

**KEEPING THE 'LADY' IN LINE:  
A MEDIA STUDY OF THE DATE RAPE DRUG  
DISCOURSE**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The use of ‘date rape’ drugs to facilitate rape has emerged as a contemporary social problem within the past ten years. This phenomenon has provided the media with a new slant for discussing sexual assault against women. Using a feminist social constructionist framework, this research examines how the Canadian print media construct the issue of drug-facilitated sexual assault and how this construction contributes to the social control of women’s activities within the public sphere.

This thesis argues that the print media’s discussion of the date rape drug appropriates the discussion of sexual violence against women by placing a monolithic focus on the drugs used rather than on the violence experienced. The quantitative and qualitative analyses indicate that women are held accountable for their victimization and that men’s violence is not problematized. The discourse exerts social control through prevention narratives, creating parameters of acceptable behaviour against which all victims are judged.

**Keywords: date rape drugs; social control; sexual violence; media; gender**

*To the Fun Club*

*This thesis is dedicated to Karen, Jeff, and Dan. Thank you all for your love, support, and encouragement. And thanks for the snacks...and the fun. It means more to me than I can say.*

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## **CHAPTER ONE: MEDIA AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE—INTRODUCTION**

“The power of discourse lies not only in its capacity to define what is a social problem, but also in its prescriptions of how an issue should be understood, the legitimate views on it, the legitimacy and deviancy of the actors involved, the appropriateness of certain acts” (van Zoonen, 1994: 40).

Sexual violence against women has an extensive history dating back to the formation of patriarchal societies. As Brownmiller argues, sexual violence, in particular acts of rape, emerged from “the humblest beginnings of the social order based on the primitive system of retaliatory force—the *lex talionis*: an eye for an eye” (1975: 16). Under this system, women were unequal before the law, and were forced to become dependent on men for their protection from other males. This in turn gave men control over the female body, as women were seen to be their property that needed protection. However, to maintain control over the female body, men have, and continue, to subject the female body to violence (Brownmiller, 1975: 16).

Research suggests that 1 in 4 Canadian women will be sexually assaulted within their lifetime (Dobash & Dobash, 1995: 462). The Violence Against Women Survey (1993) indicated that it is younger women between the ages of 15-25 who are at greatest risk of being assaulted. Within this age category, young unmarried females, generally students and unemployed women, report the highest levels of victimization (Dobash, 1995: 463). The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics found that women were more likely to be violently victimized by someone they knew than a stranger (2001: 8).

For decades women and feminists alike have sought to regain control and autonomy over their own bodies, yet patriarchal ideologies that reinforce women’s subordination relative to men and justify male violence continue to proliferate. One of the

many ways in which these ideologies persist is through the media. Although the history of sexual violence against women is extensive, media coverage of crime began only in the mid-1800's with the invention of the penny press, yet coverage of sexual violence against women was not covered frequently until about the mid 1900's (Benedict, 1992: 27). Since that time, sexual violence against women has proliferated in coverage. Madriz argues that the media place a disproportionate amount of attention on stories of violence against women, in comparison to other forms of crime (1997: 16). As Benedict argues, "crime stories sell more papers than any other type of news, [and] violent crime wins the most attention from readers, and sex-related crime the next most attention" (1992: 7-8).

It is important to note that the media do not merely relay the circumstances of the event surrounding the sexual assault. Historically, the media have propagated patriarchal ideologies in the coverage of sexual violence by incorporating rape myths into their reports. These myths seek to justify the violence men inflict on women, while blaming women for the violence they experience (Benedict, 1992: 13). The blaming of the victim is a technique of social control used to create parameters of, and illustrate to other females, acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for women. The media, and claimsmakers on whom the media depend, construct discourses of sexual violence that typically exclude the concept of male accountability. Structural explanations of violence against women historically have been all but absent in press reports of sexual victimization.

One of the newest developments in sexual violence against women to be reported by the media is the use of drugs to facilitate sexual assault. Emerging as a contemporary social problem within the past ten years, so-called 'date rape' drugs have provided the

media with a new slant for discussing sexual assault. As Berrington and Jones argue, “it is nothing new to claim that sex sells newspapers, but the use of drugs to subdue and assault offers a new angle for reporting rape, enhancing the “newsworthiness” of some stories over others” (2002: 307).

In my thesis I examine how the Canadian print media construct the issue of drug-facilitated sexual assault within a ten-year period 1995-2005, focusing specifically on the issues of gender and social control. The objective of this research was to determine if, and how, the Canadian print media, in their discussion of date rape drugs, form a gendered discourse that contributes to the social control of women. I chose this area of research to gain an increased understanding of the type of information the Canadian public are receiving about a contemporary issue of sexual violence against women. Moreover, this topic was also chosen to examine if, and how, the Canadian print media perpetuate patriarchal ideologies in the coverage of violence against women. As the media have the capacity to both, “reflect and shape[s] public opinion” (Benedict, 1992: 3), it is essential to examine contemporary discourses of sexual violence.

This research adds to the rich body of knowledge pertaining to sexual violence against women by contributing to the literature on date rape drugs and sexual assault, which to date is minimal. There has only been one study conducted looking at the prevalence of drug-assisted rape. Reviewing the hospital examination records of those who used a sexual assault referral centre, McGregor et al., looked at reporting trends in Vancouver over nine years. They found that the incidence of drug-facilitated sexual assaults had increased over the nine-year span, and that teenage girls were the most likely to be victimized (2004: 441).

Similarly, there have only been a handful of studies that have examined the construction of the date rape drug issue. For example, in 2000 Moore and Valverde examined educational materials designed to inform the public about date rape drugs, focusing specifically on pamphlets, websites, and videos. More recently, Berrington and Jones (2002) examined how British and American print media have conceptualised the issue. My research study thus contributes to the academic literature by providing a Canadian perspective on the problem. Moreover, this thesis contributes to feminist research by examining the ways in which the Canadian media continue to propagate the social control of women in their reporting of a contemporary social problem.

## **Chapter Outlines**

This thesis contains seven chapters, including this introduction. Chapter Two discusses the existing literature on violence against women, the media, and social control. The literature review is organized thematically into three sections: theoretical explanations of violence against women, media representations of gender and violence, and social control and the fear of crime. This chapter provides a platform for understanding the key concepts and research that has informed this thesis.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical and methodological framework guiding my research project. The chapter commences with a discussion of feminist social constructionist theory. This chapter also outlines the methodology used in the research, presenting the research objectives, research questions, techniques of data collection and data source. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and strengths of this research.

Chapter Four offers a discussion of the findings of the quantitative analysis of my research. This chapter explores and illustrates the trends and frequencies in three areas. The first section examines the format of the sample, including the number, type and size of articles. The second section discusses sources, identifying claimsmakers and the type of knowledge they produce. The third section examines the content of the discourse.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis. Divided into four sections, this chapter looks at the construction of the drugs; constructions of victims and assailants; media creation of fear; and resistance to the dominant discourse.

Chapter Six combines the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, addressing the research questions posed. More specifically, this chapter examines and discusses the implications of patriarchal denial, the construction of gender, and the use of fear as a strategy of social control.

Chapter Seven discusses the capacity of the media to responsibly inform the public of issues of sexual violence. Moreover, the chapter examines the importance of academic study of media discourses. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: VIOLENCE, WOMEN, THE MEDIA, AND FEAR— A LITERATURE REVIEW**

“In rape, women are objectified and dehumanized. Do newspapers reproduce this when they report on rape cases? Does media reporting on rape confirm the rapist’s view of women as objects, discourage and discredit any sense of agency in women?” (Los & Chamard, 1997: 318)

As Canadian media coverage of drug-facilitated sexual assault has not yet been investigated, my research was exploratory in nature. Despite the paucity of literature in the area of drug-facilitated sexual assaults, there is a wide body of research that has examined media depictions of violence against females, and sexual assault more specifically. This chapter examines the existing literature on theoretical explanations of violence against women, the media, and the relationship between fear of crime and social control. It thus provides a platform for situating and contextualizing the various issues relevant to my research.

### **Violence Against Women**

#### ***Theoretical Explanations of Violence Against Women***

An area of interest for many feminist researchers has been the persistent and pervasive problem of men’s violence against women. Theorists such as Brownmiller (1975), hooks (1984), Smart (1989), Finn (1989), Benedict (1992, 1997), and Currie (1998) amongst others have all offered theoretical explanations of male violence against women. Although each theorist presents a unique perspective on the problem, the perspectives converge with the characterization of violence and sexual violence against women as being embedded within the patriarchal framework of society.



Finn argues that violence against women is a form of domestic terrorism. She likens acts of violence to acts of war being waged on women by men, based solely on the fact that they are women. She states,

Whoever we are and wherever we are — at home or abroad, at peace or at war, irrespective of race, religion, class, nationality, age, or sexual orientation — women are always at risk simply by virtue of being women: assaulted and harassed daily by our “own” men at “home” during times of “peace,” by those designated as the “enemy” when our “own” men are at “war” (1989: 376).

hooks maintains that violence against women must be viewed as part of a larger framework of power relations between the dominant and subordinate. Moreover, she argues that male supremacy is merely a tenet of Western capitalist societies, located in ideologies which encourage the use of coercive methods to gain compliance, whether from women or from children (1984: 118).

Violence against women occurs in many forms, including emotional, economic, and psychological abuse. Of particular interest for academics, the media, and the public alike is the problem of sexual violence. Brownmiller argues that rape, “is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear” (1975: 15). Moreover, she claims that we live in a rape prone society in which cultural values fuel an ideology of rape, where offenders are seen as justified and women as culpable. Brownmiller characterizes sexual violence as the conflict between men and women where men attempt to maintain their ideal of masculinity, while erroneously expecting that women, in the name of femininity, will comply with all sexual requests (1975: 312).

Smart argues that ours is a phallogentric society, one in which men's sexual needs must be met at all costs and women's sexuality is problematized (1989: 27). She maintains that when women say no to sexual requests they are also, "challenging (even if unwittingly) the extensive power of men which goes beyond sex. The 'no' is understood as a challenge to manhood or phallogentricism" (1989: 32). Institutions such as the criminal justice system legitimate rape, as it is merely an extension and expression of male sexuality. Similarly, Fine et al. argue that in a society where women are viewed as inferior to men, social institutions and the official discourses they circulate attempt to normalize violence against women (1996: 135). Moreover, Fine et al. argue that dominant institutions fail to engage in discussions of male accountability in violence against females, because the white man is the embodiment of the institution, and "there is a collective investment, a wish, for his survival "in place". If he "falls" the institution "falls"" (1996: 136).

Currie, in her discussion of the criminalization of violence against women, concurs with Fine et al. arguing that the criminal justice system is a patriarchal institution that appropriates feminist demands for action, and thus never adequately addresses the violence women experience (1998: 45). Accordingly, Currie argues that although the criminal justice system has begun to examine issues of violence against women, "the legalization of women's issues contributes to the marginalization and silencing of many women" (1998: 49). Thus, although the criminal justice system may accommodate white privileged women, it does very little to address the needs of minority women.

### ***Sexual Violence and Racism***

Although the marginalized and subordinate statuses of women are key concepts in the examination of sexual violence, sexism is not the only contributing factor that merits attention. hooks argues that, “sexism as a system of domination is institutionalized but it has never determined in an absolute way the fate of all women in this society” (1984: 5). The discussion of sexual assault would be incomplete without an examination of racism.

The history of rape in North America exemplifies how integral race is in the examination of sexual crimes. Race and rape are connected in a multitude of ways. Davis argues that sexual coercion was characteristic of the master-slave relationship in the 1800’s. She claims that, “the right claimed by slaveowners and their agents over the bodies of female slaves was a direct expression of their presumed property rights over black people as a whole” (1983: 175). Davis notes that despite the abolition of slavery, the institutionalized sense of entitlement to black women’s bodies did not dissipate, yet rape became a political tool of white men to combat the black emancipation movement (1983: 175)

With the possibility of black emancipation at the end of the nineteenth century, not only were black women being raped, but black men were being lynched by white mobs, accused of raping white women. Benedict argues that when examining the history of media rape reporting, an examination of the history of lynching is necessitated. She argues that “stories of lynchings became the main vehicle for rape coverage, it was through the stories of lynchings that the press first focused on rape as a crime that mirrored racial tensions” (1992: 26). It was within this time period that the myth of the

black rapist emerged. This myth, which is still perpetuated by the media, held the belief that black men were most likely to rape white women (Benedict, 1992: 26).

The myth of the black rapist has had repercussions for both black men and black women. Historically, black men were lynched if found guilty of raping a white woman. Even after the 1930's, black men were treated more harshly in the criminal justice system than their white counterparts (Benedict, 1992: 72). Davis states that the myth of the black rapist also has negative repercussions for black women arguing:

once the notion is accepted that Black men harbour irresistible and animal-like sexual urges, the entire race is invested with bestiality. If Black men have their eyes on white women as sexual objects, then Black women must certainly welcome the sexual attentions of white men. Viewed as "loose women" and whores, Black women's cries of rape would necessarily lack legitimacy (1983: 182).

Similarly, Razack, writing from a Canadian perspective, discusses the sexual assault of Aboriginal women by white men. She too makes a connection between current violence experienced by Aboriginal women and the history of colonization and oppression. She argues, "sexual violence towards Aboriginal women was an integral part of nineteenth-century settler strategies of domination" (2002: 130). Razack states that the violence that Aboriginal women continue to experience at the hands of white men is merely an extension of the violence inflicted on these women during initial colonization. The history of colonization has given white men a sense of entitlement over the Aboriginal body, while subsequently creating symbolic racial and spatial boundaries. She argues that the denigration of the Aboriginal body is inherently tied to the spaces in which Aboriginals are confined as a result of colonization. Frequently restricted to the 'slums' of cities, a distinction is created between white 'respectable' spaces and

Aboriginal 'degenerate' spaces. This distinction highlights the criminal orientation of the Aboriginal space, facilitating and justifying violence by portraying it as an evitable consequence of the location (2002: 143).

St. Jean and Feagin argue that although women from every racial and ethnic group are subjected to sexual violence, black women "endure a special kind of racialized sexism" (1998: 101). They argue that black women are targeted by certain sexual myths, that reinforce both racial and gender hierarchies (1998: 101). These myths frequently portray black women as oversexed, perpetuating the white male's sense of entitlement to the black female body (1998: 105). Similarly, Razack argues that Aboriginal women are portrayed as "licentious and bloodthirsty" (2002: 130). She maintains that these stereotypes of the Aboriginal female maintain boundaries between 'respectable' white society and Natives (2002:130)

Although myths about black and minority women are pervasive within the media, their experiences of victimization are marginalized by the press. The victimization of Black and other minority women does not garner the same attention that the victimization of a White woman would. Kitzinger argues that the media often have selective colour blindness, and victims of colour are frequently excluded from reporting. She argues that when the media do discuss victims of colour, it's only because their activities were, "sufficiently respectable and white to warrant attention" (2004: 29).

## **Gender and the Media**

### ***Media, Female Sexuality, and Sexual Violence***

There is consensus among feminist researchers that the media are instrumental in perpetuating negative images and stereotypes of not only women, but teenage girls as

well. Asher argues that female sexuality is exploited in the media, in movies, magazines, and television for the pleasure of men. She argues that this exploitation takes the form of infantilization and physical degradation of the female body. This is problematic as it not only perpetuates negative images of women, but also encourages women to own a sexuality constructed out of patriarchal norms (2002: 24).

In their studies of teen magazines, Duke and Kreshel (1998), Wray and Steele (2002), and Lafleur (2004), reveal how this form of media serves as a “gendered behaviour guide” (Wray & Steele, 2002: 200), encouraging teenage girls to work on their physical appearance and conform to stereotypical notions of feminine behaviour. Lafleur’s (2004) study revealed that teen magazines often place the onus on females to prevent their own victimization, yet encourages them to do so without crossing the boundaries of normative femininity.

Teen magazines are not the only medium through which normative femininity is constructed or encouraged. In her study of Indo-Canadian teenage girls and femininity, Handa argues that ideals of normative femininity are constructed and reinforced through the family unit. She argues that teenage girls are encouraged to be appropriately ‘feminine’ by refraining from activities that are deemed unacceptable by their parents (2003: 111). Conversely, Campbell argues that crime prevention narratives, which can be found in various mediums, including safety pamphlets, teen magazines, newspapers, etc., are also instrumental in reinforcing normative feminine behaviour, by associating certain behaviours with victimization. Moreover, Campbell further argues that these narratives create new definitions of normative femininity. By constantly reinforcing the idea that

women are at risk, prevention narratives construct femininity as fragile and weak (2005: 120).

The emphasis on preventing victimization by following prescribed feminine behaviour as seen in teen magazines is reflective of a wider heterosexist bias that the media display in reporting violence, and sexual violence against women. It has been widely acknowledged by feminist theorists that the media frequently misrepresent the types of crime and the details of the crime in which women are victimized (Brownmiller, 1975; Smart, 1989; Madriz, 1997; Benedict, 1997). Stories containing violence against women, where the perpetrator was unknown to the victim, receive disproportionate attention from the media, despite the fact that women are more likely to know their perpetrators (Madriz, 1997).

Brownmiller (1975) argues that as a crime story, rape is particularly popular among the media because of its capacity to sell newspapers. However, rape has not always been seen as a newsworthy topic. Los and Chamard maintain that sexual assault only came to be viewed as a legitimate money making story in Canada after it was given more prominence by the state as a serious social problem (1997: 294). Yet even now that rape is recognized as a newsworthy story, some sexual assault cases are still seen as more newsworthy than others.

Steeves, in her study of media coverage of the St. Kitzito mass attack on female students in Kenya where 19 girls were murdered and over 70 were raped or gang raped, argues that the more sensational a rape case the more coverage it will receive. She found that although the St. Kitzito attack was brutal, at the time of the trials it received little coverage in Kenya as the Mike Tyson rape trial was occurring in the US and dominated

the coverage (1997: 37). Thus rape cases that are highly unusual or involve famous or rich people will be given priority in terms of reporting.

Smart argues that tabloid newspapers retell rape stories as pornographic spectacles, increasing their newsworthiness (1989: 40). Madriz asserts that the media represent rape stories, “as an epic battle between the forces of darkness and light, with victims as the lambs and criminals as the wolves...with victims as women and criminals as dark skinned men” (1997: 79), as it is more appealing to audiences. Berrington and Jones maintain a more generalized perspective, simply stating that the media’s reporting of rape is misogynistic and reinforces patriarchal values (2002: 311).

Finn argues that the media and the state normalize the act of rape, depicting it as an inevitable act that is characteristic of interactions between men and women. Moreover, she claims that the media remove male violence from its social context by highlighting unusual cases in which the assailant is unknown to the victim (1989:386). By focusing on less common stranger cases, the media pathologize stranger violence which in turn normalizes interpersonal violence. Finn also argues that when the media do discuss cases of interpersonal violence, they provide justifications to explain men’s use of violence. The violence women experience at the hands of men known to them is thus seen as normal, and not as aggressive patriarchal strategies of subordination (1989: 381).

Similarly, in her study of how Australian newspapers represented men’s violence against women and children, Howe found that the print media downplayed women’s experiences of violence by diminishing men’s responsibility. Like Finn (1989), Howe also found that the media focused less on interpersonal violence, and focused instead on problematizing incidents of stranger violence (1999: 148).



Benedict argues that the media produce uninformed accounts of rape and violence against women. Their innate fear of feminism results in journalists, “covering rape without reference to feminist research, theory or to the association between rape and sex roles-in other words, without understanding” (1997: 268). Moreover, the press refuse to look to societal explanations of rape, such as women’s marginalized position in society, by continuing to present the issue as one of individual pathology (Benedict, 1997: 268). Similarly, Smart & Smart argue that the media never address how the prevailing social structure of patriarchy contributes to violence against women and rape more specifically. They argue that the media confound the reality and nature of the crime by focusing predominantly on superficial details (1978: 101).

This failure to account for the underlying causes of sexual assault is what Kitzinger refers to as the “symbolic expulsion of sexual violence” (2004: 27). Although the media have been instrumental in bringing attention to the issue, their denial of the importance of social structure results in individualized solutions for the eradication of violence against women that focus on stranger-danger, and not interpersonal danger (Kitzinger, 2004: 27).

Los and Chamard, in their Canadian study of the changes in print media discourse surrounding sexual assault after the 1983 introduction of new rape laws, found that feminists were often portrayed as critical and complaining, and their opinions were portrayed as emotion ridden and less authoritative than those of men prior to 1983 (1997: 302). After the new laws were introduced, the authors found that the media were more willing to listen to feminist academics, which was shown through more representative coverage of violence against women (i.e. discussion of acquaintance rape). Despite media

willingness to acknowledge other forms of rape such as acquaintance rape and drug-facilitated rape, however, they continue to portray victims in a negative light and depict rape as an issue of individual pathology, instead of prevailing patriarchal structures (Los & Chamard, 1997: 323)

The media's use of language both obscures the realities of rape cases while trivializing the experiences of women. In a study of acquaintance rape stories, it was found that the press trivialized the experiences of women by referring to the attacks as date rapes (Lees, 1995: 107). Lees maintains that linking "date", a word with pleasurable connotations, with "rape" is the media's way of subtly implying that the event was not really rape. There is consensus among feminist scholars that the language used by the media in depicting rape stories is problematic as the language used to describe the event and, "the labels chosen for participants in gendered conflict... support patriarchal hegemony evident in other forms including myths" (Steeves, 1997: 83). In her study of the St. Kitzito rape trials, Steeves (1997) found that the media failed to account for the gendered nature of the crime of rape. Similarly, Berrington and Jones (2002) argue that the media fail to account for the role that men play in rapes. They claim that the media use gender-neutral language when depicting rape cases in, "a further denial of the context of patriarchy" (2002: 308).

### ***Media Characterizations of Rape: Victims and Offenders***

It has been argued that the media reinforce female subordination by implying the concept of victim precipitation, the idea that some victims either acted in a way that brought on the victimization, or were negligent in preventing their victimization

(Brownmiller, 1975: 353). The notion of victim precipitation has created a dichotomy between victims where some are characterized as innocent and others as culpable.

Madriz contends that the media place women along a continuum, with the innocent woman at one end of the spectrum and the bad woman at the other end. She argues that characteristically the innocent victim is either married or a virgin, and was acting in a respectable fashion when the victimization occurred. In contrast, the bad woman is sexually promiscuous and her actions are easily seen as falling outside socially prescribed feminine behaviour (1997: 17-18).

Benedict claims that it is the media's acceptance of rape myths that creates a dichotomy between crime victims. Relying on ten prominent rape myths, the media either characterize a female rape victim as, "pure and innocent, a true victim attacked by monsters- the "virgin"- or she is a wanton female who provoked the assailant with her sexuality- the "vamp"" (Benedict, 1992: 18). Whether a rape victim will be classified as a virgin or a vamp depends on a combination of factors including: the characteristics of the victim, the circumstances of the crime, and the primary definers of the event. There are, according to Benedict, eight characteristics that will influence the media and the public to cast a rape victim as a vamp (see Appendix B). Likewise, Lees maintains that the media stereotype all women who report sexual victimization as being hysterical, promiscuous, and manipulative or a combination of all three (1995: 111).

Smart argues that the media create a single characterization of 'woman' without distinction between class and race. Accordingly, she asserts that, "examples of this mythic category of woman appear on a daily basis in tabloid newspapers with their

stories about promiscuous women, women who say no when they mean yes and so on” (1989: 42).

Madriz offers a different perspective, arguing that the press generally present white, middle to upper class rape victims favourably as the media tend to reinforce class, race, and gender hierarchies. Moreover, white, middle-class women are received favourably by the media as they embody mainstream society’s ideal of the perfect victim (Madriz, 1997: 76). Yet as Benedict’s examination of four rape cases illustrates, even white middle class women are subjected to public scrutiny, validating her eight criteria. In 1986 Jennifer Levin, an 18-year-old white woman from a wealthy family, was murdered by a male friend, also white and wealthy. The media portrayed Levin as a promiscuous, socially active woman, who precipitated her own death through flirtation and alcohol consumption. The press effectively blamed everyone including the victim in the death: everyone except for the accused (Benedict, 1992: 184-185).

