feel unsafe in public spaces (United Nations Women, Safer Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative).
9. According to the 2012 UN Women Delhi survey, when respondents were asked what factors put women at risk for violence in public spaces, the number one response was gender. Gender, more so than age, religion, disability and state/region, puts women at risk (United Nations Women, 2012 Delhi Survey, Safer Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls Initiative). According to Shirin Rai, "It is not just the act of rape but the threat of rape that keeps women inside the home, out of the public sphere" (1994, p. 217).
10. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes, the rape rate in India is 1.7. The mean rape rate is 11.7 and the median rape rate is 5.2. The five highest rape rates: South Africa (113.5), Australia (91.6), Swaziland (76.1), Canada (68.2) and Jamaica (50.8). The five lowest rape rates: Pakistan (0), Egypt (0.2), Armenia (0.3), Maldives (0.3) and Azerbaijan (0.4). The lower rape rates in India can be attributed to underreporting, lack of reliable data and differences in the definition of rape. The UN rape rate is calculated per 100,000 population (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2010, International Statistics on Crime and Justice).
11. This 900% growth in the incident of rape in India may indicate higher levels of reporting. According to R. Amy Elman, differing conceptions of crime, including rape, and varying methods of record keeping complicates rigorous comparative and cross-national scholarship on gendered violence, including violence against women (2013, p. 240). Elman argues that a dearth of reported incidents often results from

a belief among women and girls that they are not reflected in the law as persons worthy of making a grievance, and they have limited faith in the state's capacity to rectify sexist oppression (2013, p. 240). Conversely, Elman finds, "a higher level of reporting may indicate both a greater awareness among women and girls that their abuse is criminal and a confidence in the state to respond accordingly" (2013, p. 240).

12. Polity IV characterizes India as democratic with a score in +6 to +9 range (−10 being most autocratic and +10 being most democratic). Freedom House characterizes India as free with a political rights score of 2 and a civil liberties score of 3 (1 being the most free and 7 the least free).

13. India, unlike most of the Western developed world, guaranteed women's enfranchisement prior to the ratification of the Indian constitution. In the following countries, women's enfranchisement was won through long and sustained feminist struggles: United States, UK, New Zealand, France, Canada, Belgium, Australia, Germany, Italy and Switzerland.

14. For further detail, see Kapur (2007); Kapur and Cossman (1999); Keating (2007); Nussbaum (2001, 2002) and Trivedi (2003).

15. In India, the concern with equality and diversity was simultaneous and what emerges is a constitution that provides cultural autonomy for communities, but limits women's rights because control over women functions as the central marker of cultural autonomy.

16. According to Beer, "many prominent democracy scholars find no contradiction in categorizing political systems as 'democratic' even when the female half of the population was prohibited from participating in government" (2009, p. 212). Similarly, Waylen finds that "the mainstream democratization literature has remained largely gender-blind, with very little to say about the participation of women in transitions to democracy or the gendered nature of those processes" (2007, p. 15).

17. For a detailed discussion of democratization scholarship and women's role in transitions to democracy, see Waylen (2007). For a detailed discussion of democratization scholarship and gendered citizenship, see Behl (2014).

18. For a detailed discussion on definitions of democracy, see Collier and Levitsky (1997).

19. For a detailed discussion regarding conceptualizing, measuring and validating democracy, see Coppedge et al. (2011) and Seawright and Collier (2013).

20. Polity IV measures democracy in terms of three components – executive recruitment, independence of executive authority and political competition – none of which incorporate women's suffrage either directly or indirectly (Beer, 2009, p. 221).

21. Teri Caraway finds that "by confining the study of democratization to the incorporation of [white] men, the picture of the politics of democratization is skewed" (2004, p. 457). Caraway calls for an integration of gender and race into analyses of democratization because using gender and race as analytic categories will transform the field into more than just studies of the enfranchisement of white men, while also making clear the gender and racial assumptions that underlie much of this scholarship (2004, p. 457).

22. Researchers' positionality – demographic and locational – influences access to research participants. Intersectional categories of difference can generate access to research situations – or block it (Henderson, 2009; Islam, 2000; Ortbals & Rincker, 2009; Trinh, 2009). Also, locational positionalities draw one into particular networks rather than others, which influences knowledge production (Pachirat, 2009; Zirakzadeh, 2009).

23. I use the term research *participant*, rather than research *subject* because this term acknowledges participants agency in the research process. For a detailed discussion, see Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) and Ackerly and True (2010, 2013).

24. In contrast, interpretivist scholars evaluate research studies based on the standards of trustworthiness, systemacticity, and reflexivity. For a detailed discussion, see Schwartz-Shea (2006) and Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012).

25. See, for example, cultural anthropology (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1988; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Khan, 2005; Marcus & Fischer, 1999; Narayan, 1993; Rabinow, 1977; Tripp, 1989; Visweswaran, 1994).

26. Some scholars rely on ethnography (Campbell, 2014; Majic, 2014; Pachirat, 2011). Others deploy ethnography and autoethnography (Behl, 2016; Dauphinee, 2010; Doty, 2004; Löwenheim, 2010). For a detailed discussion, see Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006); Schatz (2009) and Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012).

27. For a detailed discussion, see Schatz (2009, pp. 10–12).

28. For a detailed discussion, see Elman (2013).

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