Potter & Kappeler argue that the media distort the crime of rape in their reporting by focusing on how the victim’s carelessness or provocative actions precipitated the crime. They state:

The press gives little coverage to the lives of the victims in these stories, citing conventions protecting the identity of sexual assault victims. However, they do point out facts related to the victims’ drinking prior to the assault and other allegedly mitigating behaviours. They also discuss the alleged attackers, usually humanizing them and suggesting that they acted in confusion or highlighting the unfortunate set of circumstances which led to the rape (1998: 16).

The Levin case reflects this distortion and the media’s refusal to engage the notion of male accountability in cases of violence against women. Women, no matter

what race, will almost always be cast as partly culpable for the violence that is inflicted on them by men.

## **Media, Social Control, and The Fear of Crime**

### ***Social Control***

To comprehend the implications of media distortion of crime stories, it is necessary to provide a discussion of social control and the fear of crime. Numerous academics have discussed the relation between fear of crime and social control, and the gendered nature of social control (Smart & Smart, 1978; Green et al., 1987; Madriz, 1997; Renzetti, 1998; Altheide, 2002; Pollock, 2006). A review of the research related to social control is discussed below.

The notion of social control is conceptualised differently by various theorists. Providing a basic, gender-neutral definition, Pollock argues that social control refers to the, “limits and restrictions on behaviour and values experienced by each member of society” (2006: 7). She argues that social control manifests itself in both minor and major ways, and is formal and informal in nature. Society is subjected to formal social control from various institutions, such as school and the criminal justice system. Informal social control is exerted through the process of socialization. Through interactions with family, friends, and even the media, we learn rules of conduct (Pollock, 2006: 7).

Smart and Smart (1978) and Green et al. (1987) provide gendered definitions of social control. As with Pollock (2006), Smart & Smart acknowledge that social control can be regarded as emanating from two systems of control; one formal, the other informal (1978: 2). They argue that, “the social control of women assumes many forms, it may be internal or external, implicit or explicit, private or public, ideological or repressive”

(1978: 2). Their definition of social control implies that social control not only influences women, but also permeates their lives in every arena, public and private. They argue that women are taught how to think, act, and feel, in a manner consistent with patriarchal expectations of femininity (1978: 2). Similarly, Green et al. argue that social control “is an ongoing process, one element in the struggle to maintain male hegemony which sets the limits of appropriate feminine behaviour” (1987: 79). They conceptualise social control as a continuum between coercive and non-coercive actions. The authors argue that because of women’s relative subordination to men and the imbalance of power between the sexes, women have little choice but to consent to demands placed on them by men and society in general (1987: 80). Yet women are also coerced to comply with demands through the use of violence and the threat of violence (Green et al., 1978: 80).

Renzetti explains that social control is not inherently problematic. She argues that to a certain extent, social control is a vital aspect in the maintenance of the social order of society as it facilitates our social interactions by providing structure and expectations of how to conduct oneself (1998: 182). Despite the functionality and necessity of social control, Renzetti acknowledges that social control does have serious ramifications, especially for women. She argues that not only are social controls over women expanding, but they are, “multiplying and extending into women’s lives like tentacles that grasp prey and squeeze it into submission” (1998: 182).

Despite slight variances in definitions and emphasis on gender, it can be argued that in terms of informal social control, the media play a significant role. Madriz argues that the media do in fact play a significant role in promoting social control through their

depictions of crime news and the creation of fear. She further claims that the fear of crime is perhaps one of the greatest mechanisms that serves to control women (1997: 34).

### ***Media, Fear, and The Problem Frame***

There is acknowledgement within academia that the media's interest in the criminal justice system, their emphasis on entertainment, and their tendency to distort crime stories has had, and continues to have, important ramifications for society (Altheide, 2002; Cavender et al., 1999; Madriz, 1997). Altheide argues that the media's myopic focus on violent and predatory crime has created a widespread public perception that the world is unsafe, mounting a pervasive sense of risk. Altheide argues the media construct crime stories using the "problem frame" (2002: 41), an organizational tool that makes events more newsworthy, and more entertaining. A news story that has been constructed within the problem frame implies that an undesirable condition exists which is easily identifiable as a problem. This condition is problematic and affects many people, yet there are identifiable solutions that can fix the problem (Altheide, 2002: 49).

The problem frame creates fear amongst the public, yet this fear, according to Altheide, is socially constructed. More specifically, Altheide argues that the use of the problem frame promotes a discourse of fear where "danger and risk are a central feature of the effective environment" (2002: 41). He argues that both the media and criminal justice institutions benefit from the distortion of crime stories. The media increase their profits and the criminal justice system can justify intervention. Altheide claims that these institutions are interested in creating and promoting fear amongst the public as fear, "is a key element of creating 'the risk society'" (2002: 23). Accordingly, he claims that fear is

used as a tool of social control, which seeks to regulate the behaviour of citizens and justify intervention by agencies of social control such as the police.

Although extensive, Altheide's analysis of the media and fear of crime and their relation to social control fails to incorporate an analysis of gender. Yet there are numerous feminist theorists who bridge the gap in this area. For example, Madriz provides an in-depth analysis of gender and fear of crime. She argues that the fear of crime is just as detrimental as crime itself. Although a single crime may only involve one or two victims, Madriz claims that crime has the capacity to affect entire communities, weakening social bonds and fostering an environment of distrust (1997: 6). Similarly, Stanko argues that women experience what she refers to as "universal vulnerability" (1990: 134), where the victimization of one woman can make all women feel vulnerable.

Madriz views the fear of crime as being embedded within the structural discourse of a society. Referring specifically to the structural discourse as "prevailing ideologies" (1997: 35), she argues that "these ideologies not only seek to explain the nature of crime, its causes, the way to control it, and how to avoid being victimized (Hall et al., 1978); they also contain a reservoir of images of criminals, victims, and the relations between them" (1997: 35). Accordingly, Madriz argues that the constructions of crime that comprise prevailing ideologies exacerbate women's fear, as the fear of crime is informed more by the images and ideological creations rather than by facts. More prominence is placed on the constructed images of crime than on actual statistics. Not only do these ideologies exacerbate fear, the images of crime and criminals, victims and victimization provide a structure of public consent as to the places where it is agreed women will be



safe, what activities are safe for women, and the proper roles for men and women (Madriz, 1997: 40)

Radford, discussing the circular spiral of violence, argues that “women learn fear as a result of their own and other women’s experiences and from the media, the press, and police warnings” (Hanmer & Saunders as cited in Radford, 1987: 32). Women’s knowledge of victimization can be characterized as a recursive cycle; one is victimized or learns of victimization and modifies behaviour accordingly and constantly. Radford argues that women’s fear of violence leads to the acceptance of patriarchal ideology; that women will only be safe in the home. This is problematic as it discourages women from actively participating in the public sphere of social and work activities, while encouraging female dependence on men (1987: 32).

Madriz argues that the media’s acceptance and dissemination of a masculinized ideology that continually depicts women as vulnerable and men as powerful, contributes to the disempowerment of women by reinforcing their subordinate status in relation to men (1997: 9). The ideologies that the media disseminate lead to what Madriz refers to as the “paradox of fear” (1997: 11), where women and the elderly are more likely to fear victimization than men even though their likelihood of being victimized is significantly less than the latter group. As Madriz explains,

The fear that “something bad can happen to them” teaches women at a very early age what “their place” is; who is expected to be strong and who weak; who should be protected and who should protect; what types of clothes women should wear and what types of activities they should or should not engage in. If these clear, gendered rules of behaviour are not strictly followed, women get the blame for their own victimization, because good women are “supposed to know better” (1998: 41).

Similarly, Cavender, Bond-Maupin and Jurik address the media's effect on women's fear of crime. They argue that women are most frequently portrayed as victims of violent crime by the media, which contributes to their feelings of vulnerability and ultimately their social control. Moreover, they claim that "the cultural constructions of women's victimization... imply the proper ways to discipline girls' and women's behaviours" (1999: 645). They argue that the misrepresentation of crime stories by the media requires women to engage in informal social control, by monitoring their own actions and taking responsibility for their victimization.

Chan and Rigakos argue that women routinely police their actions, as they know "that the consequences of not doing so is not just the potential threat of violence from men but also the possibility of being negatively labelled for transgressing the boundaries of permissible conduct" (2002: 756). Green et al. assert that women who contravene socially prescribed notions of appropriate feminine behaviour are subjected to penalties that range from relatively innocuous (i.e. verbal abuse), to the more serious (i.e. actual physical harm). These penalties are characteristic of a patriarchal society, in which women must negotiate their behaviour on a daily basis (Green et al., 1987: 75).

The fear of crime arguably has important implications in the lives of women. Indeed, there are some academics that argue that women's fear of crime is in fact, a fear of men and sexual victimization (Stanko, 1990, 1998; Madriz, 1997; Kelly, 1987). The next section details some of the research and commentary on sexual violence and gendered social control.

### ***Sexual Violence and Gendered Social Control***

Brownmiller asserts that rape, an act that exposes the unequal power dynamic between men and women, is something that society teaches women to fear at a very young age. Girls are socialized into a climate of fear through fairytales such as Little Red Riding Hood, which illustrate that girls who do not conform to traditional feminine behaviour are asking for trouble (i.e. sexual violence) (1975: 310). Madriz, discussing the work of Brownmiller, contends that the imagery in fables such as Little Red Riding Hood implies that unknown and unfamiliar places (the woods in which Red Riding Hood ventures into) are dangerous for women because it leaves them vulnerable to victimization by men (the wolf). Moreover, fables and fairytales such as Cinderella and Snow White, indicate that women need men to save them from dangerous situations and to act as saviours (Madriz, 1997: 15).

Stanko asserts that throughout their lives, women are socialized with the understanding that their sexual safety is extremely vulnerable, and constantly in danger (1990: 86). Likewise, Madriz maintains that women learn at a young age gendered rules of behaviour, instilling a fear of victimization if they stray from the dictated feminine ideals. Claiming that women's reality is comprised of imposing restrictions on their behaviour to avoid victimization, Madriz states that sexual violence against women limits their attempts to navigate public spaces (1997: 40).

Smart and Smart argue that, "it is not rape itself which constitutes a form of social control, but the internalisation by women, through continual socialization, of the possibility of rape" (1978: 100). Moreover, the implicit threat of rape can be seen in the ideological restrictions that society places on the behaviours of women and the societal

prescriptions of appropriate gender activities. It is the fear of rape that places constraints and limits women's activities in the public sphere (Smart & Smart, 1978: 102).

Berrington and Jones argue that it is the public discussion of violence against women that reinforces the message that women are sexually vulnerable. They argue that public discourse places the onus on women to avoid men's violence (2002: 310). Smart and Smart claim that "the cumulative effect of press reports of rape is to remind women of their vulnerability, to create an atmosphere of fear and to suggest, as a solution, that women should withdraw to the traditional shelter of the domestic sphere and the protection of men" (1978: 102).

The research discussed in this chapter illustrates how the media have represented the problem of violence against women and how media coverage has contributed both to women's fear of crime and the social control of women. Yet there is a gap in the literature pertaining to media coverage of contemporary forms of sexual assault such as drug-facilitated rape. My research attempts to fill this void in the literature. Chapter Three provides an examination of the theoretical and methodological framework that guides my research.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

“We should choose our approach to the objects we study because of what we want to find out, because of the problem(s) that we want to solve, rather than because we are convinced that one approach leads to truth and the other to conjecture. At the same time, we must always realize that we cannot solve all of the problems or explore all of the possibilities that the text presents” (Dow as cited in Meyers, 1999: 15).

This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section discusses the theoretical framework that guides this research, looking specifically at feminism and social constructionism. The second section focuses on the methodological approach and outlines the methods used to conduct the research. This section discusses the specifics of data collection, sample characteristics, collection methods, quantitative and qualitative approaches employed, and the techniques of data analysis. This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in addressing the research questions. The justification for this approach is also provided in this section. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the contributions and limitations of this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

My research has been guided by two theoretical paradigms: feminism and social constructionism. Using feminist theory during the course of the research allowed for analysis of the date-rape drug discourse using a gendered lens. That is, the research used a woman-centred approach, focusing specifically on the interconnections between femininity, sexuality, power, and patriarchy. This research examines the discourse surrounding date-rape drugs as a social construction, rather than as an objective condition. The social constructionist perspective was employed for its ability to examine claims and claimsmakers (Best, 1995: 349).

The incorporation of feminism and constructionism is the most appropriate theoretical framework in which to approach the research questions as it addresses both the concept of gender and the media participation in the creation of cultural texts. The two paradigms are complementary. The social constructionist framework provides a means for examining the composition of claims while the feminist framework provides an understanding of structural inequalities that are reproduced in media texts.

### ***Social Constructionism***

The social constructionist perspective emerged in the early 1970's out of an opposition to the traditional objectivist stance that had dominated the field of sociological research (Best, 1995: 337). Constructionists advocate for a fundamental shift in the study of social problems, emphasizing the need to look at claims surrounding the problem rather than the actual condition itself. Constructionists argue that social problems are "not objective conditions to be studied and corrected; rather, they are the interpretative processes that constitute what come to be seen as oppressive, intolerable, or unjust conditions" (Miller and Holstein, 1993: 4). Attempts to define social problems using objective conditions are inherently flawed as definitions require subjective judgement (Best, 1997: 337).

Spector and Kitsuse (1977) constructed the groundwork for the social constructionist perspective. Defining social problems, "as the activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative condition" (as cited in Best, 1993: 112), they rejected the idea that social problems were objective conditions. Their perspective encouraged academics to locate issues in their broader social context (Best, 1993: 113). The social constructionist perspective maintains that knowledge is

created through social processes and thus is reflective of subjective values rather than objective conditions.

Objectivists argue that the constructionist focus on claims ignores subject matter that is far more important: real, harmful social conditions (Best, 1995: 339). The most influential critique of social constructionism emerged in the mid-1980's from two sociologists Woolgar and Pawluch (1985). They argued that social constructionism was "internally inconsistent" (as cited in Best, 1995: 341) and claimed that constructionists engaged in ontological gerrymandering. Although constructionists focus on subjective claims and examine "putative conditions" (Best, 1995: 341), they assume that they know the 'true' nature of a social condition. That is, arguing that a certain problem is a compilation of socially constructed claims insinuates that there is an actual condition, which is being manipulated or distorted. This requires an assumption about an objective condition, which is inconsistent with the constructionist viewpoint.

Social constructionists responded to this criticism by debating the role of objectivist assumptions within constructionist analysis and theory. Social constructionist "analysts were urged to avoid any contamination by objectivism, to shun all assumptions about the empirical world" (Best, 1993: 15). Spector and Kitsuse modified their original position in response to the critique, advocating that constructionist research should be completely devoid of discussion of objective conditions. They argued that attempts to incorporate subjective definitions with objective conditions compromised the quality of the research (Best, 1993: 113). However, others argued that analysis of the claimsmaking process must consider the social context in which claims are made. Academics such as

Best (1993, 1995) argue that assumptions are necessary to gain a better understanding of social problems and their emergence.

The ideological divide between the use of objective assumptions resulted in the division of the constructionist paradigm into two perspectives: strict constructionism and contextual constructionism. Strict constructionists do not question the reality that is constructed as to its accuracy or the effects that the inaccuracies of the knowledge create (Best, 1995: 8). By focusing solely on claimsmaking, strict constructionists attempt to avoid assumptions and the criticism of ontological gerrymandering (Best, 1995: 8).

Conversely, contextual constructionists seek to locate claims within their socio-historical context. They argue that in order to understand a social problem and the claims surrounding it, one must also have an understanding of the context from which it emerged (Best, 1995: 345). Contextual constructionists argue that it is possible to know something about an objective condition. Moreover, they argue that objective indicators of social problems, such as crime rates and statistics, although socially constructed are useful for understanding the context in which claims are made (Best, 1995: 348).

The transformation of a social issue into a social problem has been described as a process of claimsmaking, where a group takes ownership of an issue and seeks to define the characteristics of the problem (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977; Surette, 1998). Best argues that a social constructionist analysis involves three components: examination of the claim, examination of the claimsmakers, and examination of the claimsmaking process (1995: 349-351).

The first task is locating the claim. Once the claim has been located an analyst must examine how the problem is described and typified (Best, 1995: 350). The second



task of the social constructionist researcher is to focus on claimsmakers (Best, 1995: 350). Claimsmakers, according to Surette, are groups with a vested interest in the problem that not only bring attention to the issue, but also shape the context of the problem. The claimsmakers act as sources for the media who then disseminate this “problem” (Surette, 1998: 8-9). Best argues that it is imperative to identify the claimsmakers, the factions they represent, their relative power and position in social and their ideological interests, in order to gain a better understanding of the claim (1995: 350). The final task of the social constructionist researcher is to look at the dynamics of the claimmaking process. This includes examining the length of the claim in terms of duration and frequency of claims, examining the presence of rival claims and their relationship with the primary claim, and addressing the targets of the claimsmakers (Best 1995: 351).

Numerous academics have employed a social constructionist perspective to examine the relationship between the media and the criminal justice system. Surette argues social institutions such as the media and the criminal justice system have become increasingly interconnected in the dissemination of knowledge (1998: 5). Best contends that claimsmakers use the mass media to disseminate their messages amongst the public (1995: 13). However as Loseke notes, there are infinite numbers of conditions that could be classified as social problems and not all of them receive media attention (2003: 53). Jenkins argues that some claims are taken very seriously yet others never achieve enough recognition and quickly disappear (1998: 138). There is, so to speak, competition among claims as to which ones will be chosen for promotion by the media. Lowney and Best argue that claims only become successful once they, “mobilize significant organizational

support” (1995: 52). That is, the likelihood that one claimsmakers’ position will be accepted is dependent on the strength of their political status relative to that of other claimsmakers.

It would be fallacious to assume that the media merely disseminate claims. Loseke posits that the mass media engage in claimsmaking in two primary ways. First, reporters act as primary claimsmakers when they research their own stories. Secondly, and more commonly, the media act as secondary claimsmakers, by selectively interpreting and reporting claims presented to them by primary claimsmakers (i.e. politicians, lobbyists, and academics) (2003: 41). Lofquist suggests that the media tend “to follow and reproduce a narrative composed of traditional, system legitimizing assumptions and assertions” (1998: 242). He further argues that although the media are dependent on institutions of criminal justice for crime stories, they are willing to ignore information provided to them if it doesn’t coincide with the “hegemonic narrative” (1998: 254).

This research employed a contextual constructionist perspective and attempts to expose and address the dominant messages within the date rape drug discourse that may contribute to the social control of women. The contextual constructionist approach is the most appropriate as it allows for the examination of the claims surrounding date rape drugs to be placed within a patriarchal context.

### ***Feminism***

Daly and Chesney-Lind define feminism as, “a set of theories about women’s oppression *and* a set of strategies for change” (1988: 502, emphasis in original). Yet providing a more concrete definition of feminism is difficult as there are numerous

streams of feminism, including liberal, Marxist, socialist, radical, and postmodern, which vary considerably in terms of theorization of women, society and oppression. Daly and Chesney Lind argue that feminism is more than a collaboration of corresponding and competing theories; feminism encompasses numerous perspectives from different women that are used to explain women's inequality (1988: 502). DeKeseredy argues that there are at least eight distinguishable forms of feminist theory (2000: 86). Arguably, feminist theory is not a homogeneous field, and it would be erroneous to categorize the feminist perspective as one-dimensional.

James argues that within feminism, "there are many interpretations of women and their oppression, so it is a mistake to think of feminism as a single philosophical doctrine, or as implying an agreed political program" (2000: 576). For instance, radical feminists theorize that the primary cause of women's oppression is patriarchy, and more specifically, men. According to this stream of feminism, patriarchy, and the power men wield over women, manifests itself in the subordination and sexual exploitation of women (Code, 1993: 41). Marxist feminists, in contrast, view women's oppression as part of a larger economic oppression that results in capitalist societies. Marxist feminism uses traditional Marxist theory to frame their feminist discourse. The subordination of women is that experienced by all marginalized classes in a capitalist society. To be put plainly, "the root cause of the oppression of women is class society" (Alleman, 1993: 20). Socialist feminists have constructed their theory through the adoption of the Marxist analysis of class relations in conjunction with an emphasis on sex class. Socialist feminists not only apply Marxist theory in their work, they also extend it to broaden their

perspective. The socialist feminist discourse is constructed by using capitalism and patriarchy as dual explanations of female oppression (Code, 1993: 39).

Despite the competing and contrasting perspectives within the feminist paradigm, van Zoonen argues that feminist theories are united by their “unconditional focus on analysing gender as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds and our experiences of them, [which] is hard to find in other perspectives on humanity and ‘society’” (1994: 3). Those who work within the feminist paradigm focus on the power dynamics within society while noting the marginalization of women resulting from said power.

A feminist perspective has much to contribute to media studies. Feminist approaches to media research are different from traditional forms in that they recognize social inequalities and the media’s ability to perpetuate these inequalities. van Zoonen explains that the goal of feminist media research is to uncover hidden meanings of gender within dominant discourses (1994: 66). She argues that this cannot be done through the sole use of quantitative content analysis. Similarly, Reinharz argues that feminist researchers should use a combination of techniques, both quantitative and qualitative to examine how women and other groups are being portrayed. She argues that feminist media studies must have the capacity to, “look for contradictions within or between texts that illustrate the pervasive effects of patriarchy and capitalism” (1992: 149).

Lafleur argues that self-identified feminist researchers do not need to rely on pre-established categorizations of feminism to be able to produce women centred work (2004: 38). For example, Edward’s study of male violence in feminist theory examines feminist theories by discussing the writings of women as individuals, not as subscribers

of particular frameworks. She states that, “the alternative, to use general categories such as ‘Marxist’ or ‘radical’ feminist to refer to different schools or ‘brands’ of feminist thought, leads to oversimplification and distortion as similarities within and contrasts between the various perspectives are necessarily overemphasized” (1987: 15). van Zoonen argues that the typologies of feminism have become problematic, in that the distinctions between the different streams have become less defined as each stream has become more theoretically diversified, encompassing numerous and opposing perspectives (1994: 13). This research will therefore not be guided by one specific stream of feminism, yet will embody a ‘spirit’ of feminism, by discussing feminist concepts relevant to my research, focusing specifically on gender, power, and the media.

### ***Feminist Social Constructionism***

Like many theoretical approaches, social constructionism is guilty of being androcentric, or male centred. However, this does not mean it is incompatible with a feminist perspective, or that it cannot be more woman centred. A feminist perspective can contribute to the constructionist framework by maintaining a focus on gender and the ways in which the system of patriarchy influences claims, claimsmakers, and the claimsmaking process. Conversely, a social constructionist perspective can contribute to a feminist framework, by providing a means of examining gender constructions of women’s issues.

Although not extremely prominent, feminist constructionism has been used in academic research (Glenn, 1986; Rollins, 1985). McCall argues that feminist constructionism, “developed independently of the social constructionism of symbolic interactionists, out of the politics and epistemology of critical feminist theory” (1993:

183). She argues that the feminist tradition emerged due to an increasing opposition to positivistic approaches and methodologies. Feminist researchers reject Spector and Kitsuse's position that a researcher should remain value neutral. Rather they seek to, "represent the historical and structural implications of each case they study by embedding it in the context of the world political economy" (McCall, 1993: 183).

By incorporating a feminist perspective with the work of social constructionists, this framework has the capacity to examine the construction of the date rape drug discourse and can examine relations of gender inequality inherent in media texts. Reinharz argues that cultural texts such as newspapers and other media output, have the capacity to shape a society's norms and not merely reflect them. As such, she argues that when feminist researchers are studying cultural texts, it is important to examine the process of production to gain an increased understanding of the role of the media in producing cultural artefacts (1992: 149). A feminist social constructionist framework is ideal for my research as it allows for the examination of claimsmakers, the construction of claims, and the role that gender occupies in these stories, while embedding the analysis in the socio-historical context of patriarchy.

## **Research Question**

The goal of this thesis is to examine how the Canadian print media construct the issue of date rape drugs in the facilitation of sexual assault. Despite media attention to this issue and its emergence as a contemporary social problem within the past ten years, little research has been conducted in regards to the use of date rape drugs in the facilitation of sexual assault. The few feminists who have commented on the issue often argue that the media have over exaggerated the date rape drug problem and claim that the

'hype' is merely a strategy of social control which attempts to regulate the public lives of women (Gorin, 2000; Berrington and Jones, 1999). To date, there has not been an examination of how the Canadian media depict the issue. My study is exploratory in nature. The research focused on one main question while posing numerous sub-questions to engage in deeper analysis of the construction of the issue of interest. The following question was the primary focus of my research:

**Have the Canadian print media, in their presentation of the date rape drug issue, constructed a gendered discourse that implicitly or explicitly contributes to the social control of women's activities in the public sphere? If so, how has this been achieved?**

Central to the investigation of the date rape drug issue as a gendered discourse, were two key components that had to be identified. First, what were the general characteristics of the discourse? Essential questions that were addressed in the evaluation of the discourse included:

- ❑ How did the problem emerge, and how is it constructed as a threat to society?
- ❑ Who, or what, is being labelled as the problem?
- ❑ Is there a group that is trying to dominate the discourse, and if so what explanations are they putting forth about the issue in question?
- ❑ What solutions are being put forth to end the problem, and who is proposing these solutions?
- ❑ Do the media use fear in construction of the issue? If so, what role does fear of crime assume in the discourse, and what are the consequences of this construction?

The second component of the main question which required identification was how gender, and in particular femininity, was constructed and subsequently portrayed in

the composition of the discourse and the consequences of this construction. Essential questions that were addressed in the analysis of gender included:

- ❑ How do the print media portray the victims and offenders of rape?
- ❑ How is female sexuality portrayed?
- ❑ Are rape myths prevalent in the articles?
- ❑ Do the media target women in the promotion of fear? Do they target men?
- ❑ Do the media make suggestions as to how women should regulate their activities in the public sphere? Are these suggestions specific to women, or do they also target men?

This research sought to (de)construct news articles from various Canadian newspapers using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer the aforementioned questions. Qualitatively, a grounded theory approach was used to examine emerging themes and concepts. Moreover, a constant comparative method was used to explore the conceptualization of date rape drugs and sexual assault. Quantitative content analysis methods were engaged to provide information pertaining to the frequency of, and trends in, coverage of the issue in each paper, both individually and collectively. The theoretical and methodological approaches employed in this study are complementary. The feminist paradigm provides a framework in which to ground the qualitative analysis, whereas the quantitative techniques employed allow for the examination of both claims and claimsmakers.

## **Definitions**

There are many words that can be used when discussing violence against women. However, as Berrington and Jones note, it is essential that one is critical of the language used to describe violence against women as all too frequently the terminology employed,



“fails to identify and obscures the differential application, impact or consequences of violence and oppression for different groups of women” (2002: 308). Many works use language that denies the patriarchal structure inherent in discourses, by denying men’s role in violence against women, and using denigrating language when discussing female victims. This thesis attempts to use language in a fashion that does not obscure men’s role in violence against women or contributes to the subordination of women.

A key concept explored in this thesis is gender. For the purpose of this study, gender is conceptualised as a social construction, in that it is assumed that “the differences between females and males are not based in some biologically determined truth” (Kramer, 2005: 3). Gender is thus a label that describes, “the traits and behaviours that are regarded by the culture as appropriate to women and men” (Brannon, 2002: 12).

Another important concept discussed in this study requiring definition is that of ‘discourse’. I define discourses as “systems of linguistic representations through which power sustains itself” (Gamble, 2000: 217). These linguistic systems exert control by organizing information in attempts to ‘make sense’ of everyday reality (Gamble, 2000: 218). In this way, a discourse is merely a way of presenting information. However, I also use this term recognizing that, “discourse[s] produce social meanings that can have material effects in the world” (Brock, 2003: 331). I use the term ‘gendered discourse’ throughout this thesis. By this I am referring to a mode of linguistic representation that both relies on, and incorporates, socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity in the organization of information pertaining to date rape drugs.

A primary issue of contention within this thesis was how to both define and depict the use of drugs in the facilitation of sexual assault. By referring to the issue as date rape

'drugs' and date rape 'druggings', the media obscure the reality that the drugs are used for the purpose of sexual assault. Moreover, combining the words "date" with the word "rape" attempts to differentiate this form of sexual assault from 'real' assault. It insinuates that date rapes are not as traumatic as stranger rape (Lees, 1995: 107). So as not to obscure the data that emerged from the qualitative analysis, I reluctantly use the terms 'date rape' drugs and 'date rape' druggings, in this thesis. However, in my discussion of the findings, I chose to use the terminology 'drug-facilitated sexual assault', to ensure that the focus remained on the element of violence rather than on the drugs. Moreover, I have chosen to use the term "incapacitation drugs" in the discussion provided in Chapter Six, in lieu of date rape drugs, which insinuates that the drugs, rather than men who use them, are responsible for the sexual assault.

Drug-facilitated sexual assault has been defined by the medical community as occurring, "when an individual has been sexually assaulted due to the surreptitious administration of drug(s) thereby rendering her/him unable to give consent" (McGregor et al., 2004: 441). This definition is adopted in this thesis.

The term "victim" is employed in this research to describe all women who have been subjected to male violence. This term is used to depict both women who were assaulted, and those that were drugged but not assaulted, as the intention was there to inflict harm upon them. I chose the term victim, not to denigrate the experiences of women or cast them as passive participants in their experiences of victimization but rather to acknowledge the, "complex processes within which women are indeed victimized" (Sev'er as cited in Lafleur, 2004: 5). Moreover, I use the terms women and

females interchangeably throughout the work, with an acknowledgement that females of all ages experience male violence.

Like many feminist researchers discussing violence against women, I felt an internal struggle in deciding between the terms “assailant”, “offender”, “rapist” and “perpetrator” to describe men who sexually violate women. I debated whether or not to exclusively use the term ‘rapist’ as a descriptor, as I wanted to ensure that the discussion of drug-facilitated sexual assault remained focused on the behavior and actions of males, and the sexual nature of the violation. Yet I felt that the term rapist was a loaded term, and although I do not want to minimize the seriousness of the act, I also want to guard against incorporating the rape myth that men who rape are perverted or crazy. Therefore, I have chosen to use the terms perpetrator, “someone who has committed a crime, or a violent or harmful act” (Cambridge Dictionary), and assailant “a person who attacks another person” (Cambridge Dictionary), and use them interchangeably. Although this terminology is of a generalized nature, it is not my intention to trivialize men’s participation in violence against women, or negate the significance of the violence.

## **Data Collection**

As the goal of the research was to examine how the Canadian media have constructed the date rape drug discourse nationally, it was decided that researching English language newspapers from all across the country would lead to the most representative sample of the Canadian coverage. However, as there are approximately 100 daily newspapers in Canada (Standing Senate Committee, 2004), numerous decisions had to be made in regards to both the sample selection and data collection methods.

After the primary research question was formulated, a preliminary search of the Canadian Newsstand database, as provided on-line by the Simon Fraser University library, was conducted to find stories pertaining to date rape drugs and sexual assault. Initial searching using the keyword “date rape drug” found that there were no stories pertaining to date-rape drugs and sexual assault before October of 1995. It was decided that the study would examine ten years of coverage, from 1995-2005, using suitable newspapers located in the Canadian Newsstand database, in order to see how the issue was initially constructed and how it continues to be constructed. As the database requires time to post the newspapers, August 31, 2005 was chosen as the end date to ensure that all the papers being studied were posted by the time data collection was poised to begin. Despite evidence that there were no stories of date-rape drugs prior to October 1995, August 1, 1995 was designated as the start date to ensure a full ten years of coverage.

However, not every paper that is contained on the Canadian Newsstand database was suitable for study, as many of them do not contain records past 1996, which was incongruent with the date range specified for this study. Moreover, the Canadian Newsstand database mainly contains mass newspapers owned by CanWest Media Works. Ericson, Chan, and Baranek describe mass newspapers as those that encompass the elements of both popular and quality newspapers. They argue that, “instead of finding a particular limited niche in the market, the mass newspaper tries to be the market itself” (1991: 35). Therefore, it was decided that although the Canadian Newsstand database would be suitable for the majority of data collection, it was imperative that a quality newspaper, not owned by CanWest be examined, to avoid homogeneity of the sample. Quality newspapers differ from mass and popular papers in that “their formats include

longer items, features, and continuing stories on complex matters affecting business and political elites on a national and international scale” (Ericson et al., 1991: 35). The articles from the Globe & Mail were found using CD-ROM’s. The data for this research are news articles found within nine Canadian newspapers. The sample of articles was retrieved from one quality newspaper, six mass papers, and two popular style papers. The newspapers chosen for study are outlined in table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Newspapers selected for study**

REGION	CITY	NEWSPAPER
<i>Atlantic</i>	Halifax	The Daily News
<i>Eastern</i>	Montreal	The Gazette
	Ottawa	The Ottawa Citizen
	Toronto	The Toronto Star
<i>Western</i>	Calgary	The Calgary Herald
	Edmonton	The Edmonton Journal
	Vancouver	The Province
	Victoria	Times Colonist
<i>National</i>	National	The Globe and Mail

These papers, with the exception of the Globe and Mail, were chosen primarily because the database contained records before 1995. The Globe and Mail was chosen based on its designation as a quality paper. The Daily News and The Province were chosen to include a popular style format in the sample, which relies on entertaining the reader to capture his or her attention (Ericson et al., 1991: 35). The rest of the papers were chosen because of their city location, most of which represent major urban centres.

The majority of the papers are owned by CanWest MediaWorks, with the exception of the Daily News, which is owned by Transcontinental Inc., the Toronto Star, owned by the Torstar Corporation, and the Globe and Mail, owned by Bell GlobeMedia. The desired sample size for the study was approximately 300-400 stories. Using the key

words *date rape drug*, *Rohypnol* and the abbreviation *GHB* (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate), the Canadian Newsstand database and the electronic version of the *Globe & Mail* were searched with the date range of August 1, 1995 through to August 31, 2005.

Only stories that pertain to the issue of date rape drugs in reference to sexual assault were chosen for the sample. This included stories pertaining to the legislation of date rape drugs (in the context of use in sexual assault), court cases where the drugs have been used to facilitate sexual assault, stories and warnings of prevention and safety, and finally stories regarding drug busts (which identify the drugs as being used specifically for the purposes of sexual assault). Items that were excluded from the sample were those in which date rape drugs were mentioned but not within the context of victimization (i.e. stories of recreational use, “drug busts”, and raves). After all the articles had been filtered for applicability to the research, the final sample was comprised of 301 items.

## **Data Analysis**

The research utilized content analysis methods, drawing from both the qualitative and quantitative traditions. Qualitative and quantitative analyses both have strengths and weaknesses, and using them in combination served to strengthen the validity of the research. As van Zoonen explains, quantitative content analysis looks only at the manifest content of a particular document, and thus has no capacity to look at the latent content (1994: 69). This is problematic as, “only the explicit words, sentences, texts, images – the signs that actually appear in the media text – are taken into account” (van Zoonen, 1994: 69). Yet quantitative content analysis does serve a purpose in that it is easier to replicate in comparison to qualitative analysis, which is frequently criticized on the basis that its subjective nature makes it virtually impossible for two researchers to come to the same

conclusion. Moreover, Reinharz argues that despite the somewhat problematic nature of quantitative analysis, it is useful when attempting to, “identify patterns in authorship, subject matter, methods and interpretation” (1992: 155). Qualitative content analysis, although criticized for being subjective, is useful in media studies as it has the capacity to attend to latent content, examining hidden themes and sub-text that would be missed in a quantitative analysis. Strauss and Corbin argue that, “to build dense, well-developed, integrated and comprehensive theory, a researcher should make use of any or every method at his or her disposal, keeping in mind that a true interplay of methods is necessary” (1998: 33). The use of both traditions, quantitative and qualitative, addresses the weakness of both methods, and will subsequently be employed in this research.

### ***Qualitative Analysis***

The qualitative content analysis was undertaken using the Grounded Theory approach as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The tenets of grounded theory indicate that theory should be generated from the bottom up, arising out of the data to be situated in context. Using the grounded theory approach and the technique of constant comparison, the data were analysed to develop a model of understanding of the construction of the date-rape drug discourse. Although grounded theory is most often applied in interview research (Creswell, 1998: 56), it was chosen as the method for this study for its utility in the categorization of information and thematic analysis.

The analysis of the qualitative data was done manually using the coding procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1998). After the data were collected, every article was read and the text was grouped into generalized thematic and dominant categories. In this first step, referred to as open coding, “the researcher forms initial categories of

information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information. Within each category, the investigator finds several properties, or subcategories, and looks for data to dimensionalize the property” (Creswell, 1998: 57). Strauss and Corbin outline three approaches to open coding which include coding line by line, coding individual paragraphs, or coding an entire document (1998: 119-120). I chose to code each article line by line, examining and deconstructing each sentence, both as a whole and as individual groupings of words. Although this form of coding is considered the most time consuming of the three methods, it is extremely beneficial as it generates many categories that can be further developed in later stages of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 119).

Once the initial categories were formed and saturated, the information was again analysed for the presence of sub-categories. This step, known as axial coding, “consists of intense analysis done around one category at a time... This results in cumulative knowledge about relationships between that category and other categories and subcategories” (Strauss, 1987: 32). Axial coding is used in the process of identifying a central category, to which the sub-categories relate.

After the axial coding had been completed, the new categories were analysed to flush out the central phenomenon as well as related themes. In the last step, selective coding, information from axial coding was used to generate a model of understanding about the codified data (Creswell, 1998: 151).

The qualitative coding was done manually, without the aid of a software program. Typed coding memos were created to: 1) identify themes, both major and minor, 2) Analyse and re-analyse identified themes and, 3) provide a reference as to why certain decisions were made during the research process.



### ***Quantitative Analysis***

This research also used quantitative content analysis methods to look at the frequency of both coverage and prevailing themes within the date rape drug discourse. Quantitative content analysis “is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantifiable manner” (Jensen, 2002: 220). Moreover, the quantitative content analysis approach was adopted as it has, “a useful contribution to make, particularly for the understanding of media output, its consumption and effects” (Jensen, 2002: 229).

A coding manual found in Lafleur’s (2004) study of teen magazines, based on the work of Ericson et al. (1991), was adapted and modified to relate specifically to the study of date rape drug coverage. The manual was used for the quantitative content analysis to garner frequencies of news coverage, identify claimsmakers, themes, and the prevalence of rape myths. The software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to facilitate the quantitative analysis. After every item had been coded, the information was entered into SPSS to generate basic statistics.

### **Limitations and Contributions**

Due to the sheer volume of newspapers that would have to be examined, cover-to-cover examination of the newspapers as a research strategy was ruled out because of time constraints. Although a cover-to-cover search may have yielded more stories that were not picked up by the database or the electronic copies, it would negate the possibility of studying numerous Canadian papers. However, these databases do not contain every story written, and as such, my sample may not be comprised of every relevant item that may have been found if cover to cover searching had been employed.

Moreover, although the Canadian Newsstand database is an efficient tool for data collection, it is important to note that in 2002 the database changed ownership, and as such, there may be inconsistencies on their part as to which articles were selected for posting in the database. Although it was a conscious choice to retrieve the majority of the sample solely from the Canadian Newsstand database, this is a limitation with using this database and therefore my sample may not be completely reflective of all the material available. The Canadian Newsstand database did not reference the Globe & Mail, thus I had to rely on a different source for the collection of those articles. The data collection method was not uniform. Although the keywords used were the same, there are discrepancies between two sources, and one may be over or underrepresented.

There are also methodological concerns relating to content analysis. Quantitatively, reliability is improved when more than one person codes the data, as inter-rater reliability can be assessed. As I was the only person coding the data, I had to rely heavily on the use of the coding manual and had to explicitly define my procedures. I addressed the issue of reliability by using a coding manual that outlined specific definitions and categories of interest, and remaining diligent when coding. Qualitatively, issues of validity frequently arise as critics argue that the results of qualitative studies are highly subjective (Silverman, 2000: 11). To address the concern of validity, I evaluated and analysed all the data I collected, even that which contradicted my presumptions.

Finally, although the concept of social control is discussed at length in this thesis, I recognize that this research can only draw conclusions as to how the depiction of violence against females may contribute to, or influence mechanisms of social control, and cannot speak to the actuality of the effect of the discourse on women's lives.

Despite these limitations my research has the potential to contribute to the academic literature in numerous disciplines, including criminology and women's studies. Within the study of criminology, my research adds to the immense body of knowledge pertaining to sexual violence against women by contributing to the literature on date rape drugs, which to date is minimal. Moreover, my study will contribute to feminist research by examining the ways in which the Canadian media continue to propagate the social control of women in their reporting of a contemporary social problem.

As previously noted, although media studies have been conducted in the area of sexual assault, there have been few that have examined the construction of the date rape drug issue.. To date, there has been no research conducted in Canada that has looked specifically at print media coverage of drug-facilitated sexual assault. My research contributes to the academic literature by providing a Canadian perspective on the problem.

Methodologically, the use of triangulation, the incorporation of qualitative and quantitative techniques, is a strength of my research. van Zoonen argues that using multiple techniques of data collection and analysis "will modify the weaknesses of each individual method and thus greatly enhance the quality and value of interpretative research projects" (1994: 139). Triangulating the methods in this study allowed for an examination of the length and frequency of the discourse, as well as an examination of prevailing themes.

Chapters Two and Three have examined the literature, the theoretical perspectives, and methods used in this research. From this framework, Chapter Four will detail the findings based on the quantitative analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: QUANTIFYING THE DATE RAPE DRUG DISCOURSE**

“In their daily lives individuals negotiate a range of forms and levels of risk. For women, the possibility of sexual assault is part of this negotiation process. Is drug-assisted rape simply a recent variant of risk for women to take into account? Is it merely a new development among the many forms of assault, actual and potential, that women must deal with?” (Berrington & Jones, 2002: 310)

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative analysis. It is organized into three sections, providing the reader with an overview of the composition of the sample, the claimsmaking process, and the content of the discourse. More specifically, the number and type of items, the type of source and knowledge provided, and details pertaining to both victims and assailants are examined. In addition, prevention advice, the prevalence of rape myths, and explanations provided for drug-facilitated sexual assault are addressed.

### **News Formats**

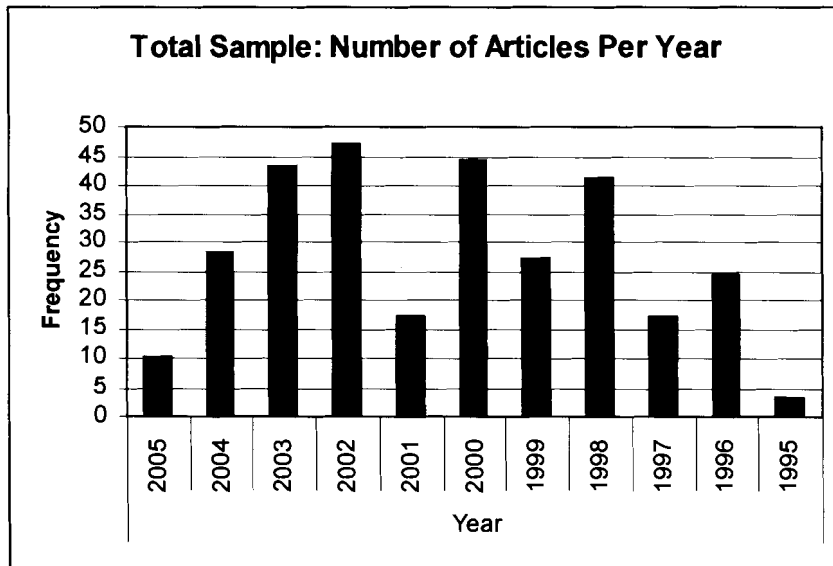
To gain an increased understanding of the prominence and frequency of the date rape drug discourse, the format of the newspapers was examined. The number of items, the length of the items, and the type of items prevalent in the sample were analysed in an effort to gain an increased understanding of how the discourse emerges and is sustained over the ten-year period.

#### ***Number of Items by Year and By Paper***

The total sample consisted of 301 items, which were taken from nine different Canadian newspapers over a ten-year span, 1995-2005. Each paper contributed the following number of articles to the sample (from most to least): The Vancouver Province

contains the most articles pertaining to date rape drugs, comprising 14.9% (45/301) of the sample. The Ottawa Citizen and the Montreal Gazette round out the top three, each contributing 13.6% (41/301) to the sample. The Calgary Herald, the Toronto Star, the Edmonton Journal, the Globe & Mail, and the Daily News comprise 12.6% (38/301), 11.3% (34/301), 9.9% (30/301), 8.3% (25/301), and 8.0% (24/301), respectively. The Times Colonist comprises the smallest portion of the sample, representing only 7.6% (23/301) of the articles. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the distribution of articles of the entire sample over the ten-year period, beginning August 1, 1995 and ending on August 31, 2005.

**Figure 4.1 Total sample: Number of Items by Year, 1995-2005**



The distribution of the items demonstrates that coverage of the issue fluctuates unevenly over the ten-year span. Prior to 1995, there is no mention within Canadian newspapers of date rape drugs or drug-facilitated sexual assault. The year 1995 marks the emergence of the discourse, and comprises only 1% (3/301) of the total sample. Over the

next five years, the prevalence of articles pertaining to date rape drugs fluctuates, peaking at 15.6% (47/301) in 2002. After 2002 coverage begins to decrease, falling to 3.3% (10/301) in 2005<sup>1</sup>. It appears that the increasing fluctuation in the years 1998, 2000, and 2002 may be attributed to specific local cases where date rape drugs have been administered, thus affecting the number of items presented by the regional paper. The yearly fluctuation is not distributed evenly across all the papers, in that an increase in articles in one year does not indicate an increase across all papers for that year. Rather increases appear to be dependent on local events. However, it is not clear as to why there is a dramatic decrease in the year 2001.

### ***Size and Type of Item***

In order to examine the construction of the discourse, it is necessary to gain information on the type of articles that are written about drug-facilitated sexual assault. Examining the length and type of article enables theorization as to the significance and prominence of the issue.

Table 4.1 presents the breakdown of the type of item by newspaper. The findings indicate that feature articles, those that specifically discuss the use of date rape drugs in the facilitation and/or the attempt of sexual assault, comprise the largest part of the total sample 55.8% (168/301). The lack of advice columns and letters to the editor seems to indicate that the general public are either not engaging with critical questions about the issue or the media is silencing their voices.

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<sup>1</sup> Coverage of the issue was incomplete for the year 2005, as data was only collected up until August 31, 2005. Therefore, coverage of the issue for that year may actually be higher than anticipated.

**Table 4.1 Type of Item: All Paper Comparison and Total Sample, 1995-2005<sup>2</sup>**

Type of Item	Breakdown by Paper																		Breakdown by Total Sample		
	Daily News		Montreal Gazette		Ottawa Citizen		Toronto Star		Calgary Herald		Edmonton Journal		The Province		Times Colonist		Globe & Mail		Total	%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Feature	12	50.0	25	61.0	22	53.7	18	52.9	26	68.4	19	63.4	16	35.6	18	78.2	12	48.0	168	55.8	
Secondary	9	38.0	12	29.3	8	19.5	5	14.7	10	26.3	10	33.3	18	40.0	3	13.0	9	36.0	84	27.9	
Blurb	2	8.0	3	7.3	1	2.4	9	26.5	2	5.3	0	0	10	22.2	1	4.4	3	12.0	31	10.3	
Advice Column	0	0	1	2.4	6	14.6	0	0	0	0	1	3.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	2.7
Letters to The Editor	1	4.0	0	0	4	9.8	2	5.9	0	0	0	0	1	2.2	1	4.4	1	4.0	10	3.3	
Total	24	100	41	100	41	100	34	100	38	100	30	100	45	100	23	100	25	100	301	100	

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C for definitions of article types

Of the 301 items which comprise the sample, over half, 50.2% (151/301), are medium in length, ranging from 150-450 words. Long items, those which range from 450-950 words, make up the second largest group of articles, accounting for 27.9% (84/301) of the sample. Short articles, blurbs (articles under fifty words), and very long articles (over 950 words) are the minority in the sample, comprising only 13.6%(41/301), 4.0% (12/301), and 4.3% (13/301) of the articles. All of the papers examined, with the exception of the Globe & Mail, are comprised primarily of medium articles. The Globe & Mail has an equal amount of medium and long articles 32.0% (8/25) respectively, which is reflective of its orientation as a quality newspaper. The finding that the Globe has the most long articles coincides with the work of Ericson et al., who argue that the orientation of quality newspapers results in longer items in these papers than in popular or mass papers (1991: 35).

The prevalence of medium length and feature articles indicates that the date rape drug discourse is not superficial. That is, the articles produced are providing the public with substantial information about the issue. The length of the articles indicates that the topic of date rape drugs is receiving more than brief coverage while the type of article indicates that the information presented is of a structured 'educational' nature.

### **Claimsmakers and Claims**

The social constructionist perspective maintains that knowledge is created through social processes and thus is reflective of the subjective values of society. As noted in Chapter Three, when claimsmakers are successful in constructing claims, they act as sources for the media, who may disseminate the discourse. All of the articles were examined to indicate the type of source used by the papers and the accompanying



knowledge they provided. This analysis was crucial as it addressed the question of who makes the claims and how they construct the date rape drug discourse.

***Types of Sources***

The total sample of 301 items contains 628 sources. Table 4.2 displays the source breakdown for the total sample. The findings indicate that members of the criminal justice system, professionals, and journalists dominate the date rape drug discourse. It is also evident that the voices of victims, assailants, and the public remain marginalized, as they are among the least frequently cited. The overrepresentation of CJS participants indicates that the viewpoints of these sources are held in higher regard, are more frequently sought, and may be seen as more credible, than those without certain credentials. Moreover, this finding reiterates Surette’s argument that the media and the criminal justice system have become increasingly interconnected in the dissemination of knowledge (1998: 5).

**Table 4.2 Total Sample: Type of Source**

		Total Sample	
		All Papers (N)	All Papers (%)
Type of Source	CJS participants	212	33.8
	Journalist	132	21.0
	Professional	104	16.6
	Victim	47	7.5
	Political/Government	33	5.2
	Community Organizations	23	3.7
	Assailant	22	3.5
	Unspecified	19	3.0
	Public	16	2.5
	Academic	10	1.6
	Other	10	1.6
	Total	628	100

Within the category of Criminal Justice System participants, police officers comprised the majority of sources, 67.9% (144/212). Lawyers, judges and family/friends made up the rest of the category, accounting for 17.9%(38/212), 10.4% (22/212) and 3.8% (8/212) respectively. An examination of the ‘Professional’ classification revealed four categories: rape crisis/women-centre workers<sup>3</sup>, healthcare providers, scientists, and restaurant/bar owners. Rape crisis centre workers dominated this category, comprising 49.0% (51/104) of the professional sources. Overall, the police emerge as the most frequently cited source, comprising 22.9% (144/628) of all sources, followed by journalists 21.0% (132/628), and rape crisis/women centre workers and organizations<sup>4</sup> 11.3% (71/628).

Across the various papers, the type of source cited within the articles remains fairly consistent with the total sample findings. Criminal Justice System participants rank as the most cited source among all the papers, with the exception of the Daily News, which cites journalists 29.0% (18/62) more frequently than CJS participants 20.9% (13/62). Some interesting findings of note involve the use of academic sources. Surprisingly, it is the majority of the mass papers, including the Montreal Gazette, the Ottawa Citizen, the Edmonton Journal, and the Times Colonist, which contain no academic sources. It is the Daily News, a popular paper, which comparatively has the most representation from academics, citing academics in 6.5% (3/62) of its articles.

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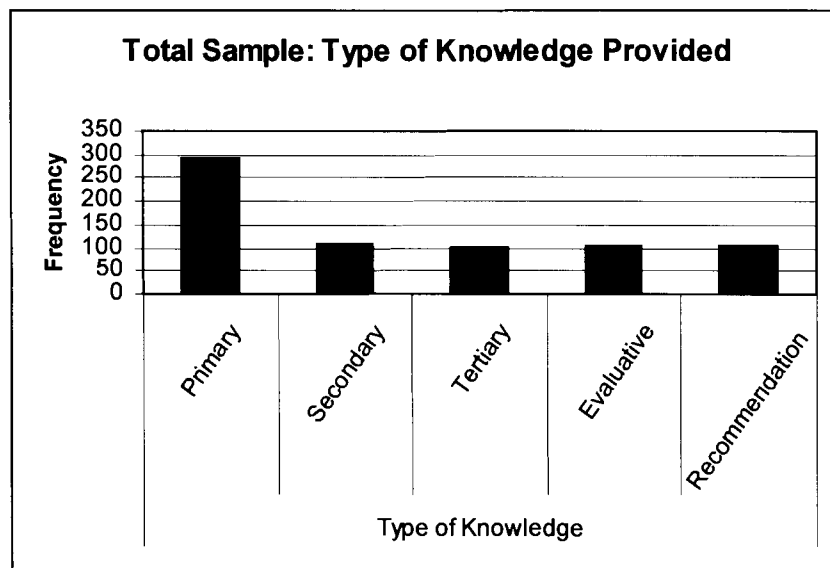
<sup>3</sup> If the article mentioned their position at the centre, they were coded under the ‘professional’ group. If a blanket statement was made by the centre, it was coded under community organization.

<sup>4</sup> Within the category ‘Community Organizations’ twenty of the twenty-three were identified as being women-centred. This number was combined with those identified in the professional category to produce the total number of women-centred sources.

### ***Type of Knowledge***

Identifying the claimsmakers is necessary to understand how the date rape drug discourse emerged, yet it is also pertinent to examine the type of knowledge that the claimsmakers use to construct the issue. The articles were analysed for the presence of the following five types of knowledge as identified by Ericson et al. (1991): Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Evaluative, and Recommendation<sup>5</sup>. In the 301 articles examined, 697 forms of knowledge are provided by sources. Figure 4.2 illustrates the total sample breakdown by type of knowledge provided.

**Figure 4.2 Total Sample: Type of Knowledge Provided**



Primary knowledge is cited most frequently, comprising 41.7% (291/697) of the total sample. Secondary knowledge, used in 15.3% (106/697) of the sample, is the next most cited type of knowledge. These findings indicate that the articles are primarily interested in first asking, “what happened” and then “why”, providing readers with

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix C for definitions

factual and explanatory knowledge. Evaluative and recommendation are cited almost equally, comprising 14.5% (101/697) and 14.6% (102/697) of the sample respectively. Tertiary knowledge is used the least, comprising only 13.9% (97/697) of the total sample. This indicates that the articles do not rely heavily on emotional knowledge, although this is not surprising considering the underrepresentation of victims as sources. These findings differ from those of Ericson et al., who found that primary and evaluative knowledge were used most frequently (1991:206). However, the lack of evaluative knowledge relative to secondary knowledge in the discourse may be attributed to the lack of judgement made specifically about the overall situation. Coding for evaluative knowledge was based on the question “was what happened good or bad” (Ericson et al., 1991: 204), yet as will be discussed in Chapter Five, most evaluations were made pertaining to individuals and/or drugs, i.e. is this person good or bad or conversely, are these drugs good or bad. Moreover, the evaluations of individuals and drugs were often made through insinuations rather than direct evaluations. As such, the quantitative approach was not suitable for exposing value judgements.

Again, the breakdown across the various newspapers remains consistent with the total sample breakdown. Primary knowledge is the most prevalent in all the papers, and the frequency of the other forms of knowledge vary only slightly from one paper to another. The only trend of note emerges from The Province, which has significantly more evaluative knowledge 21.4% (21/98) than secondary knowledge 8.2% (8/98), which coincides with the overall findings of Ericson et al. (1991: 206).

## **Newspaper Content**

The quantitative analysis of the content of the date rape drug discourse is divided into four sections. The first section examines how the media portray the drugs used in sexual assaults, focusing specifically on how the drugs are presented, which drugs are viewed as culpable, and the location of the drugging. The second section looks at the representation of the victim and the assailant, examining the frequency in which they are mentioned, their gender, race, and relationship with one another. The third section looks at suggested prevention methods, investigating the prevalence of various suggestions while concurrently examining to whom these suggestions are being directed. The final section examines whether or not negative characterizations of the victim are made, if rape myths are used, and the explanations provided for drug-facilitated sexual assault.

### ***Media Discussion: Date Rape Drugs***

Overall, ten major topic categories emerge from the total sample of 301 articles. These categories included: cases of drug-facilitated sexual assault<sup>6</sup>, characteristics and effects of the drug, prevention advice, prevalence of the drug, police drug seizures, detection devices<sup>7</sup>, legislation, awareness campaigns, and reporting.

The findings indicate that specific cases of drug-facilitated sexual assault are discussed most frequently, comprising 27.5% (176/614) of all the topics. Although not as frequently discussed, characteristics, effects, prevalence, and prevention advice, are recurrent topics amongst the articles, representing 16.7% (107/641), 12.3% (79/641), 15.1% (97/641), and 10.9% (70/641), correspondingly. The prevalence of these topics

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<sup>6</sup> Included in the category of cases of drug facilitated sexual assault are all incidents where information was provided about a specific event, which also included court cases.

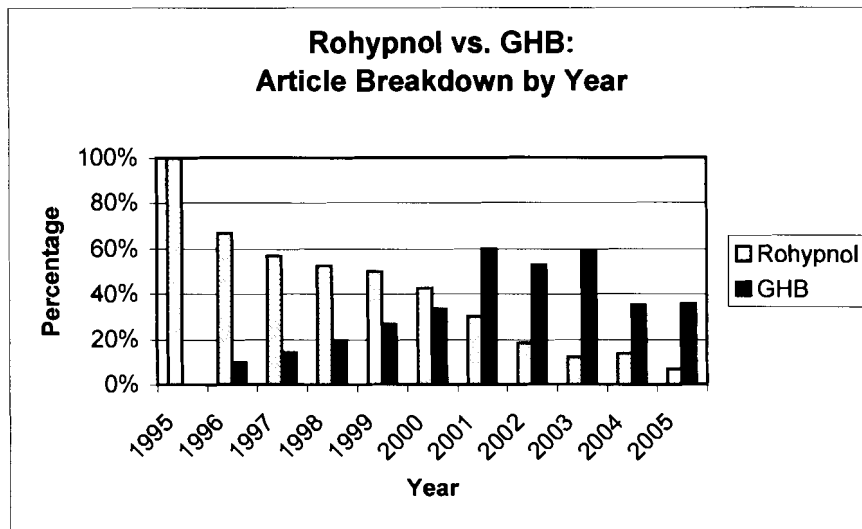
<sup>7</sup> Included in the category of detection devices was the discussion of coasters which detect drugs in a drink, and also tests used to detect the drug in the body after it has been ingested.

seems to indicate that the media are attempting to provide the public with information about specific details about the drugs, perhaps in an attempt to educate and increase awareness. Stories of drug seizures, detection devices, legislation, awareness campaigns, and reporting, comprise less than 5.0% each of all prominent topics.

The media designate specific drugs as date rape drugs. In the total sample, individual drugs are discussed 407 times. Rohypnol and GHB are depicted as the drugs most frequently used in the commission of drug-facilitated sexual assaults, comprising 34.9% (142/407) and 36.4% (148/407) of the total sample. Ketamine and alcohol are only given the 'date-rape' drug designation in 4.2% (17/407) and 1.7% (7/407) of the total sample. The articles frequently make general references to date rape drugs, without specifying one or the other.

Although Rohypnol and GHB are frequently identified as being used in the facilitation of sexual assault, the two drugs are not designated as date rape drugs consistently over the ten-year span, 1995-2005. Rohypnol is the first drug to receive the date rape designation, whereas GHB slowly begins to take over that designation in the year 2001. Figure 4.3 displays the breakdown of Rohypnol vs. GHB as the designated date rape drugs by year.

**Figure 4.3 Rohypnol vs. GHB: Yearly Designation of "Date Rape" Drug, 1995-2005**



As illustrated by figure 4.3, Rohypnol emerges as the predominant date rape drug in the year 1995, comprising 100% (3/3) of all mentioned drugs. As the issue of date rape drugs becomes more prominent, other drugs garner discussion and Rohypnol is given the date rape designation with decreasing frequency. Over the next five years, GHB is increasingly touted as the “new” date rape drug peaking at 60.0% (12/20) in 2001. After a brief resurgence in 2003, both GHB and Rohypnol are cited less frequently as being used to facilitate sexual assault. Interestingly, beginning in 2004, articles begin describing ‘date-rape’ drugs more generally by not naming one specific drug. In 2005, 57.2% (8/14) of designations are general in nature. The shift from Rohypnol, to GHB, and then to general depictions, may indicate a growing awareness that many substances can be used in the facilitation of sexual assault.

Claimsmakers also attempt to inform the public of the places where date rape drugs are administered. In the 301 items, 234 locations are identified as places where date

rape drugs could be, or have been, administered. Table 4.3 provides the breakdown of the locations identified from the total sample, as likely places for druggings to occur.

**Table 4.3 Total Sample: Location where date rape drugs are administered**

		Breakdown of Location: Total Sample	
		Total (N)	Total (%)
Location	Bar/Pub	111	47.4
	House Party	33	14.1
	Residence: Offender	25	10.7
	Residence: Shared	18	7.8
	Residence: Victim	16	6.8
	Other <sup>8</sup>	13	5.5
	Workplace	6	2.6
	Restaurant	5	2.1
	Hotel	4	1.7
	School	3	1.3
	Total	234	100

Bars are identified as the primary location where druggings occur and this finding is consistent across all of the papers studied. Cumulatively, residences, whether that of the victim, assailant, or both, comprise 25.3% (59/234) of possible locations. Although it is encouraging to see the media provide more accurate reports regarding sexual assault (i.e. that a victim is likely to know her assailant, and will be assaulted in a private location), the findings still indicate that the discourse surrounding ‘date-rape’ drugs attempts to problematize social settings. The problematization of public spaces is achieved primarily through police sources, who consistently indicate that people are most vulnerable in bars and at parties.

<sup>8</sup> Other locations where the date rape drug was administered included a music festival, a car, a truck stop, a research site, a peep show, a fair, a dance, a tour bus, and generalized locations (i.e. ‘social events’, ‘public settings’).



### ***Media Descriptions: Victims, Offenders, and Their Relationships***

In the total sample of 301 items, 77.1% (232/301) mention at least one victim. Only 22.9% (69/301) of articles have no mention of victims of drug-facilitated sexual assault. Interestingly, The Province and the Globe & Mail are the two papers among the entire sample that are the least likely to mention victims, although the reason why is not abundantly clear. Ericson et al., found that popular newspapers were the most likely to discuss victims, which is contrary to my findings (1991: 197). However, my findings may be explained by looking at the sources used by the Province, as 30.4% (28/92) of the sources quoted within this paper were police spokespeople, who, as discussed in Chapter Five, focus primarily on date rape drugs, to the exclusion of the issue of sexual assault.

The overall findings indicate that victims are discussed frequently and may play a prevalent role within the discourse. Reference to individual victims is made 376 times. The majority of victims are described as being female 86.7% (326/376), where as men only receive the designation of victim in 8.9% (33/376) of the cases. The race and ethnicity of victims seldom appear within the reports of drug-facilitated sexual assault. Race and ethnicity are not specified for 97.9% (368/376) of the mentioned victims. Similarly, the victim's occupation is only mentioned in 4.5% (17/376) of descriptions. Thus it appears that the 'date-rape' drug discourse is not concerned with the race or socio-economic status<sup>9</sup> of the victim, and focuses more specifically on gender. While the lack of discussion of race may indicate a positive step away from racist reporting, it is also problematic as victims are construed as a homogeneous entity.

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<sup>9</sup> By failing to provide the occupation of the victim, a generalization as to the socio-economic position of the victim is not possible.

Assailants are mentioned in 61.8% (186/301) of the items. Yet 38.2% (115/301) of the items have no mention of assailants, in comparison to 22.9% (69/301) of items that do not discuss victims. Reference to individual assailants is only made 218 times. The findings indicate that men are characterized as being responsible for drug-facilitated sexual assault. The male gender is designated as the culpable party in 78.9% (172/218) of cases. Women are only characterized as the assailant in 2.2% (5/218) of cases, whereas the gender of a particular assailant is not specified in 18.9% (41/218) of the references. Moreover, assailants are primarily categorized by gender and then by their occupation. Of all the assailants mentioned, reference to their occupation was made in 30.3% (66/218) of descriptions. The overall findings indicate that victims receive substantially more coverage than do perpetrators, which may be indicative of the media's tendency to downplay the role that men assume in violence against women.

The items were analysed to see if the media provide a characterization of the victim-assailant relationship. Within the articles, 254 victim-assailant relationships are mentioned. Five categories were constructed to classify these relations. They include: strangers, acquaintances, friends<sup>10</sup>, family, and unknown.

The victim-assailant relationship is most frequently categorized as one of acquaintance, accounting for 30.7% (78/254) of mentioned relationships. The categories of friends and family comprise 5.5% (14/254) and 12.6% (32/254) of the stated relationships. However, 20.9% (53/254) of all the mentioned relationships are said to be those in which the victim and assailant are strangers. This finding appears to indicate that

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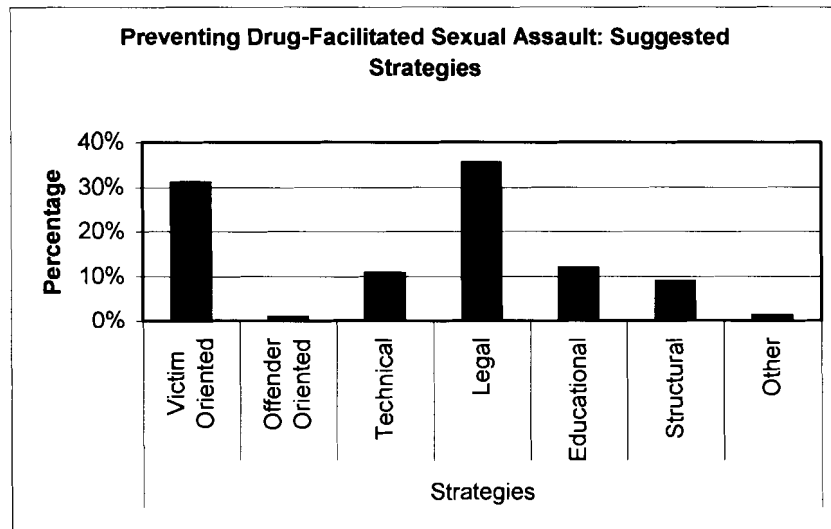
<sup>10</sup> The relationship was categorized as friends rather than acquaintance if the article specifically mentioned that the victim and offender were friends or provided details that illustrated that the two were well known to each other.

the media still rely on the rape myth that a victim will not know her assailant. However, if the categories of acquaintances, friends, and family are merged to form a single category, the number of relationships where the victim and assailant know each other comprises 48.8% (124/254), of all mentioned relationships vs. 20.9% (53/254) of “stranger” relationships. Thus it appears that although the media continue to discuss stranger rape, the majority of characterizations pertaining to the familiarity of victim-assailant relationship are reflective of the ‘realities’ of sexual assault.

### ***Prevention***

Preventing drug-facilitated sexual assault is a reoccurring topic within the ‘date-rape’ drug discourse, representing 10.9% (70/641) of all mentioned topics. An in-depth examination of the prevention topic reveals that strategies for preventing druggings are a common theme. In total, 345 strategies are suggested, comprising seven categories: victim oriented, assailant oriented, technical, legal, educational, structural, and other strategies (see Appendix C for description of various categories). Figure 4.4 displays the total sample breakdown of suggestions by predominant strategy.

**Figure 4.4 Total Sample: Suggested Strategies for Preventing Drug-Facilitated Sexual**



Of the 345 suggested strategies on how to avoid being the victim of a drugging, legal strategies are suggested most often, comprising 35.4% (122/345) of all suggested strategies. These strategies take the form of criminal justice system intervention through arresting and incarcerating individuals who administer the drug. This finding is not surprising based on the overrepresentation of Criminal Justice System participants as sources.

Individualized victim strategies also comprise a large majority of suggestions, representing 31.0% (107/345) of all strategies. This form of strategy places the onus on the victim to prevent their victimization, by watching their drinks, discarding unattended beverages, not accepting drinks from strangers, not over indulging with alcohol, etc.

Offender strategies, educating males and placing the onus on them to stop sexual violence against women are the least represented, comprising only 0.9% (3/345) of the suggested strategies. This finding suggests that men are not being held accountable for

the violence that they commit against women. Moreover, this also indicates that the role men play in 'date-rape' druggings and sexual assault is diminished by the claimsmakers.

The prevention and awareness tips provided are most frequently directed towards females. 63.8% (88/138) of the items which mention prevention specify that women are responsible for preventing victimization. Males are only encouraged to use prevention tips in 1.4% (2/138) of the cases. This coincides with Stanko's study of safety pamphlets, which found that prevention advice was geared specifically towards women (1998:63). In 34.8% (48/138) of the cases in which prevention and awareness tips are given, a gender was not specified, which may indicate that it is, a) directed to society at large, both men and women or, 2) it is assumed that it is directed at women. This finding will be further examined in the qualitative analysis.

### ***Characterizations, Myths, and Explanations***

As it has been established that the date rape drug discourse maintains a prominent focus on victims, it was important to examine how the claimsmakers were characterizing the victims. The items were examined for the presence of Benedict's eight "vamp" characteristics (Appendix B), to explore if the victims are portrayed as innocent or culpable. Although the quantitative analysis cannot fully explore the depth of the characterization of the victims, it does provide insight into how frequently negative and/or positive depictions of victims are made. Table 4.4 displays the total sample breakdown of the characterization of victims.

**Table 4.4 Designation of Victim: Virgin or Vamp**

		Characterization of Victim: Virgin or Vamp	
		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Characterization	Virgin	26	6.9
	Vamp	130	34.6
	Virgin <i>and</i> Vamp	156	41.5
	Not Characterized	64	17.0
	Total	376	100

The findings indicate that victims frequently receive a mixed designation, as both virgin and vamp 41.5% (156/376), which portrays them as partly culpable for the assault. This finding is consistent among the nine papers. Although victims most frequently receive a mixed designation, there is a greater tendency to characterize the victim as a vamp 34.6% (130/376), rather than as a virgin 6.9% (26/376). The Journal, The Province, the Times Colonist, and the Globe & Mail never once portray a victim solely as a virgin, instead characterizing the victim as both virgin and vamp.

The findings indicate that although victims are not being held completely accountable for their victimization, they are still more likely to be portrayed as partly culpable than not. An issue of contention within the date rape drug discourse is whether or not date rape drugs are considered to be a weapon. In Benedict's criteria, use of a weapon is a mitigating factor in the labelling of a victim as a virgin. In this study, the date rape drug was counted as a weapon only if specified as such by the source. However, it can be argued that if the use of date rape drugs was categorized as a weapon in all of the items, than the vamp category would be obliterated and the category of mixed designation would increase significantly. Based on the number of 'vamp' characteristics

present in the discourse, it is unlikely that categorizing date rape drugs as weapons would lead to a marked increase of the virgin category.

The items were also examined for the prevalence of rape myths as characterized by Brownmiller (Appendix A). Of the 301 items, at least one rape myth is found in 72 of the items, 99 items do not reiterate rape myths, and 130 items were not applicable. Of the total sample only 23.9% (72/301) of the items mention a rape myth. These findings appear to indicate that rape myths are not frequently included in articles, however they still are present within the ‘date-rape’ drug discourse. Examination of the 72 articles that do contain rape myths revealed that there are in fact 97 instances where rape myths were present. Table 4.5 provides a breakdown of myths found in the articles.

**Table 4.5 Breakdown of Rape Myth Reiteration**

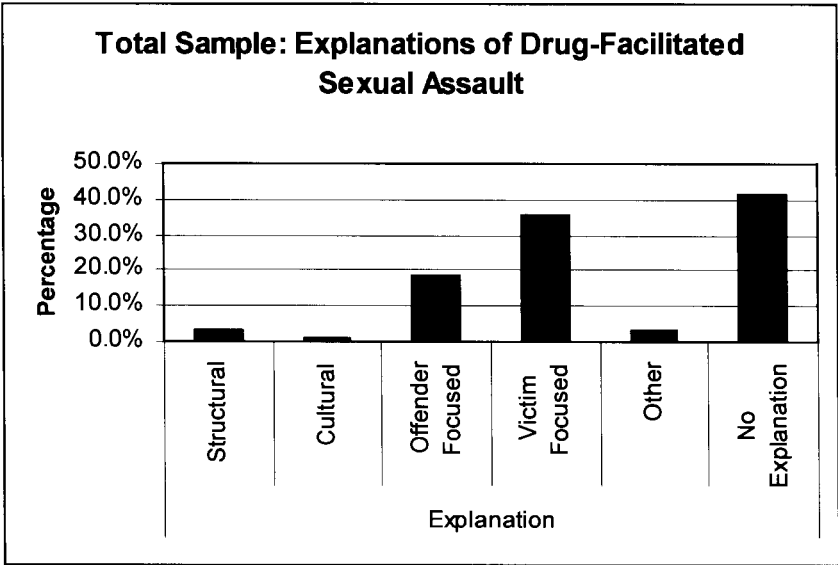
		Predominant Rape Myths Reiterated	
		Total (N)	Total (%)
Myth	The assailant is perverted/crazy	29	29.9
	Rape is Sex	21	21.7
	Women cry rape for revenge	20	20.6
	Women deserve rape	16	16.5
	Women provoke rape	4	4.1
	Lust as motivation	2	2.1
	Only loose women get raped	2	2.1
	The attack sullies victim	1	1.0
	Rape is punishment	1	1.0
	Assailant is Black or lower class	1	1.0
Total	97	100	

The ten myths described by Brownmiller (1985) are reiterated to varying degrees within the items. The most common rape myth used is that the assailant is perverted or crazy, comprising 29.9% (29/97) of all mentioned rape myths. The portrayal of men as perverted or crazy denies that most victims know their assailants and that sexual assault

occurs because of a desire to dominate women. This finding reflects the patriarchal tendency to deny the systemic nature of men’s violence against women. Moreover, this finding also coincides with the work of Finn (1989), who suggests that media accounts attempt to “other” violent men, portraying them as pathological and creating a fallacious distinction among men. The second most frequently reiterated myth, that rape is sex, supports the idea that rape is no more harmful to women than is consensual sexual intercourse, denying the violence, humiliation, degradation, and trauma inherent in the act of rape.

The articles were examined to detect if claimsmakers are providing explanations for the occurrence of drug-facilitated sexual assault. The total sample produced 193 instances of explanations for why drug-facilitated sexual assaults occur. An explanation is not provided in 35.8% (108/301) of the items examined. Figure 4.5 illustrates the breakdown of the explanations provided in the articles.

**Figure 4.5 Total Sample: Explanations of drug-facilitated sexual assault**





Individualized explanations are the most common. Victim focused explanations attribute the victimization to the characteristics or actions of the victim and comprise 35.2% (115/327) of all explanations. This finding is consistent with the characterization of the victim being held at least partly accountable for their victimization. Offender focused explanations comprise 18.0% (39/327) of the sample and focus on specific characteristics of the assailant or an aspect of his/her life that can explain his/her actions. The prevalence of this form of explanation is not surprising considering the predominance of the myth that the assailant is perverted/crazy. Structural and cultural explanations are only seen in 2.8% (9/327) and 0.3% (1/327) of the provided explanations respectively. The lack of cultural explanations, those that attempt to normalize violence against women, such as ‘boys will be boys’ are surprisingly absent. Other explanations comprise 2.8% (9/327) of the sample.<sup>11</sup>

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter illustrates that the date rape drug discourse has been present in popular, mass, and quality Canadian newspapers for over 10 years. Moreover, the analysis of the number, type, and length of articles demonstrates that the issue has received extensive coverage over the years and therefore warrants examination.

The quantitative analysis reveals that Criminal Justice System participants have emerged as the primary claimsmakers of the date rape drug discourse, followed closely by journalists and professionals. This finding indicates that this discourse has been constructed and is maintained by those in positions of power who have access to the

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<sup>11</sup> Included in the Other category: Some explanations held the actual drugs accountable, others held the companies who manufacture the drugs accountable, lack of reporting was used as an explanation as to why the assaults continued to occur, irresponsible reporting from the media i.e. aiding rapists, etc.

media, and is not controlled by the people most affected, including the victims and offenders. Accordingly, the knowledge provided by these sources is more factual than emotional in nature.

The quantitative findings indicate that the date rape drug discourse is divided along gender lines. Victims are most likely to be constructed as women, and assailants as men. Moreover, women are the most likely to be targeted with prevention advice, and the onus is most frequently placed on the victim to prevent her own victimization. When victimization does occur, the victim is often depicted as being partly culpable, receiving the designation of both virgin and vamp. Rape myths, although not extremely prevalent, are still seen within the discourse. The most prevalent rape myth, that the assailant is perverted/crazy, attempts to deny the pervasiveness of patriarchy and structural explanations of violence against women. This is further reiterated by the explanations provided for drug-facilitated sexual assault.

The quantitative findings provide a framework of understanding of the prevalence of certain characteristics of the date rape drug discourse, yet provide little context in which statements are made, and thus cannot provide more than a manifest understanding of the discourse. Chapter Five will focus specifically on the latent context and content of the discourse, discussing specific topics and themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DECONSTRUCTING THE DATE RAPE DRUG DISCOURSE— DOMINANT MESSAGES AND THEMES**

“Most “drug rape” news obscures an important reality. As Elizabeth Stanko astutely comments, drugs are simply another aid to the committing of rape. It is men, not the drugs, who actually carry out the assault” (Berrington & Jones, 2002: 307).

This chapter examines the latent content of the date rape drug discourse, focusing specifically on the dominant messages and themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis. The articles were deconstructed to determine if the Canadian print media have constructed a gendered discourse that contributes to the social control of women’s activities in the social realm. This chapter is divided into four main sections: 1) Construction of a “Drug” Problem; 2) Constructions of Victims and Assailants; 3) Creating Fear; and 4) Resisting the Dominant Discourse.

Every article from the total sample of 301 items was examined in the qualitative analysis of the discourse. Since a key objective of this research is to examine whether or not articles written by the Canadian print media constitute a gendered discourse on drug-facilitated sexual assault, I decided to treat the sample as a whole. Unlike the quantitative analysis, no distinction is made between the various newspapers. By making no distinction between the papers studied, it is not my intention to imply that there are no differences between them, rather this approach was adopted to avoid making generalizations about the orientations of specific papers. For example, The Province and the Daily News can both be classified as popular papers, yet as demonstrated by the quantitative analysis, the two papers demonstrated numerous differences in reporting the

date rape drug issue. Moreover, all of the papers followed the same basic format on reporting events, with slight variation on emphasis.

## **Construction of a “Drug” Problem**

This section attempts to address the questions of how the discourse emerges and how it is constructed as a problem. Therefore, here I focus primarily on how the drugs used to facilitate sexual assaults are depicted by various claimsmakers. First, the claims pertaining to the emergence and evolution of date rape drugs are examined. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the depiction of specific drugs. This section concludes with a discussion of the solutions that are proposed to deal with the issue.

### ***Emergence and Evolution: The Date Rape Drug Discourse***

As illustrated in Chapter Four, the date rape drug discourse does not emerge in Canada until the year 1995. Police officials and sexual assault centres are the two main groups establishing themselves as claimsmakers in regards to the emergence of date rape drugs in Canada. The claims endorsed by the two groups are convergent on many levels, yet differ significantly in terms of the focus of the claims and the timing.

The police discourse on the emergence of the date rape drug can be categorized into three distinct phases. The first phase beginning in the year 1995 and ending around 1997, can be described as the “it’s not here but it’s coming” phase. The second phase, between 1997-2001 is the “it’s arrived but it’s not a problem...yet” phase. The final phase, beginning approximately in the year 2002, is the “it’s here and it’s a problem” phase. An examination of all three phases is provided below. It must be noted however that these phases are fluid and are not strictly confined by specific years. The parameters

were loosely established by examining claims and the years in which they were made. Lowney and Best argue that before a social problem is successfully constructed as such, the “early phases may involve dissension and debate among claimsmakers promoting rival typifications and interpretations” (1995: 34). They argue that it may take years of unsuccessful claims before one is accepted. This is reflected in the evolution of the date rape drug discourse. The early phases are marked by dissension among claimsmakers, which slowly, with repeated claims, leads to a dominant police oriented discourse.

In the initial stages of the discourse, police officials frequently deny that date rape drugs are available in Canada. Claimsmakers argue that the drugs are an American problem. For example, one police officer states, “Rohypnol has been used in sexual assaults in the southern United States, but its appearance in Canada has been limited if at all” (Ottawa Citizen, December 24, 1996: D2). Despite this denial, Canadian police officials frequently express concern over the potential for the drugs to make their way into this country. One item states:

Use of the drug Rohypnol has been reported in several U.S. university campuses. Although the prescription is not available in Canada, police aren't optimistic that will stop its use here. “Sure, just like you can't get cocaine here, either,” said one officer (Times Colonist, November 22, 1996: 1).

After 1996, the discourse begins to transition away from the notion that the drugs are not in Canada and shifts into a dialogue that recognizes their presence in the country. Despite this recognition, various police spokespeople initially had the tendency to depict the drugs as a problem of big cities, implying that rural regions are immune to the problem. According to one officer, “date rape drugs such as Rohypnol and GHB (gamma hydroxy butyrate) are found in larger cities in North America” (Calgary Herald, May 22,

1998: B5). Similarly, others argue that the drugs are only a problem in specific regions of the country. For example, one police spokesperson is quoted as saying “We see it here...but not as frequently as back East or in the States” (The Province, January 15, 1999: A12). This sort of comment is reiterated numerous times, from police officers all over Canada. This continued denial of the presence of date rape drugs illustrates that although criminal justice professionals are the dominant claimsmakers of the date rape drug issue, the claims they endorse are not always consistent across the country

As the discourse moves into the second phase, ‘date rape drugs’ are characterized as an “everywhere” problem. Claimsmakers increasingly begin to argue that although not seen in great frequency, the prevalence of date rape drugs is going to increase. As with the first phase, the drugs remain as the dominant focus of the discourse in the second phase. Moreover, it is within this phase that the language surrounding the issue becomes increasingly fear laden. Claimsmakers use instances where drugs have been seized as opportunities to express sentiments of fear. For example, one item asserts:

The size of the first seizure in Canada of the “date-rape drug” rohypnol has police worried that it is more prevalent than previously thought. RCMP found 3,500 doses of the odourless, colourless and tasteless tranquilizer -- which they had believed was rare in this country -- in a North Vancouver home last week. “It’s a big concern,” said Sgt. Chuck Doucette of the RCMP’s drug awareness unit in B.C. (Calgary Herald, January 26, 1999: A4).

Passages such as this contribute to a sense of fear on many levels. Primarily, it indicates that not only are the drugs available in Canada, but they are highly prevalent and undetectable. Moreover, it indicates that the situation is extremely problematic as it points to a lack of control over the issue.

By 2002 the discourse shifts into the third phase that argues that date rape drugs are present and they are a major societal concern. The intensity of the concern expressed by all claimsmakers is noticeably higher in this phase, which is marked by an intensified trepidation on behalf of the police. One police officer is quoted as saying, “These drugs are around and they’re a concern for us...it’s not an epidemic, but these drugs are here and we’re worried” (The Province, January 18, 2004: A20). Claimsmakers begin to discuss the prevalence of date rape drugs in conjunction with the frequency in which they are used to facilitate a sexual assault. The shift in focus can be seen as an attempt by claimsmakers to illustrate the pervasiveness of the problem. However, these claims are frequently cloaked in fear rhetoric. The following illustrates how claimsmakers use fear-inducing language when depicting the frequency of drug-facilitated sexual assaults:

Vancouver police last week warned that women should take “extra caution” in bars after an “*alarming increase*” in possible sexual assaults linked to GHB. Fourteen cases have been reported to Vancouver police in the past week. There have been more than two dozen reported cases of spiked drinks and possible sex assaults since May (The Province, July 21, 2003: A4, emphasis added).

While the police are the main claimsmakers noting the prevalence of date rape drugs, employees of sexual assault and women’s centres also attempt to construct claims throughout the ten-year period. Their claims are analogous with those of police officials in terms of concern expressed about the issue. However, their perspective on the emergence of date rape drug varies slightly from the one put forward by the police in that their focus is placed more specifically on the frequency of drug-facilitated assaults, rather than on the prevalence of the drug itself.

Sexual assault centres also offer a competing claim to that made by police that although the drug is present, it is not prevalent. These centres claim that the police do not know the true extent of the problem, arguing it is more prevalent than the police know. They endorse the idea that reported cases are not indicative of the frequency of a crime and how frequently victims are coming forward is a better indicator of the real picture. For example, one sexual assault worker comments, “while the police are aware of the problem of date rape drugs, they may not be aware of the same numbers we are because they only get a portion of the complaints we get” (Ottawa Citizen, May 29, 2002: C1). While the police are trying to minimize the problem during phase two, sexual assault and women’s centres are indicating that drug-facilitated assaults are extremely prevalent. The following passage illustrates the difference in claims made by police officials and sexual assault centre employees during phase two of the discourse:

“The use of the so-called date rape drug has made its way to Canada from the United States, with cases reported in Toronto, Montreal and about 15 near Windsor. But that's nowhere near the extent of the problem with Rohypnol or “roofies” slipped into women's drinks by would-be rapists, says Kathy McIntosh, co-ordinator of Windsor's sex assault centre. “I really believe that we're not seeing anywhere near even half the times that it's happening out there,” she said (Daily News, April 5, 1997: 11).

The claimmaker in this passage refers to the frequency of sexual assaults, not the prevalence of the actual drug. Moreover, she does not attempt to minimize the issue, instead indicating that it is more prevalent than anticipated. The claims advanced by sexual assault and women’s centres tend to be more extreme than the claims of the police, indicating that the prevalence of sexual assault is greater and the danger to women is higher than people are being told. The different intensity of the claims illustrates how individual experiences can contribute to different constructions of the same issue. The



police attempt to construct the issue as a substance problem whereas women centre's attempt to construct the issue as a problem of sexual violence.

### ***Characterizing Date Rape Drugs: A Continuum of Danger***

The quantitative analysis established that the drugs Rohypnol and Gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB) are the most frequently used drugs in the commission of sexual assaults. Moreover, the quantitative analysis further indicates that over the ten-year span, 1995-2005, Rohypnol is the first to receive the date rape designation but the focus quickly transitions into discussion about GHB. The shift from Rohypnol to GHB is also marked by changes in a continuum of the evaluation of the individual drugs, from potent to dangerous. The use of fear-laden language in depicting date rape drugs increases over the ten-year span.

Rohypnol, the first drug to receive the date rape designation, is initially portrayed as a useful drug that is being used for nefarious purposes. It is categorized as being both powerful and potent, but not dangerous in and of itself as its medical utility is frequently highlighted. Below is an example of a typical depiction of Rohypnol:

the drug is legally manufactured by the pharmaceutical giant Hoffman-Laroche as a sedative. It is considered 10 times as potent as Valium and has been moving north from Mexico where it is used by prescription to treat sleep and mental disorders (Ottawa Citizen, January 31, 1998: A5).

As a drug that is imported from other countries, the Rohypnol problem is seen to be manageable as governments and police agencies can take active measures to prevent the drug from being brought into the country. Rohypnol is depicted as harmful because of its potency and capacity to sedate quickly, but not dangerous in and of itself.

As GHB gains more media attention, there is a noticeable shift in the continuum of danger that is reflected in the language of the discourse. GHB, a drug that can be manufactured in any location using widely available ingredients, is classified as being twice as dangerous as Rohypnol, as it has the same capacity to sedate but is depicted as being physically dangerous. As one journalist comments, “the up-and-coming popper GHB, or gamma hydroxybutyrate, makes Rohypnol look like candy” (Calgary Herald, February 8, 1999: B5).

Claimsmakers, both the police and women’s centre spokespeople, register an increase in concern over the “new” date rape drug, frequently citing the negative implications for physical safety, describing extreme side effects. Various police sources describe GHB as “a dangerous drug”, “frighteningly potent”, and even “lethal”. The physical side effects are frequently mentioned as proof of the danger of GHB. For example, one item states, “The drug can be extremely dangerous, causing seizures, severe respiratory depression, and fatal comas” (Globe & Mail, September 20, 2002: A5). GHB does not merely threaten sexual safety, it also threatens lives. Women not only have to worry about rape, they also should be concerned about dying.

As illustrated by police claims of the emergence and rhetoric surrounding GHB, the date rape drug discourse appears to be more concerned with the drugs, their prominence and effects, rather than sexual assault. The drugs usage in facilitating sexual assault appears almost as an after thought, and is not the main focus of the claims.

### ***Proposing Solutions***

As mentioned in Chapter Three, a key component in examining the construction of the date rape drug discourse requires identifying how claimsmakers explain the issue

and how they propose to deal with the problem. The qualitative analysis revealed that numerous claimsmakers provide explanations as to why date rape drugs emerged in Canada, and why the issue continues to be problematic. Lenient laws, an indulgent criminal justice system and lack of public awareness are all identified as contributing factors to the 'date rape' problem. Claimsmakers propose solutions to address these factors which take three forms: 1) legislative amendments; 2) punishment as deterrence; and 3) awareness campaigns.

The discussion of how Canada's lenient laws contribute to the problem of drug-facilitated sexual assault, dominated by the police, focuses on the prevalence and ease of obtaining the drug rather than the assault itself. The claims put forth argue that in the case of Rohypnol, Canada is not doing enough to stop its importation from other countries.

One item states:

In Canada, Rohypnol is listed under Schedule 4 of the Controlled Drug and Substance Act...that makes it an offence to import or traffic in Rohypnol, but stops short of outlawing simple possession. Mr. Nichols<sup>12</sup>, who recently tried to get Rohypnol reclassified in Florida as a dangerous Schedule 1 drug, voiced astonishment at the leniency of Canada's law (Globe & Mail, November 22, 1997: A1).

Moreover, in regards to GHB, claimsmakers (primarily police officials) argue that Canada is negligent by allowing ingredients needed to make the drug to remain easily accessible. The problem is seen as legal, one where there has been a failure on the part of the government to wield the law to eliminate the problem. Legislative amendments are touted as a potential solution to address the problem. Placing more restrictions on the ingredients to make GHB, banning the importation of Rohypnol, and classifying date

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<sup>12</sup> Mr. Nichols was cited as being the Assistant State Attorney of Broward County, Florida

rape drugs as a weapon under the Criminal Code are all suggested to deal with the issue. However, this solution neglects to address the underlying cause of drug-facilitated sexual assaults and the systemic nature of violence against women. The presence of the drug is problematized, not the actions of men violating women.

Another proposed solution entails using harsh criminal justice penalties for those found guilty of administering date rape drugs in order to deter others who may be contemplating similar actions. Criminal justice sources, particularly lawyers and judges, argue that harsh penalties are required for perpetrators in order to prevent future assaults. The principles of denunciation and deterrence are depicted as paramount for the cessation of drug-facilitated sexual assaults, as illustrated in the following passage:

Jerry Dycko was jailed for four years last fall, after a B.C. Supreme Court judge said a strong message had to be sent out that people who use drugs to facilitate rape will be treated harshly by the courts (Times Colonist, June 18, 1997: 1).

Although this form of solution does target assailants, the focus is again placed on the drug. Sexual assault is not problematized, the drugs that facilitate it are.

Awareness campaigns are highly touted as a good means of dealing with date rape drugs. Numerous claimsmakers, including police, government officials, and rape crisis centres, all indicate that date rape druggings occur because people do not realize that the drugs are available and that they should be taking precautions to prevent being drugged. One rape crisis centre worker comments, “many of the date-rape drug victims...are ages 12 to 24 and may not be aware of the problem...date-rape drugs work because the victim is unaware they are present” (Edmonton Journal, December 29, 2000: A2). The emphasis on victim ignorance as an explanation as to why date rape druggings occur coincides with

the findings of the quantitative analysis, which indicate that victim oriented explanations are used most frequently to describe why the incident occurred.

The claim is that if the public, and women in particular, are educated about the prevalence, effects, and dangers of the drug, they will be more empowered and better able to prevent victimization. However, this solution places responsibility directly on the victim, and fails to account for men's violence against women. One campaign started by a Windsor sexual assault centre used approximately "26,000 round coasters with bright pink writing warning women to 'Think before you drink'" (Daily News, December 30, 2000: 35), and placed them in bars. Although awareness is important, campaigns such as this, which egregiously place the onus on the victim to prevent her own victimization are problematic and misguided. The focus should be on men. However, educating men and the structural reasons why men perpetuate violence against women are completely absent. The only discussion of men in the discourse emerges in the depiction of assailants. The next section will discuss in detail, the depiction of both perpetrators and victims, as constructed in the discourse.

### **Constructions of Victims and Perpetrators**

This section, divided into three parts, attempts to address the question of how the print media portray the victims and offenders of drug-facilitated sexual assault. The discussion begins by looking at the characterization of perpetrators, exploring how their construction embodies prevalent rape myths. Second, the characterization of victims is examined, illustrating how the media continue to perpetuate rape myths and characterize victims as both virgin *and* vamp. Third, claims of victim precipitation, focusing

specifically on alcohol consumption, sexual innuendo, impaired judgement, and naiveté are examined. Finally, this section concludes with a discussion of victim accountability.

***Perverts, Predators, and Everyday Men: Assailant Characterizations***

Assailants are frequently described not by their age or their looks but by their occupation. The occupation and socio-economic status of the perpetrators discussed in the sample are extremely diverse, ranging from hairdressers, musicians, football players, and bodybuilders to home cleaners, unemployed surfers, and businessmen. If the perpetrator is famous, more prominence is given to the description of his occupation. For example, a hockey player in the NHL was charged with sexual assault, and the main focus of the article was his career statistics (Toronto Star, December 14, 2002: E5).

The qualitative analysis revealed that despite the tendency to discuss the occupation of the assailant, the discourse is laden with the notion that assailants are, in some form, pathological. This coincides with the quantitative findings that the most prevalent rape myth speaks to the perversion/craziness of the assailant. Assailants within the date rape drug discourse receive mixed designations. The focus on occupation attempts to give the perpetrator an “any” man characterization; that is, any man, rich or poor, can use date rape drugs in an attempt to facilitate a sexual assault. Yet the assailants described are also categorized as either sexual deviants or depraved predators.

Claimsmakers, most frequently judges, lawyers, and victims, tend to depict assailants as sexually deviant, offering examples to illustrate the depth and intensity of their perversions. An interest in pornography and previous charges of sexual assault are used as evidence of deviancy.

For example, the first Canadian case of the administration of Rohypnol in the facilitation of sexual assault involved a married couple. Paul Lesniak was accused of purchasing Rohypnol and slipping it into his wife's drink. She testified that he told her that once the drug had taken effect, he had sexually assaulted her, urinated in her mouth, and took explicit photos of her and placed them on the Internet. Aside from the description of the lurid details, Paul Lesniak's interest in pornography is a key element in his depiction as sexual deviant. His wife testified that:

...she often found magazines about sex slaves and bondage in the house or car. She also caught him viewing internet pornography on their home computer. She said he fantasized about having sex with her while she was unconscious or submissive and about watching a friend tie her up and have sex with her (Edmonton Journal, December 11, 1999: B1).

There is not one article pertaining to the court case that does not mention Mr. Lesniak's desire for pornography. He is continually depicted as sexually deviant. This depiction and acceptance of the assailant as perverted is problematic, as Finn (1989) and Kitzinger (2004) argue, as it insinuates that the assailant is somehow distinguishable from other men, denying the systemic nature of violence against women.

In the case of Gomez and Rowe, one man slipped the drug in the victim's drink and assaulted her while the other man took photographs. The media used the men's sexual orientation as evidence of their deviance; the two men lived together and were having a sexual relationship. Moreover, the men's past infractions with the law for sexual assault convictions is used to illustrate that they are fundamentally different from 'normal' men. Likewise in an American case, a male model accused of sexual assault is defined as a "sex offender" based on undisclosed circumstances from his past.

Perpetrators are also depicted as depraved predators. The discourse attempts to demonize assailants referring to them as evil monsters with no morals. These characterizations are made about specific assailants and assailants in general. In an American case, Andrew Luster, an heir to the Max-Factor makeup fortune, drugged and raped three women. One of his victims remarked, "I can't believe he would do this to me. He is sick. He is evil" (Globe & Mail, January 8, 2003: A1). The judge presiding over his trial said, "the behaviour of Andrew Luster was so perverse and despicable, he is a man totally lacking in a moral compass" (Montreal Gazette, August 16, 2003: A26).

Other examples of the demonization of the assailant include two touring musicians from Norway, who were accused of drugging and sexually assaulting a fan after a concert. The journalist states that the band is, "as straightforwardly evil as artists come" (Toronto Star, December 23, 2004: D3). A repeat sex offender speculated to have assaulted hundreds of women received the following characterization from his family and the media, "Baker's mother, Lesley, said she believes that her son is driven by a voracious sexual appetite that causes him to "feed" off women. "He is a monster," said his brother Kevin" (Toronto Star, May 22, 1999: 1).

The discourse often relies on value-loaded terminology such as predator, callous, and evil when describing perpetrators, which reinforces rape myths. This finding reiterates the work of Benedict who argues, "the mainstream press refuses to look at societal reasons for rape and insists on covering the crime only in terms of individual pathology" (1997: 268).



### ***Crying Rape: Victim Characterizations***

The qualitative analysis reveals that within the discourse two categories of victims emerge; specific victims, whose cases are public knowledge, and the generalized victim, an ambiguous reference used by journalists attempting to explain the concept of drug-facilitated sexual assaults. These two categories of victims receive very different designations from the media. The depiction of specific victims is less than flattering. The claims made indicate that the victims are liars. They are either willing participants who engaged in consensual sex, or are fabricating rape stories for the purpose of revenge.

In the American case of Andrew Luster, his lawyer proclaims that not only was the sex consensual, but the women took the drug GHB willingly. Luster's lawyers argued that the victims' accusations of rape were fuelled by revenge after she and the accused had broken up stating, "the extreme ill-feeling generated by their breakup explain...Tonja's accusations of rape...all three women's complaints were motivated by malice and embarrassment at their own behaviour" (Ottawa Citizen, September 22, 2001: E9)

At the core of many victim depictions lay the rape myth that women cry rape for revenge. This myth is fostered by the inability of victims to remember specific details and the lack of evidence. The victim in the Lesniak trial, his ex-wife, is characterized as both dishonest and vengeful. The following passage illustrates a common claim about this particular victim which appears frequently in reports about the trial:

The defence said the accusations are all part of an elaborate scheme by Lesniak's wife to set him up. She drugged herself, defence lawyer Tom Engel told the jury. And she planted a series of E-mails in Lesniak's computer that suggest he bought the drug from a supplier in France... She needed something to gain the upper hand in their divorce and the battle over custody of their four children which would outweigh the affair she had in 1995 (Montreal Gazette, December 7, 1999: A10).

This account clearly portrays the victim as a liar. The discussion of her extramarital affair characterizes her as a “loose” woman, insinuating that any woman who could cheat on her husband must be capable of fabricating a story of rape.

The majority of claims about specific victims are negative in nature, which is not completely surprising based on the fact that the claimsmakers tend to be either the assailant, or the assailant's lawyer. However, the discussion of general victims advances a more neutral characterization. The generalized victim receives little description, other than that they are unsuspecting and naive. This characterization indicates that anyone could be a potential victim. In one explanation of drug-facilitated sexual assault the article claims, “Predators often slip the drugs into the drinks of unsuspecting patrons in dance clubs and bars, then take the victims home and assault them” (Edmonton Journal, August 7, 2002: B1).

The difference between the characterizations of the two groups illustrates that although rape myths are still pervasive, there is an attempt by the media to remain neutral. Yet this results in conflicting claims. The public are being told that victims are in a sense innocent, marked by their unsuspecting nature, yet simultaneously are being bombarded with cases in which the victims are portrayed as devious liars.

### *Virgin or Vamp: Precipitating Sexual Violence*

Like many discourses about sexual assault, the date rape drug discourse is marked by an emphasis on victim precipitation. That is, according to the claims, all victims are culpable to varying degrees for the victimization they experience. According to Brownmiller, the concept of victim precipitation, “says, in effect, an unlawful act has been committed but had the victim behaved in a different fashion the crime in question might have been avoided” (1975: 353).

Specific victims are depicted primarily by police, as having precipitated their victimization through: 1) Alcohol consumption; 2) Sexual innuendo; and 3) Impaired judgment. Generalized victims are depicted as precipitating through naiveté. Looking specifically at the work of Benedict (1992) it can be argued that the depictions of victims within this discourse do not fall squarely into the virgin or vamp categories, and instead reflect a merging of the two, or a dual characterization. Madriz’s (1997) notion of a continuum better reflects the claims made about the majority of victims in this discourse.

One of the most frequently recurring descriptions of victims involves the amount of alcohol they consumed on the night of their victimization. The emphasis on the quantity of alcohol consumed is tied to normative femininity and behaviour that is seen as socially acceptable for a female. Those who consume amounts deemed excessive by claimsmakers are depicted as more culpable for the victimization than those who abstain or drink ‘acceptable’ amounts. This difference is illustrated in the following passages.

The first passage describes a female who did not consume alcohol:

A model student and talented athlete...“She was not a drinker and had no prior indication of drug use,” said La Porte police Lt. Carl Crisp. “We have no indication that this was induced by her own free will” (Montreal Gazette, September 16, 1996: E9).

This victim clearly falls into the virgin category. There is no attempt by the claimsmaker to insinuate that her victimization was in any way precipitated by her own behaviour. However, most victims do not receive virgin designation, as illustrated by the findings of the quantitative analysis. Rather, most victims are portrayed either as a combination of virgin and vamp, or just as a vamp. The next passage describes a female who did consume alcohol and illustrates how claimsmakers use the amount of alcohol consumed to cast doubt on her innocence:

Carey drank two bottles of Fat Weasel beer -- a "boutique brew" with a thunderously powerful seven per cent alcohol level. She and David first went to Woodstock's, a bar- and-grill in Isla Vista, where they drank Long Island iced tea -- vodka, dark rum, gin and Triple Sec. At about 10:30 p.m., they hit a few more bars, and at approximately 1 a.m. reached O'Malley's, a dance-and-drinks joint. The club's head of security, Sergei Onishenko recalls: "The girl was everywhere," he says. "Wasted" (Ottawa Citizen, September 22, 2001: E9).

The victim's behaviour is used to explain in part why she may have been victimized. Her own behaviour is depicted as reckless and used not only as justification for the assault, but to cast doubt on her credibility. The myth that women deserve rape is quite apparent when discussing victim precipitation through alcohol consumption. It is argued that if women remained sober, and abstained from consuming alcohol, then their victimizations would not occur. As one police officer claims, "typically, an assailant will find someone who is already under the influence, and that way they don't get accused of administering it" (Calgary Herald, October 27, 1999: B1). Yet this argument is fallacious, as the drug can be administered in any beverage, not just those that contain alcohol.

Women's sexuality is also depicted as being a precipitating factor in drug-facilitated sexual assaults. Victims in the discourse are not described by their physical

appearance, but by their marital status. Women who have been drugged and sexually assaulted are often described as having “no steady boyfriend” or as “divorced”, indicating that single women are more likely to be violated than women who are in a relationship or married. Victims are often accused of ‘leading men on’, reiterating the rape myth that only loose women are raped. The idea that women’s sexuality contributes to the assault also calls into question whether the incident was actually rape. Accounts of victimization are riddled with innuendos that the victim was flaunting her sexuality. Below are examples from two different cases where the victim’s sexuality is depicted as a precipitating factor in the commission of an assault:

“I feel I was leading him on,” she says. “When he started kissing me, I didn't think it was a big deal. Then, I blacked out. When I woke up, he was on top of me. I kept saying no, but I was so drunk that I didn't know what to do” (Ottawa Citizen, March 24, 2003: C1).

She had never met Goodliffe before. The girl testified that she was emotional and had been drinking alcohol. She took GHB from one of the men and allowed Goodliffe to massage her back. She told the court she then had sex with her boyfriend on the floor beside the bed. She woke up later in bed with Goodliffe and he was having sex with her (Times Colonist, July 9, 2003: C2).

These examples illustrate how the media problematize female sexuality, using it as fodder to blame the victim for the violence perpetrated against her. The more overt the sexual behaviour, the more likely the victim will be labelled as a vamp and culpable for her victimization. Accounts of women behaving in a manner outside the dictated feminine ideal attempt not only to blame the victim, but cast doubt on her experiences of violence. The media’s reliance on the rape myth that only loose women are raped acts as a warning to other women to not express themselves in a sexual manner, yet is also

problematic as it insinuates that only a certain type of woman is raped, and may provide a false sense of security for other women.

An interesting element of the date rape drug discourse is that victims are being blamed for their behaviour after they have been drugged. It is argued that women's impaired judgement which results from the consumption of date rape drugs may be a precipitating factor in sexual assaults. Even though the drug subdues and incapacitates women, it is insinuated that the drug causes them to act in ways that precipitate rape. For example one journalist writes, "GHB has similar effects to Rohypnol. However, it can also make the victim act out of character, becoming aggressive or flirtatious" (Calgary Herald, February 4, 1998: B1). This is the most absurd explanation of precipitation advanced by claimsmakers in my sample, and reflects the deep-seated belief that women are to blame for their victimization.

Even generalized statements about victims insinuate that women are responsible for their victimization. Perhaps the most likely to receive the virgin designation, generalized victims are depicted as unknowing and unsuspecting, and it is this naiveté that precipitates sexual assault. In a vox pop interview a woman remarks, "a lot of women are too trusting, too gullible... especially the younger ones" (Daily News, April 5, 1997: 11). Generalized victims are portrayed as stupid, careless women who are unaware of the dangers surrounding them.

The finding that victims within the date rape drug discourse are viewed as partly culpable for their victimization is consistent with the existing literature on media representations of sexual assault (Benedict, 1992; Lees, 1995; Potter & Kappeler, 1998). What is interesting within this discourse is the extent to which women are characterized

as culpable. Although the findings are more compatible with a continuum of culpability approach rather than a dichotomized divide, it cannot be denied that victims, whether virgin or vamp, are depicted as having precipitated, to varying degrees, their own victimization.

***Victim Accountability: Prevention and Proof***

The 'date rape' drug discourse places the onus on women to prevent victimization by suggesting ways in which females can modify their behaviour in public settings. Interestingly, there is no discussion of private settings. The suggestions made by numerous claimsmakers embody numerous rape myths including the notion that the assailant is a stranger and that women deserve rape. The main strategies that women are encouraged to implement are to watch their beverages, be wary of strangers, and to remain in groups in public. These suggestions, and their implications, are further examined below.

The most prevalent strategy encourages women not to leave their drink alone and to watch the drink being poured. This is seen repeatedly throughout the discourse, reiterated in both prevention advice and awareness campaigns. One awareness campaign using coasters to spread the message about date rape drugs, "advise(s) drinkers to keep an eye on their drinks, avoid consuming drinks left unattended and not to accept drinks from strangers" (Montreal Gazette, November 24, 2000: A7). Vox pop interviews with young females suggest that most consider drink watching to be a sufficient prevention technique (Daily News, July 9, 2002: 23; Montreal Gazette, November 12, 1998: H12).

Not only is this technique frequently suggested, it is argued to be frequently applied. One female indicates, "I pretty much hug my drink the whole night. If I happen

to put it down, I won't drink it. It's a waste of a couple of dollars, but so what" (The Province, January 18, 2004: A20). This suggests that the potential of being drugged structures the actions of women in bars by requiring them to be diligent in watching their beverage, limiting their freedom of movement. For example, one may be required to finish a beverage before going to the washroom, or going to the dance floor. Having to constantly guard a beverage because of the potential of being drugged limits mobility. Although a recurring suggestion, there are forms of prevention advice advanced by claimsmakers whose implications are significantly more intrusive on the lives of women.

Another prevalent strategy suggested by claimsmakers is for women to be wary of strangers. This prevention tip embodies the deep-seated rape myth that the victim will not know her assailant. The prevalence of this prevention tip within the discourse is surprising considering the findings in Chapter Four, which indicate that in reports of specific cases, the victim and perpetrator are characterized as being known to one another. It is a prevention paradox, a combination of old rape myths with attempts to accurately depict the 'reality' of sexual assault. The date rape discourse is in a sense a hybrid of the old reporting techniques, which according to Benedict frequently rely on rape myths and recent attempts to accurately portray sexual assault as found by Los and Chamard (see Chapter Two). A primary example of this paradox is reiterated by an article that states, "*Beware strangers* bearing drinks, police are warning women following the arrest of *a man* who allegedly used a "date rape" pill on *his wife*" (Edmonton Journal, June 16, 1998: B3, emphasis added).



Both victims and police officials advise women to be cautious of strange men who offer to buy drinks and offer to help when women feel disoriented. One victim in a letter to Dear Abby writes:

Abby, please tell women out there it really can happen to them. Never accept a drink from a stranger and never allow a stranger to help you “walk off” a bad feeling. It is a hard lesson I wish I hadn't had to learn the hard way (Ottawa Citizen, March 3, 2000: C11).

This form of prevention advice, and the accompanying tales of violence from women who did not heed the advice, contribute to the social control of women by restricting their interactions with other people. Women who do not refrain from interacting with strange men are cast as culpable for their victimization. One police officer is quoted as saying, “if you accept a drink from another person, you are putting yourself at risk” (Calgary Herald, October 27, 1999: B1). The prevalence of this particular prevention tip, coupled with the contradictory emphasis on acquaintance rape, demonstrates how the discourse attempts to structure women's actions in both spheres, private and public. As one journalist comments, “don't take drinks from strangers, but considering how much abuse occurs as a result of attacks from close friends, neighbours and relatives, you had best be on guard most of the time” (Montreal Gazette, June 7, 1997: J4).

Not only are women being advised to censor their interactions with men, they are actively discouraged from being independent. Claimsmakers indicate that women are vulnerable in public settings on their own, and as such should only go out with others and remain in the group. This is reiterated by both police officials and employees of women's centres. One rape crisis centre worker indicates, “our public education department

teaches women how to be safer in a bar – to go with someone, not to be left alone” (Edmonton Journal, June 16, 1998: B3). Statements such as this imply that bars are inherently dangerous places for women, and that women are not capable of protecting themselves.

Moreover, women are expected to both depend on and take care of friends in public locations. The discourse relies on stereotypical notions of femininity, portraying women as nurturing caregivers. As Moore and Valverde argue, telling women to depend on friends “underlines the persistence of old-fashioned gender dangers, since one can hardly imagine male[s]...being interpellated in this way” (2000: 525). Further, it places a generalized onus on women to act as protectors for others. Between guarding one’s drink, and watching out for one’s friends, women’s actions are restricted by the number of precautions they are urged to take.

The advice to be dependent on friends is legitimised by claimsmakers in their presentation of stories about women who were drugged but escaped sexual assault thanks to the quick action of their friends. Numerous stories are relayed about women who “got lucky”, and owe their sexual safety to the people who accompanied them to the bar. The following confirms the importance of dependence:

A 19-year-old American woman can thank an alert friend for keeping her safe after she was apparently given a drug in a downtown bar. When the woman tried to leave the bar with a man she didn't know, her friend stopped her, then took her to her parents' house (The Globe & Mail, April 23, 1998: A13).

It is implied that although women who go out with friends may still be drugged, their sexual sanctity will be protected. By default then, women who go to public places alone are more vulnerable to being assaulted, and thus culpable if they are victimized.

The woman who goes out with friends, stays with them, avoids strangers, and watches her drink, will not be cast as culpable as a woman who decides to go out alone.

Despite all the prevention strategies given to women, there is a prevalent indication that there is no real way to fully protect oneself and that women will always be vulnerable. One journalist discussing prevention tips laments:

So we can add not leaving your drink unattended in a bar to the long list of ways to avoid assault. But no matter how much we add to that list, we will never erase the risk. This can be frustrating to live with. Unwinnable fights usually are (Montreal Gazette, September 29, 1998: A4).

This element of the discourse may further contribute to the social control of women's actions in the public sphere, through inciting fear of crime. If there is no foolproof way in preventing drug-facilitated sexual assaults, then women are constantly at risk. As one crisis centre worker remarks, "even taking precautions does not guarantee safety" (Daily News, May 2, 2001: 3). Vulnerability thus becomes a defining characteristic of femininity.

According to the discourse, women are not only responsible for preventing their victimization, they are also responsible for ensuring proof is obtained if they are unfortunate enough to be attacked. Yet the focus of the claims remains squarely on finding proof of the drugs in one's system, and not proof of sexual assault. Victims are encouraged to go to hospitals immediately to find evidence of the drug. One doctor states, "If you think you have been drugged, the sooner you get treated, the more likely we'll be to successfully trace the drug" (Calgary Herald, May 22, 1998: B5).

Claimsmakers openly place blame on victims who fail to act quickly in reporting their victimizations, citing the time delay and victim negligence as key factors for the failure in obtaining proof. As one officer states:

Often by the time the victim comes around, starts talking to her friends about what happened, and decides to seek treatment, the drug has left her system...So we're left with reports that describe symptoms without any evidence of the actual drug (Ottawa Citizen, May 25, 2003: A8).

The date rape drug discourse places the onus on the victim to report immediately to find proof of drugs, but proof of the drug does not help the victim remember who assaulted her. As one officer stated, "even if you prove the victim was drugged, all it does is prove they're telling the truth. It doesn't get the guy and it doesn't get the conviction" (The Province, September 8, 1996: A5). Finding proof of the drug becomes a way of differentiating between reliable and unreliable, believable and non-believable victims.

### **Creating Fear: Cautionary Tales and Public Reactions**

This section addresses three key research sub-questions: Do the media use fear in the construction of the date rape drug issue, do they target women in the promotion of this fear, and if so, what are the consequences of this construction? The qualitative analysis revealed that fear plays an integral role in the date rape drug discourse. This section explains how fear is promoted within the discourse, focusing on how women's stories of victimization act as cautionary tales for other women and how the discourse affects public reactions. By attributing the victim's failure to take necessary precautions as the cause of her victimization, victim's experiences of violence are used to coerce other women into altering their own behaviour in the public sphere.

Within the discourse, victim's experiences of being drugged and raped are described as ones where they are rendered helpless, unable to fight back or resist. One victim describes her experience stating, "you have no control over your own body and there's absolutely nothing you can do...you can't scream, you can't fight back" (Daily News, May 3, 1998: 26). Statements such as this reinforce the importance of women remaining diligent in protecting themselves from being drugged. Moreover, it fortifies the claim that women need to remain dependent on their friends, as they will be unable to protect themselves when drugged.

Tales of victimization also describe a sense of self-blame that is experienced as a result of the assault. The challenge of overcoming the idea that they are somehow culpable for the violence they experience is depicted as a difficult one. One victim claims, "The whole idea is to get past the belief that you deserved to be raped...because no one deserves to be raped, no matter how you dress, what you say, how you act" (The Province, November 21, 2004: B3). This statement illustrates that victims struggle with internalising rape myths, particularly that women deserve rape. However, this statement also acts as a counter-claim to the prevailing message within the discourse that victims are at least partly culpable in precipitating the assault.

In addition to feelings of self-blame, victims describe the emotional effects of the victimization. The assault is described as one of emotional trauma, which results in a loss of a sense of self. The assault is more than a violation of the body; it is a violation on the very nature of the person herself. The self after the assault is marked by an increase in victim fear. One victim explains, "I was pregnant with twins when I found out. Sadly, I lost one of my twins due to the emotional agony. She told the judge, 'I'm still afraid to

fall asleep at night” (Edmonton Journal, February 19, 2003: A9). After the assault the victim is depicted as less than whole. The notion of loss of self is reiterated by many claimsmakers. A sexual assault centre worker argues that victims have, “lost a piece of their life. The assailant possesses that piece of their life and the victim will never get it back” (Ottawa Citizen, May 29, 2002: C1). Statements such as this subtly imply that the victim will always remain incomplete, drawing on another prominent rape myth that the victim is somehow sullied by an attack.

Within the discourse, the emotional repercussions embody a significant sense of duration, in that the effects of the assault will plague the victim for the rest of her life. One victim describes the emotional consequences she was experiencing stating: “I don’t remember the last time I was genuinely happy,’ she testified. ‘There is not a day that goes by that I don’t remember what’s on that video” (Daily News, August 17, 2003: 16). The consequences of an assault are constructed as being extremely severe, and may act as a warning to other women to modify their public behaviours so they to need not experience the trauma suffered by these women.

In addition to the emotional trauma, victims describe how they have altered their behaviour to avoid further victimization. There is an acknowledgement on the part of the victim that there was something about their behaviour that contributed to their victimization. Their new prevention strategies focus on limiting their own actions within the public sphere. Victims describe how they have altered their behaviour stating:

“I’m not going out for a while. And when I do, it’s going to be different,” Crystal said in a telephone interview from home on Tuesday. “I will never drink as much as I did before” (Montreal Gazette, October 17, 2002: A1).

With candour, 18-year-old Amanda explains why, after living in student residence for six months, she doesn't go to parties anymore. Instead, she barricades herself in her room and devotes her time to schoolwork. When she musters the courage to walk the halls, she avoids eye contact with her neighbours (Ottawa Citizen, March 24, 2003: C1).

These examples demonstrate how violence and the fear of further violence cause women to retreat back into the private sphere. However, these examples also demonstrate how the discourse encourages other women to retreat, by demonising public spaces. The “danger” discourse of public places is legitimised because it comes from other women who have been victimized.

Overall, women's tales of victimization highlight how they were neglectful in preventing the assault, and act as cautionary tales to other young women. That is, victim's experiences of violence are used as proof of what occurs if women are not vigilant in protecting themselves. Police use victim's experiences of violence as opportunities to warn women to regulate their behaviour. In a story of a woman drugged in a bar, one police officer comments, “we hope this case sends a message to other young women” (Montreal Gazette, October 17, 2002: A2). Numerous victim stories illustrate how the victim did not use prevention advice; they accepted drinks from a stranger, they did not watch their drink, or they did not stay with the group. Take for instance the story of Gian, a middle aged English teacher out for a Christmas party:

It was near the end of the Christmas buffet and a few pints at the Hornby Street club that she spotted him; clean swarthy complexion, straight hair the hue of burnished chestnut, a hint of sideburns. He emerged from the club's shadows and wanted – no, insisted – on buying red wine for her table. Like a fool, she sipped. Then tripped, stumbled, toppled. Was lifted back up on wobbly legs, which then got her to a nearby bus stop. A car pulled up; we know better. Gian climbed in (The Province, January 15, 1999: A12).

This item openly criticizes the victim for her behaviour, and illustrates how she was neglectful in her own protection. Although this example does not directly tell women how to behave, it sets parameters between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. So in this instance allowing a man to buy drinks is unacceptable, as is accepting aid from strange men.

The idea that women are at risk is propagated throughout the discourse and is reinforced by women's stories of victimization. There is evidence within the discourse that the public has embraced the idea that women have something to fear. It is argued that women are vulnerable and their safety is in jeopardy when they leave the home. One article reports that, "students feel there is a "huge risk" for young women going out for drinks" (Daily News, October 11, 2002: 4). Moreover, it appears that females are receptive to the discourse. Young women explain how the threat of date rape drugs structures their behaviour and interactions with others in public settings:

If someone does offer to buy me a drink, I'm kind of wary about it, she said, I have heard of people passing out and waking up in strange places with no idea of where they'd been (Daily News, October 11, 2002: 4).

A lot of girls like to go out and say, 'Oh, this guy bought me drinks all night' and they think it's really cool, but you just can't do that anymore (Daily News, May 3, 1998: 26).

These responses indicate that women are cognizant of the discourse. Moreover, it demonstrates to other women that the issue is one of concern, as it is not just victims who are taking precautions. Claims such as these fail to recognize that men's violence against women has always been an issue, and creates a false sense of fear about the 'new' situation.



## **Resisting the Dominant Discourse**

As illustrated in Chapter Four, numerous claimsmakers contribute to the date rape drug discourse. The qualitative analysis thus far has revealed that the claims comprising the dialogue about drug-facilitated sexual assault deny the structural causes of men's violence against women such as patriarchy, and embrace various rape myths, which both blame women and hold them responsible for preventing victimization. Although some counter-claims can be found in items amongst the main claims, there are very few items that actively challenge the dominant discourse. Of the total sample of 301 items, only 5 openly dispute the claims made by dominant sources<sup>13</sup>.

Two forms of resistance emerge from counter-claimsmakers. The first challenges the construction of the problem, problematizing the focus on the drugs. The second form challenges the claim that women are responsible for prevention, arguing that the focus of the discourse is misguided, as it should not be targeting women. This section examines these predominant counter-claims, and discusses how they are received and dismissed.

### ***Drug as Scapegoat and Misguided Prevention: Counterclaims***

The counter-claims argue that the predominant focus on and demonization of certain drugs is misguided. Endorsing a structural perspective, workers from women's centres or drug advocates recognize that drug-facilitated sexual assaults are merely a part of a larger problem that has nothing to do with drugs. In response to a claim made by a Canadian Alliance M.P. that date rape drugs were weapons, a concerned citizen writes:

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<sup>13</sup> Two items appeared in the *Globe & Mail*, and the *Daily News*, *Times Colonist*, and *Toronto Star* each contained one counter-item respectively.

Bigger issues need to be addressed here. How can we claim to be a civilized nation when we objectify women's bodies in advertising and the media? How can we start to break through the secrecy and shame that surround survivors of a sexual assault? How do we teach values of respect and compassion, in sex as in all things? GHB and Rohypnol seem to me to be a tiny part of a bigger, less politically straightforward problem that the Canadian Alliance is not addressing, although it may be well intentioned (Globe & Mail, September 25, 2003: A28).

This example illustrates an attempt to address the root causes of violence against women, while concurrently addressing how dominant claimsmakers fail to do so.

Moreover, the counter-claims challenge the idea that the drugs are dangerous in and of themselves. A drug advocate, with knowledge of GHB challenges the dominant construction that the drug is dangerous stating, "there are no dangerous side effects when used properly and GHB is used for everything from treating sleep disorders to childbirth, to depression" (Times Colonist, March 5, 1999: A11). This directly contradicts the predominant claims that GHB is not only dangerous, but also deadly. Furthermore, counter-claimsmakers argue that the use of drugs to facilitate rape is not a new phenomenon, and that the emphasis on certain drugs denies that many drugs can be, and have been, used to facilitate rape.

Counter-claimsmakers also argue that the prevention tips provided for women are misguided, acknowledging that men should be the targets of campaigns and warnings, not women. As one rape crisis worker states, "warnings should be geared at men. The situation won't change until men stop using these drugs" (Daily News, December 30, 2000: 35). These counter-claims recognize that drug-facilitated sexual assaults occur as a result of men's behaviour not women's, and they dispute the benefits of warning women to be "careful". Statements from rape crisis centre workers illustrate this disputation:

It's irresponsible for police to respond to a seizure of GHB by telling women to be more careful in bars. It's a little bit insulting to women. We from a very young age have learned how to protect ourselves. What we want is the focus to be on men's behaviour, not women's behaviour (Globe & Mail, March 12, 2001: A7).

Other counter-claims speak to the practicality of prevention tips, arguing that it is unrealistic to expect women to remain constantly vigilant for their safety. Moreover, it is argued that the expectation that women can prevent their own victimization by abstaining or limiting their access in public spaces is absurd.

### ***Dismissing Counter-claims***

For the most part, counter-claims are not addressed by dominant claimsmakers. In the rare instance when counter-claims are addressed they are quickly discounted and dismissed. For example, one academic argues that alcohol is a much greater risk to women and is used more frequently to facilitate assault than are date rape drugs. She criticizes drug specific awareness campaigns and argues that education campaigns should focus on sexual assault, and not specific date rape drugs. Her counter-claim is dismissed in the article by a police official who argues:

It's important for women to be forewarned. You can't bury your head in the sand and not warn potential victims that date rape drugs are out there and can be hazardous to their well-being (Toronto Star, December 17, 2000: A4).

Counter-claimsmakers, such as the academic from the above example are depicted as not taking the problem seriously. Their claims are dismissed on the grounds that they do not appreciate the true extent of the problem, which is legitimised by discussing the frequency with which drugs appear. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, academics and the public are amongst the least cited sources. It is interesting to note that

the sources that are given the least representation emerge among the dominant counter-claimsmakers. Their resistance to the dominant narrative offers an explanation as to why these two groups are cited so infrequently.

## **Chapter Summary**

The qualitative analysis of the items indicates that the claims comprising the date rape drug discourse are concerned primarily with the date rape drugs themselves and not sexual assault. The specific focus on drugs and the minimal dialogue about sexual assault represents a symbolic expulsion of the violence women experience. Structural causes of violence against women are never addressed by the dominant claimsmakers, and men's behaviour is not problematized. Rape myths and negative depictions of the victim are used to both deny and excuse men's role in the crime.

The discourse attempts to structure women's activities in the public sphere by blaming victims and placing the onus on women to prevent their victimization. Victims' stories are used as cautionary tales to other women, illustrating the consequences of engaging in activities in the public sphere. Items attempting to resist the dominant discourse rarely appear and are dismissed by dominant claimsmakers. Chapter Six combines both the quantitative and qualitative findings, and discusses the implications of the discourse.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSING THE DATE RAPE DRUG DISCOURSE— DENIAL OF PATRIARCHY, NORMATIVE FEMININITY AND THE PERPETUATION OF FEAR**

“The dictum that a woman’s place is in the home doesn’t so much mean that she shall not go out to work, but that she should not go out to play” (Dobash and Dobash as cited in Green et al, 1987: 81)

This chapter discusses the implications of both the quantitative and qualitative findings. The first section argues that the date rape drug discourse is hegemonic as it both denies the concept of patriarchy and appropriates the voices of feminist claimsmakers. In the second section, the discourse’s construction of gender is examined. I argue that the date rape drug discourse constructs its own definition of normative femininity under which all victims are judged. The third section discusses the use of fear in the date rape drug discourse and argues that it is strategically employed by the media and claimsmakers as a means of controlling women’s activities in the public sphere.

### **Denying Patriarchy and Appropriating Feminist Voices**

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate that the date rape drug discourse does not engage in discussions of male accountability and the role men play in the violence women experience. The concept of patriarchy is excluded from the discourse, resulting in a myopic focus on date rape drugs. Moreover, claimsmakers appropriate feminist voices by dismissing claims that challenge the dominant narrative.

### ***Denying the Assault in Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assaults***

The quantitative analysis illustrates that prior to the year 1995, there was no reference made to ‘date-rape’ drugs in Canadian newspapers. The qualitative analysis indicates that claimsmakers depict incapacitation drugs as a ‘new’ problem, one which

they had never encountered before 1995. By claiming that the use of drugs in the facilitation of sexual assault is a novel problem, claimsmakers deny the history of violence against women. Although the use of specific drugs such as Rohypnol and GHB may be a newer phenomenon, men have long used various substances in the facilitation of sexual assault.

Although the quantitative content analysis indicates that primary articles, those that discuss both sexual assault and drugs are the most predominant, the qualitative analysis reveals that discussion of sexual assault is often secondary. That is, the predominant claimsmakers, criminal justice system participants, focus their claims on the drugs used in the facilitation of sexual assault, rather than on the sexual assault itself. From the beginning stages of the discourse, police claimsmakers problematize the prevalence of the drug, and not the incidents of sexual assault. As the discourse evolves, the drugs and their dangers remain the principal focus. As in Howe's study of Australian media coverage of violence against women, my findings indicate that, "the sex of sex crime is never problematized in mainstream discourse" (1999: 148).

The myopic focus on the drugs used in sexual assaults is problematic for a number of reasons. By directing attention onto specific drugs, claimsmakers attempt to differentiate drug-facilitated sexual assault from 'regular' sexual assault. The use of the drugs allows for the media to report more sensationalistic accounts of violence. However, the dramatization of drug-facilitated sexual assault by the media is problematic as it denies the normalcy of the situation (Berrington and Jones, 2002: 314). That is, it denies the pervasiveness of sexual violence by men against women. Moreover, the minimal coverage of legitimate discussion of sexual violence within the discourse reflects what

Kitzinger refers to as the symbolic expulsion of violence by the media. She argues that the media offer:

Very distorted reflections of the nature of sexual violence, with an emphasis on stranger-danger and a tendency to attribute sexual violence to only a certain type of “person” (“the other”). This then sets the scene for promoting a law-and-order agenda that tackles sexual violence purely by identifying and controlling these individuals (2004:27).

In the date rape drug discourse, the drugs used in the assaults are constructed as the “other”. Conversely, Moore and Valverde argue that placing the emphasis on drugs rather than on sexual assault “de-genders” sexual violence, “because the intention to commit the crime is displaced from the man to the drug” (2000: 524). My findings indicate that the date rape drug discourse is an appropriation of dialogue about sexual violence, which uses drugs as a scapegoat for male accountability.

The language used by the claimsmakers in their discussion of drug-facilitated sexual assault reflects an attempt to minimize women’s experiences of violence. Referred to most commonly as date rape drugs, the language confounds the nature of the problem. The term date rape is used to denote the relationship between the victim and assailant, that being one of familiarity. Yet using the term date in conjunction with rape is an attempt to, “loosely differentiate it from ‘real’ rape” (Lees, 1995: 107). It insinuates that date rapes are not as traumatic, or as authentic as ‘regular’ sexual assaults. The terminology used by the media to allude to drug-facilitated sexual assaults, embodies the rape myth that rape is sex (see Appendix B). The language used in describing this form of sexual assault illustrates both the media’s patriarchal orientation, and the propagation of patriarchal ideologies.

### ***Explaining Drug-facilitated Sexual Assault: The Denial of Patriarchy***

The quantitative analysis illustrates that the discourse provides very little structural explanation as to why drug-facilitated sexual assaults occur. Explanations that focus on men's violence against women, acknowledging men's privileged position of power over women and other marginalized groups are not addressed. The quantitative analysis also demonstrates that claimsmakers often attribute causes of drug-facilitated sexual assault to the actions of victims and characteristics of assailants. The qualitative analysis reinforces these themes, with victim precipitation and assailant perversion also emerging as explanations for why the crime occurs.

My research indicates that rape myths continue to be incorporated into media coverage of sexual assault, despite claims by other academics (Kitzinger, 2004: 19) indicating that the media no longer incorporate falsehoods in their reports of sexual violence. Within the date rape drug discourse, rape myths are predominantly found within discussions of victim precipitation and assailant characterizations. These myths play a key role in the discourse, contributing to the denial of patriarchy and ignoring structural causes of violence against women.

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate the pervasiveness of victim blaming by the claimsmakers. The quantitative content analysis reveals that "women cry rape for revenge" (Benedict, 1992: 17) is one of the most prevalent myths pertaining to the characterization of the victim. Seen in two predominant cases, the Paul Lesniak case in Canada and the Andrew Luster case in the U.S., the qualitative analysis reveals that this rape myth is used to construct victims as liars and to cast doubt on their claims of abuse. Similarly, the myths that women deserve rape and only loose women are



raped, plague victim descriptions as constructed by the discourse. These myths blame the victim for the violence she experiences while attempting to minimize men's behaviour.

The finding that numerous rape myths pertaining to victim characterization continue to proliferate in media reports of sexual assault indicates an attempt to deny victim's experiences of violence. Moreover, this finding further illustrates that the media continue to formulate discourses, "that legitimate the stories of abusers and disintegrate the stories of survivors who tell" (Fine et al., 1996: 135). Holding women accountable for the violence they experience is not only misogynistic, it is the ultimate denial of patriarchy. The discourse uses rape myths in the characterization of victims as one means of explaining why drug-facilitated assaults occur. By placing the blame on the victim, describing in detail how they precipitated their victimization, claimsmakers are absolved from mounting a critique of men's behaviour.

The quantitative analysis indicates that the media embrace the myth of assailant perversion, using assailant centred explanations to explain various occurrences of drug-facilitated sexual assault. Other academics (Finn, 1989; Lafleur, 2004) have found that assailants known to the victim are depicted using less inflammatory language than are strangers. Interestingly, my findings indicate that all perpetrators within the discourse are subjected to being "othered", regardless of their relationship to the victim. By relying on characterizations of illness and perversion, claimsmakers fail to account for the normalcy of violence against women, denying the systemic nature of male violence. Smart and Smart argue, "the concentration upon specific characteristics of the individual rapists...serves to create the impression that rape is an isolated event having no structural relationship to other social practices or phenomena" (1978: 99). Moreover, focusing on

specific characteristics also fails to examine power dynamics between men and women, perpetuating the myth that rape is about sex rather than power.

### ***No “Structural” Solutions***

The qualitative analysis reveals three solutions that are being touted as having the capacity to deal with the date rape drug problem. The first solution calls for using harsh criminal justice policies when dealing with assailants. Although increasing the severity of dispositions targets assailants and represents an acknowledgement that men do play a role in violence against women, it does not do anything to prevent assaults as harsher punishments generally do not act as deterrents. As Brownmiller argues:

The ideology of rape is aided by more than a system of lenient laws that serves to protect offenders and is abetted by more than the fiat of total male control over the lawful use of power. The ideology of rape is fuelled by cultural values that are perpetuated at every level of our society (1975: 289).

Moreover, the focus of deterrence was again placed on the drugs, and not on the assault. The intention is to prevent males from using the drugs in sexual assault, and there is no statement about the sexual violence itself.

The second solution calls for legislative amendments to criminalize possession of incapacitation drugs and materials required for their production. Again, this form of solution completely fails to account for men’s use of the drug. By suggesting regulation of the drug, police make the issue one of substance control instead of one about violence. The attempted transformation of the date rape drug issue from one of sexual violence into one of drug control is reflective of what Currie refers to as the “institutionalization of women’s issues”. This concept refers to how feminist discourses on male violence are appropriated by patriarchal institutions. Demands for change are altered into reforms that

are easily accommodated by the criminal justice system (Currie, 1998: 45). This is exemplified in the “date rape” drug discourse. Instead of dealing with the structural issues of male violence against women, dominant claimsmakers, the police and government, transform the issue and construct it as a drug problem. The new construction of the problem allows these agencies to avoid criticism of complacency, as they can demonstrate that they are actively taking measures to address the issue.

The third solution emerging from the qualitative analysis calls for an increase in awareness programs for females. This solution “individualizes responsibility, without collective comment on *the problem of men*” (Stanko, 1998: 65, original emphasis). The contention that females require education on the issue falsely assumes that women are not aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol and that females do not know how to protect themselves. Moreover, the insistence that females require education about the issue and the failure to include males, falsely insinuates that it is not a problem men need to be concerned with, or that men are more knowledgeable or more ‘aware’ than are females. As Tellijschmann et al., in their survey of 600 high school juniors discovered, “far more females than males seemed to be aware of the issues regarding rape, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse, especially regarding the issue of fault” (1995: 111). Thus, other researchers have demonstrated that women are in fact aware of the issues surrounding sexual assault. Claiming that the lack of awareness among women is a viable explanation for the commission of drug-facilitated sexual assaults only acts to make women accountable for the violence that is inflicted upon them by men.

### *Appropriating Feminist Voices*

Although, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, criminal justice system participants dominate the discourse as primary claimsmakers, rape crisis centre workers and employees of women's centres are also cited as sources. By quoting workers from rape crisis and women's centres, it appears as though the media are trying to gain representation of a 'feminist perspective'. In their study of sexual violence and the media, Los and Chamard found that following legislative amendments to sexual assault provisions in the Criminal Code, the media were more willing to present the knowledge of women and feminist groups (1997: 302). They indicate that prior to the amendments in 1984, "women's knowledge was presented as less authoritative due to their emotionality and vested interests" (Los and Chamard, 1997: 302). My research indicates that although women's opinions are being sought on the issue of "date rape" drugs, they are only validated if they do not conflict with the opinions and claims put forth by the dominant claimsmakers. The qualitative analysis reveals that women incorporate the police discourse of dangerous drugs into their narratives. Unlike the police however, women conceptualize the drugs as being dangerous for their capacity to facilitate sexual assault, rather than dangerous in and of themselves. These women's narratives do not challenge the dominant police discourse, and attempt to adopt similar viewpoints for different means. Their use of police discourse only strengthens the dominant discourse, overshadowing and accommodating the focus on sexual assault.

As Howe argues:

Under conditions of gendered inequality and hegemonic masculinity, women frequently share men's viewpoints, adopting their masculinist perspectives as their own. In this way, such loaded viewpoints become normative, and feminist and other radical perspectives are dismissed as extreme (1999: 150).

Feminist statements that contradict the dominant discourse are either completely ignored or are quickly dismissed as attempts to ignore the 'real' issue. Attempts to engage in the discussion of male accountability appear to be efforts in futility. Feminists who actively attempt to resist the dominant discourse receive little attention from the media, and their credibility is questioned by dominant claimsmakers.

### **Constructing Gender: Normative Femininity**

The findings of the quantitative analysis reveal that females are most frequently designated as victims and targeted by prevention suggestions. The qualitative analysis indicates that the media construct two differing depictions of victims, one that is overtly negative and another that remains fairly neutral. This section begins by discussing the characterization of the victims of drug-facilitated sexual assaults in relation to the work of both Benedict and Madriz. This is followed by an examination of normative femininity and the construction of gender within the discourse. The section concludes by discussing the implications of gender construction.

#### ***Victim Characterizations***

The quantitative findings reveal that the Canadian print media portray women as a homogeneous group within the date rape drug discourse. Very few items provide information about the race, class, or other physically distinguishing features of victims. Although this can be viewed as a positive factor, since historically the media have had the tendency to minimize the violence experienced by racial minority women, it is also

problematic because it denies the reality that women experience violence differently, and that certain groups are more likely to be victimized than others. Potter and Kappeler argue that, “the press gives little coverage to the lives of victims citing conventions protecting the identity of sexual assault victims. However, they point out facts related to the victims’ drinking prior to the assault” (1998: 16). This is evident within coverage of the date rape drug discourse. The media depict females as a single gendered entity, and only provide descriptions of the victim’s actions prior to, during, and after the assault.

My findings indicate that despite the lack of descriptive information about the victim, the media use the victim’s behaviour to form characterizations of the women they discuss. The quantitative findings indicate a dual characterization of victims. That is, using Benedict’s (1992) eight factors as a guide, victims within the date rape drug discourse are most likely to embody the characteristics of both virgin *and* vamp (Appendix B). My findings are similar to those found by Lafleur (2004) in her study of teen magazines, indicating that victims cannot be placed into dichotomized groups of guilty vs. not guilty. An approach that emphasizes a dichotomized divide in the characterization of victims is too simplistic and does not capture the complexity of victim depictions. As the findings of this research indicate, the majority of the victims within the discourse are depicted as having precipitated their victimization to a certain degree, a continuum approach, such as the one suggested by Madriz is better suited in explaining the characterization of victims (see Chapter Two for an explanation of continuum).

Although the media appear to refrain from categorizing females strictly into structured stereotypical categories of virgin or vamp, the frequent incorporation of the concept of victim precipitation illustrates the media’s continued tendency to blame

women for the violence they experience. The mixed representation of victims within the discourse is what Meyers refers to as “fractured”, with media images, “inconsistent and contradictory, torn between traditional, misogynistic notions about women and their roles on the one hand, and feminist ideal of equality for women on the other” (1999: 12). The “fractured” images of victims within the date rape drug discourse illustrate how the Canadian print media in their discussion of a contemporary issue of sexual assault, cannot relinquish stereotypical representations of women.

The Canadian print media use women’s behaviour prior to the assault as an explanation for their victimization, underscoring the patriarchal composition of the discourse. As discussed in Chapter Four, criminal justice system participants ranked as the most frequently cited, and thus may provide an explanation as to the incorporation of patriarchal ideologies within the discourse. As Kitzinger argues, the media’s reliance on court cases often leads them to produce news stories that incorporate court discourse. This is problematic as “courtrooms are places where traditional patriarchal understandings of rape are reified” (Kitzinger, 2004: 26). The victim often remains invisible, or is cast as innocent or culpable, depending on her behaviour. The date rape drug discourse frequently discusses specific cases of drug-facilitated sexual assault and incorporates dialogue from specific court cases. Thus the negative characterizations of victims cannot be attributed solely to media representations, as it is reflective of a systemic misogyny that permeates most structural institutions.

### ***Construction of Gender: Perverted Masculinity and Normative Femininity***

My research indicates that all women are perceived by the discourse as having precipitated their victimization to a degree. Whether through alcohol consumption, sexual

behaviour, or provoking the assailant, the behaviour which is implied to have precipitated the assault has crossed the boundaries of normative femininity. That is, victims are depicted as having engaged in behaviour that falls outside prescriptions of “what constitutes respectable ‘womanly’ behaviour” (Green et al., 1987: 81). This depiction is reinforced through the use of the rape myths that women both deserve and provoke rape. Although academics argue that there are no static traits of what constitutes “normative” femininity (Adams & Bettis, 2003: 75), dominant assumptions about how women should behave in the public sphere are still pervasive (Green et al., 1987: 81).

The date rape drug discourse constructs the ideal of normative femininity through two primary means: by setting parameters of behaviour deemed inappropriate for women, and imposing prevention strategies. Both are examined below.

According to Handa, normative feminine behaviour is often defined by establishing parameters of behaviour that is unacceptable for females (2003: 111). The date rape drug discourse fashions its own parameters of what constitutes normative femininity. According to the discourse, ‘good’ women do not interact with strange men, they do not flaunt their sexuality, they do not overindulge in alcohol, and they are dependent on others for their safety. As illustrated by the findings, females who contravene these norms of behaviour are cast as “bad” woman by claimsmakers.

Within the date rape drug discourse, normative femininity is also constructed through prevention strategies advocated by claimsmakers. As Campbell argues, prevention narratives prescribe a certain form of femininity. That is, prevention strategies do not merely just control women; they create new boundaries of femininity. By telling women they have something to fear these strategies “(re)cast the category of femininity



as weak and vulnerable” (Campbell, 2005: 120). According to the date rape drug discourse to be a woman is to be a potential victim, because women are vulnerable, naïve, and incapable of protecting themselves. Moreover, the prevention narrative within the date rape drug discourse, “reifies and reinforces gender essentialism (glossing over fragmented and contrary experiences), by constituting a feminine subject who is disempowered and helpless” (Campbell, 2005: 129).

In defining normative femininity, the discourse not only cast women as vulnerable, it makes female sexuality a contentious issue by depicting it as both problematic and dangerous for women. As illustrated by the qualitative analysis, a victim’s sexual behaviour is used as justification for the violence she experiences. According to Smart, “from the judge to the convicted rapist there is a common understanding that female sexuality is problematic and that women’s sexual responsiveness is whimsical or capricious” (1989: 31). The finding that women’s sexuality is frequently used as an explanation in the precipitation of sexual assault is reflective of this ‘common’ understanding. Moreover, it represents the embodiment of the rape myth that rape is about lust, insinuating that women tempt men beyond their control.

By attributing a woman’s victimization to her expression of sexuality, and depicting her behaviour as contravening the boundaries of normative femininity, the media and institutions of justice attempt to both dismiss women’s experiences of violence and indicate to others the consequences of ‘inappropriate’ female behaviour. The pervasiveness of rape myths in the descriptions of both victims and assailants illustrates an understanding of claimsmakers that women are culpable simply because they are women, and that men who use the drugs are pathological. Masculinity is never

problematized within the discourse yet femininity is depicted as a weakness, because it is a precipitating factor in victimization. The date rape drug discourse does not attempt to define or mount a critique of masculinity, yet it is a gendered discourse, as it focuses on what women should and should not do, while setting different standards for men.

### ***Implications of Gender Construction***

The imposition of heteronormative femininity as constructed by the discourse attempts to control, both implicitly and explicitly, women's activities in the public sphere. Prevention strategies contribute to the social control of women, yet they also have the capacity to define what it is to be a woman. The ability of prevention strategies to both control and define women is examined below.

Despite the fact that the quantitative analysis demonstrates that within the overall discourse women are characterized as knowing their perpetrator, claimsmakers encourage women to be wary of strangers. The emphasis on 'stranger-danger' indicates an attempt on the part of the media to control women's social interactions with men. As Madriz argues, "depictions of women as victims of strangers are the lifeblood of social control" (1997: 90). The date rape drug discourse provides a dual characterization of the assailant in general. By focusing on their occupations, the discourse indicates that any man could be a potential rapist, yet the incorporation of rape myths alleviates the need for claimsmakers to engage in discussion of male accountability. By constructing perpetrators as both "normal" yet "pathological", the media attempt to limit women's interactions with all men, and subsequently limit sexual interaction. This form of prevention can be seen as an attempt by the media to not only control women's activities in the public sphere, but also to place restrictions on female sexuality. Many women go to

bars as prospective locations where they might meet men. This form of advice can be seen as an attempt to restrict women from engaging in sexual activity with strange men and being sexually promiscuous. If women are forbidden to speak to strange men and interact with them, there is little chance they will go home together at the end of the night.

This prevention tip while claiming to be in the best interest of the women reinforces stereotypical gender roles and the double standards of sexuality. Behaviour that is seen as appropriate for men continues to be portrayed as inappropriate for women. The discourse subtly implies the sexual double standard by urging women to refrain from interacting with males unknown to them.

The qualitative analysis indicates that the media, instead of describing the victims in terms of appearance, describes them by their marital status. By consistently identifying the victims as being single<sup>14</sup> women, the discourse perpetuates patriarchal ideology that women need men to protect them. Being single is depicted as a precipitating factor as it is insinuated that women with significant others are less likely to be victimized. This again illustrates how the discourse attempts to equate femininity with vulnerability. Victims who are single have deviated from traditional female norms of being in a relationship, and their single status is highlighted as a warning to other young women to conform to the ideals of heterosexuality or risk victimization.

The construction of normative femininity, and the media tendency to blame women who contravene the boundaries of that construction, has consequences beyond controlling women's behaviour in the public realm. The predominantly negative

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<sup>14</sup> Single refers to never married, divorced and separated women.

representation of the victim in the discourse has important ramifications. As Madriz argues, images of innocent and culpable victims teach society that some crimes committed against women aren't real crimes (1997: 89). The discourse construction of 'good' vs. 'bad' women has implications for women who are considering reporting victimization. Those woman who have engaged in behaviour deemed 'inappropriate' by the discourse may feel even more stigmatized and may be less likely to report, especially if they did not follow all of the prescribed prevention methods.

The construction of women as permanently vulnerable also has implications stretching beyond the social control of women. As Campbell argues, rape prevention strategies, "do not so much interrupt the possibility of rape as much as they *further* the possibility" (2005: 121). That is, prevention tips teach women how to be vulnerable. By constantly monitoring one's behaviour, women adopt gender identities characterized by helplessness (Campbell, 2005: 121). Perhaps most disturbing, with femininity equating weakness, the act of rape seems unavoidable and inevitable, a "consequence of feminine vulnerability" (Campbell, 2005: 133).

### **The Perpetuation of Fear and the Social Control of Women**

The qualitative analysis indicates that the media use fear-inducing language in the construction of the discourse. This section examines the media's strategic use of fear in describing the prevalence of drugs, victim's stories, and prevention. Fear laden language is used with the implicit goal of social control, attempting to influence women to restrict their movements in the social realm. I argue that the discourse exerts social control not through direct coercive means, but rather in a more subtle fashion by relying on fear inducing language to persuade women to police their own behaviour.

### ***Dangerous Drugs and Cautionary Tales***

As demonstrated in Chapter Five, police officials are an important source for the media's construction of a dialogue about the use of drugs in the facilitation of sexual assault. The information presented over the ten-year span becomes increasingly fear laden. Claimsmakers endorse the position that women should be fearful of the drug, as it is the drug that is to blame for sexual assault. The absence of dialogue surrounding men leaves room for claimsmakers to cast the drugs as a form of folk devil, a "stereotypical carrier of significant social harm" (Ellis as cited in DeKeseredy, 2000: 38). By encouraging women to fear a drug, which is odourless and colourless, claimsmakers encourage women to remain in a constant state of vigilance in public spaces. As the drugs are not recognizable, women must be on guard at all times. This requirement inevitably structures women's experiences in the public sphere. The potential of being drugged requires that women remain in a permanent state of suspicion.

By representing the drugs as dangerous because of their characteristics and their potential side effects, both police officials and rape crisis centre workers instil fear into the discourse. Fear plays a functional role as a way of convincing women of the severity of the situation and to encourage them to alter their behaviour in public settings. These claimsmakers warn women that their sexual safety is not just at risk but also their lives. The emphasis placed on mortality illustrates how claimsmakers resort to making extreme statements about the dangers of the drugs, in attempts to convince women that public spaces are dangerous.

Claimsmakers use fear-inducing language such as "alarming increase" (Daily News, 1995: 30), and "frighteningly common" (Globe & Mail, 1997: A1), when

describing the prevalence of incapacitation drugs in Canada. These descriptions are more than just assessments of the prevalence of the drug; they are statements about the safety of public venues. Through these characterizations, claimsmakers communicate to women the level of risk they face if they decide to venture out. It also denotes the level of vigilance women are required to take. As the discourse progresses, public spaces are increasingly deemed as unsafe for women, based on the descriptions of the prevalence of the drug. Yet as Moore and Valverde argue, the date rape drug issue is inextricably linked to specific times and places. They claim that, “Rohypnol could of course be slipped into someone’s coffee at Starbucks, but somehow this possibility does not enter the minds of young women or the texts of those who govern them” (2000:523).

Further, women are told be “careful” and “aware” after seizures of date rape drugs by police. This denies that both GHB and Rohypnol are used recreationally, and appears as an attempt to incite a feeling of vulnerability amongst all women. Calls for women to be more “aware” in nightclubs is a call for women to modify their behaviour, by not overindulging, staying vigilant, and staying with friends.

Depicting the drugs using fear-inducing language, while concurrently telling women that the drugs are undetectable and the chance of being drugged is high, requires that women severely limit their movements within the public domain yet there is an underlying indication that there is nothing a woman can do to prevent being drugged and raped. One claimmaker refers to women’s attempts to protect themselves as the “unwinnable” fight (Montreal Gazette, 1998: A4). Telling women that they will never be safe despite all the precautions they may take, reinforces the ideology that women are permanently weak and men are permanently strong. Moreover, this ideology “articulates

that rape is an inherent male feature, and part of his natural right to a woman's body” (Campbell, 2005: 132).

The media and criminal justice claimsmakers rely on descriptions of victim's experiences of violence as cautionary tales for other women. That is, other women's victimization indicates to all females that they too are vulnerable. The fear that something may happen, coupled with the assessment that women are being victimized, attempts to incite a sense of fear in all women. This sense of fear acts as the main mode of social control in women's lives as, “it organizes consent around a strict code of behaviour that ‘good’ women need to follow” (Madriz, 1997: 155).

My findings indicate that the discourse specifically targets women in the promotion and dissemination of fear. Claimsmakers accommodate the stories of victims to define boundaries of normative femininity, and describe in detail the emotional and psychological consequences of crossing those boundaries. It must be acknowledged that many of the descriptions of the effects of the sexual assault come directly from the victims, and it is not my intention to dismiss the severity of the crime or the emotional repercussions of a sexual assault. However, it is important to examine how the media use these emotional claims as fodder in the social control of other women. The media manipulate victim depictions of emotional effects, by coupling them with rape myths and prevention advice for other women. Thus, women's emotional experiences are used as an arsenal by claimsmakers and the media to illustrate the severity of the crime to all women, and to drive home the so-called ‘importance’ of modifying behaviours. It has been argued that:

Press reports of rape often serve a more specific function than just a general reconfirmation of women's inferior status, for in many cases there is a warning or caution for women, such as where and when not to go for a walk, how not to behave and what not to wear. Such warnings may be quite implicit but none the less they serve as reminders for women of the boundaries of socially approved behaviour and sensitize them to the possible consequences of violating social conventions (Smart and Smart, 1978: 101)

Depictions of victims' experiences in the "date rape" drug discourse are not merely stories; they are illustrations to other women of the consequences of defying normative feminine behaviour. These cautionary tales use fear-inducing language in describing both the sexual violation and the aftermath, reminding women of the importance of heeding prevention 'tips', and ultimately encourage women to refrain from engaging in public life.

## **Chapter Summary**

The date rape drug discourse represents a contemporary narrative of sexual violence against women. Yet as illustrated by the findings, this discourse obfuscates meaningful discussion of sexual violence by transforming the issue into one of substance control. As such, the date rape drug problem is constructed as a battle between women, drugs, and public spaces. The discourse, which propagates gender essentialism, attempts to both control and construct femininity by focusing specifically on how women precipitate drug-facilitated sexual assaults. By failing to address structural causes of violence against females, the discourse simultaneously fails to mount a critique of men and patriarchal influences that both foster and perpetuate sexual assault.

Chapter Six has examined the implications of the main themes that comprise the date rape drug discourse. The final chapter will discuss the media's capacity to inform,



the importance of examining media documents, and concludes with suggestions for future research in this area.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

“Every society teaches its members many things, including what to worry about...the target of fear is socially constructed-but this does not mean it is not perceived as real and does not have consequences” (Altheide, 2002: 54).

The mass media are a major source of crime news for the public. Although there are other venues through which one can learn about occurrences of crime, such as family or school, the pervasiveness of the media and its capacity to disseminate information amongst many people cannot be denied. The media have the ability to both enlighten and educate. Yet the media also have the capacity to confound the nature of a problem, constructing discourses that may or may not be reflective of an actual condition. As Surette notes, “a social condition can become a major social problem and then subside, without the situation it concerns having undergone any significant change” (1998: 6).

It is important to keep in mind that the public do not blindly accept what they are told to be the truth by the media. As illustrated by my findings, the public often voice counter-claims that challenge the dominant narrative. Yet these counter-claims are few and far between in media coverage. As Strinati notes, there is not a direct causal link between the media and their influence on the public (1995: 200).

Although there may not be a direct causal link between the media and their audience, it is important to acknowledge the potential of the media to influence the perceptions of their audience. Newspapers are a form of cultural document. They reflect the norms of a society, but media also have the capacity to shape norms as well. Surette argues that although the public do not naively accept the ‘truth’ as it is professed by the

media, “the inherent credibility of news means that the image of justice the news media project has serious ramifications for the public’s understanding of the judicial system” (1998: 80). The credibility of the news also has serious ramifications for the public’s conception of gender relations and violence against women. As Cavender et al. note, “gendered images circulate in society through many institutions. The media...are central vehicles for constructing and conveying such images” (1999: 644).

Historically, media reports of sexual violence have both embodied pervasive rape myths, and negatively represented victims of rape. It was imperative to examine the construction of the discourse using a social constructionist feminist lens to see if these media trends persist within modern day reports of sexual assault.

A feminist perspective was used in this research for its capacity to look at larger structures of inequality, examining how the date rape drug discourse structures claims that attempt to subordinate women and deny the behaviour of men, while subsequently controlling women’s movements in the public sphere. The feminist perspective facilitated the analysis of gender within the discourse, which was instrumental to discovering how the media construct masculinity and femininity and the consequences of these representations.

The social constructionist perspective was adopted as the lens through which to view the research based on its ability to focus on the creation of the news. The recognition that knowledge is created through interactions with other people, allowed for the examination of the relationship between the media and differing claimsmakers. Moreover, by identifying the groups responsible for the construction of the claims that comprise a discourse, we can look at the implications and possible motives of a particular

construction. Taking the position that gender, in particular femininity, is a socially constructed category, allows for an examination of structural conditions that foster ideologies of violence against women. As Edwards notes, if gender is a socially constructed category then, “cultural practices involving sexual aggression, violence, abuse and exploitation of women by men must be the result of social and historical conditions, not primarily of human (male) biology” (1987: 26). Thus the social constructionist perspective is complementary to a feminist lens, as it aids in examining the underlying structural causes of women’s oppression, while concurrently examining and explaining how the structure of the media attempt to normalize men’s behaviour. It is important to note that the social constructionist perspective does not attempt to deny the existence of crime, or negate women’s experiences of violence. On the contrary, this perspective attempts to examine the implications of issues that are constructed as threats to society. As Madriz argues, the social constructionist perspective is particularly useful in studying discourses and the social control of women as it allows for the examination of the “dominant narratives that constrain their [women’s] lives” (1997: 31).

The findings of this research illustrate that the Canadian print media continue to propagate and disseminate dominant patriarchal ideologies. As a contemporary discussion of sexual violence against women, the date rape drug discourse both symbolically expels the true nature of the crime while perpetuating numerous rape myths. Furthermore, the media reinforce gender hierarchies by constructing public spaces as dangerous for women, indicating that they are only appropriate for men, encouraging women to retreat to the private realm. The dual characterization and division of victims into general and specific, undeserving vs. deserving, can be seen as an attempt by the

media to counter rape myths and provide balanced depictions of sexual assault, yet the emphasis on victim precipitation and exclusion of dialogue of male accountability, inevitably illustrates that the patriarchal nature of the media continues to proliferate.

Clearly, much work still needs to be done. The media and institutions of justice alike need to cease blaming women for their experiences of violence. Feminists must continue to illustrate the patriarchal orientation of the media, in attempts to improve coverage of violence against women, and work with the media to dispel pervasive rape myths. As the public gain much of their knowledge from newspaper reports of crime and justice, we must continue to work on infiltrating and breaking down the walls of patriarchy which govern media reports of sexual violence against women. Yet this requires more than just targeting the media, it requires a collective strategy that addresses the very structure of our society.

Studying and deconstructing media discourses that perpetuate patriarchal ideologies of violence against women is required to bring attention to the sexism that is inherent in our society. By addressing how the media promote destructive stereotypes of females, feminist scholars can identify areas that require attention, and address them accordingly. Moreover, by highlighting the areas in which the media are still negligent, critical media studies produce alternate discourses that may counter the negative effects of the mainstream media and may provide the public with a more balanced view of crime.

### ***Considerations for Future Research***

The issue of drug-facilitated sexual assault has remained relatively unexplored by academics. There are numerous avenues of investigation that can be explored in this area. Below are some suggestions for future research.

This research only examined the print content of the date rape discourse, thus the potential impact on women and the public at large can only be speculated. My research could be expanded to interview women, to gauge their reactions to the discourse and how they interpret the knowledge disseminated by the media. Research that encompasses both content analysis and interviews would be able to provide a more complete analysis of how the discourse contributes to the social control of women's lives. Interviews with women would be essential in discovering the impact of the media's use of fear-inducing language. Surveying women would allow for analysis of the consequences of negative depictions of victims within the discourse. Moreover, it would be interesting to discover the precautions women take, if any at all, in preventing drug-facilitated sexual assault.

My research could also be expanded to examine the construction of the discourse internationally, to see if the trends illustrated by the Canadian media are reflective of overall changes within the media, or if it is a situation unique to Canada. Moreover, with the proliferation of online subscriptions, newspapers from all over the globe are accessible to anyone at anytime via the Internet. The accessibility of these media warrant examination of newspapers other than those found in Canada, as they too may be informing the Canadian public of issues of sexual violence.

Newspapers only encompass a small fraction of mass media. This research could be expanded to examine other forms of media, such as radio, and more specifically television. By expanding the research to include various mediums, a more complete or even different construction of the date rape drug issue may emerge, providing a new perspective on the issue.

As the date rape drug discourse insinuates that it is teenage girls and women in their early twenties who are most frequently victimized, it would be interesting to examine how a medium that specifically targets this demographic discusses the issue of drug-facilitated sexual assault. An examination of the content of popular magazines targeted towards adolescents, combined with interviews of young females about their perceptions of risk, is another avenue for potential expansion of this research.

Finally, this research could be expanded to look at how feminist organizations, such as rape crisis centres and women's centres, construct the issue of drug-facilitated sexual assault. In a pilot study, I discovered that educational pamphlets pertaining to violence against women that were produced by a rape crisis centre, embodied traditional rape myths when discussing date rape drugs. As the findings of this research indicate that the perspectives of feminist organizations were both accommodated and dismissed by dominant claimsmakers, examining the publications of feminist groups pertaining specifically to incapacitation drugs on a larger scale would provide information on the type of advice that victims of sexual assault are receiving. It would also serve to indicate how these organizations construct the issue.

Contributing to many disciplines, the findings of this thesis have demonstrated that the media not only continue to perpetuate rape myths, they have constructed a gendered discourse that specifically targets women. Moreover, the findings further indicate that the date rape drug discourse uses fear-inducing language to encourage women to self-impose limitations on their social, public lives.

## APPENDIX A: RAPE MYTHS

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1. *Rape is sex*: This myth is said to be the most influential as it is the foundation on which all other rape myths are supported. This myth supports the idea that rape is no more harmful to women than is consensual sexual intercourse. It denies the violence, humiliation, degradation, and trauma inherent in the act of rape.
2. *The assailant is motivated by lust*: This myth, supported by the ideology that rape is merely sex, depicts the assailant as over-sexed, a person with uncontrollable male urges who cannot contain their sexual desires. This myth ignores the common motivations of rape: anger and desire to humiliate and dominate others.
3. *The assailant is perverted or crazy*: This myth perpetuates the idea that the rapist is a crazed stranger, or is somehow deranged. This myth attempts to disguise the fact that most victims know the men who rape them.
4. *The assailant is usually black or lower class*: This myth, propagated by the media, implies that it is Black males, from lower socio-economic strata, who rape white women. However, the crime of rape is generally an intra-racial phenomenon.
5. *Women provoke rape*: This myth is based on the notion that women precipitate rape by provoking men with their appearance and/or behaviour. This myth ignores the fact that rapes are frequently crimes of opportunity, and the victim's appearance and demeanour are of very little importance.
6. *Women deserve rape*: According to this myth, women who 'take risks' (I.e., going out alone, being out at night, etc.) are seen as lacking diligence in protecting themselves from rape, and are thus viewed as culpable for their victimization because they didn't take adequate care in preventing it.
7. *Only "loose" women are victimized*: This myth claims that only "sluttish" women are raped, denying the innocence of the victims. Moreover, this myth perpetuates the idea that bad things only happen to bad people.
8. *A sexual attack sullies the victim*: Based on the notion that rape is sex and not violence, this myth promotes the idea that the victim becomes soiled as a result of the attack, and is somehow less desirable as a person.
9. *Rape is a punishment for past deeds*: This myth perpetuates the idea that the rape was a result of something the victim had previously done, allowing others to rationalize why this terrible act would never be committed on them.
10. *Women cry rape for revenge*: This final myth implies that women are vengeful liars, who make up stories of rape to seek revenge on others or simply to gain attention.

\*Benedict, H. (1992). *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes*. New York: Oxford. Pp. 14-19



## **APPENDIX B: BENEDICT'S "VAMP" FACTORS**

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1. The victim knows the assailant: victims who know their assailants receive less sympathy than those who do not
2. No weapon was used in the assault: People are more inclined to believe tales of rape in which weapons were used.
3. The victim and assailant are of the same race: White victims assaulted by black assailants receive the most attention, whereas black victims assaulted by black assailants receive the least.
4. The victim and assailant are of the same class: Victims who are assaulted by assailants of a lower class are blamed less for the attack.
5. The victim and assailant are of the same ethnic group: Victims are reflected more positively if the assailant is from a different ethnic group, as prejudices about ethnicity can be used to denigrate the assailant.
6. The victim is 'young': Younger women tend to be seen as provocative
7. The victim is 'pretty': In cases of sexual assault, women receive less support if they are seen as attractive
8. The victim departed from traditional female sex roles: Victims who engage in activities or behaviour that contravenes the dictated ideals of femininity of child rearing and family life receive less sympathy.

\*Benedict, H. (1992) *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes*. New York: Oxford. Pp.19

## APPENDIX C: CODING MANUAL

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1. Item number: Indicate the three-digit number assigned to the item
2. Indicate which paper the item is in:
  1. The Daily News
  2. Calgary Herald
  3. Edmonton Journal
  4. The Province
  5. The Times Colonist
  6. Ottawa Citizen
  7. The Gazette
  8. Toronto Star
  9. Globe & Mail
3. Date: Specify date in the following format: dd mm yy
4. Type of Item:
  1. Feature Article: The article specifically discusses the use of date rape drugs in the facilitation and/or the attempt of sexual assault
  2. Secondary Article: The article relates to date rape drugs but does not focus specifically on sexual assault (e.g. articles which focus on drug busts of date rape drugs, and only briefly mentions sexual assault).
  3. Blurb: Short item informing readers about an issue involving date rape drugs
  4. Advice column (e.g. Dear Abby)
  5. Letters to the editor
  6. Other, specify

5. Types of sources (list the first six that apply): modified from Lafleur, N (2004). Coding Manual for “Boys will be Boys and Girls will be Good”.
  1. Journalist: The knowledge that is provided is not attributed to a source; the journalist who composed the article is the main source of information. This category also includes advice columnists
  2. Victim: Individuals who were unknowingly administered a date rape drug and/or those who consumed knowingly and were subsequently sexually assaulted
  3. Assailant: Offenders, accused, and suspects
  4. Criminal Justice System participants: Anyone who participates within the legal and/or criminal justice systems (excluding victims and assailants). This includes: police officers, lawyers, judges; those identified as witnesses, any family member or friend of the victim or offender.
  5. Political/Governmental sources: anyone who represents any level of government, either Canadian or foreign. This includes politicians, civil servants, and those who speak on behalf of the government.
  6. Academic Sources: The knowledge is provided by someone with a recognized affiliation to a University, i.e. University professor (Administrative staff of universities excluded, coded as individual professionals)
  7. Professionals: individuals affiliated with a particular profession (i.e. health care workers, social workers, rape crisis counsellors, teachers, school administration, business owners). If the article mentions a specific person by occupation but not by name, they should be counted here, not as ‘unspecified’
  8. Public Sources: Individuals without any affiliation, people randomly interviewed for their reaction to issues or events
  9. Community Organizations: Individuals affiliated with, or statements generated by, formally organized, non-profit groups that represent or service a particular community (i.e. Rape Crisis Centres, groups supporting youth, religious organizations).
  10. Unspecified sources: unnamed sources (‘experts’, ‘observers’, ‘analysts’, ‘authorities’, ‘specialists’...)
  11. Other-any type of source not listed above, specify
  12. Don’t know/not applicable
  
6. Knowledge (list first 5 that apply): Indicate all the types of knowledge offered as identified by Ericson et al. (1991).
  1. Primary: factual knowledge asks ‘what happened’ in this situation
  2. Secondary: explanatory knowledge asks ‘why has this situation occurred ’
  3. Tertiary: emotional knowledge asks ‘how does it feel to be involved in this situation’
  4. Evaluative: moral knowledge asks ‘was what happened good or bad’
  5. Recommendation: asks ‘what should be done to rectify the situation’
  6. Not applicable

7. Topics discussed in the item (list first four that apply):
  1. Specific date rape drug cases
  2. Rape drug characteristics
  3. Effects of rape drugs
  4. Prevention and defence tips
  5. Prevalence of date rape drugs
  6. Date rape drug seizures
  7. Drug detection (i.e. methods of detecting presence of drugs in drinks)
  8. Legislation
  9. Awareness campaigns
  10. Reporting
  11. Other
  
8. Drugs: Specify the drug(s) identified by the article as culpable for date rapes (List the first three that apply):
  1. Rohypnol
  2. Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (more commonly referred to as GHB)
  3. Ketamine
  4. Alcohol
  5. Other—specify
  6. General (no specific drug identified, categorized only as date rape drugs)
  7. Not Applicable
  
9. Size of the item
  1. Blurb: 0-50 words
  2. Short: 50-150 words
  3. Medium: 150-450 words
  4. Long: 450-950 words
  5. Very Long: 950 words or more
  
10. List the locations indicated by the article where the date rape drugs were administered (list first three that apply)
  1. House party
  2. Bar/Pub
  3. Restaurant
  4. Residence of assailant/accused/suspect
  5. Residence of victim
  6. Shared Residence- shared by both victim and assailant/accused/suspect
  7. Hotel
  8. Workplace
  9. School
  10. Other-specify
  11. Don't know/not applicable

11. Number of victims discussed in the item (this category includes only identified victims. Vague, generalized statements about victims are not included here. Ex. ‘victims of date rape drugs should...’ would be excluded from this category):
1. One
  2. Two
  3. Three or more
  4. Unknown (article refers generally to ‘victims’ and does not specify number)
  5. Not Applicable
12. Gender of victim discussed in the item (indicate gender for every victim mentioned in the article):
1. Female
  2. Male
  3. Unknown
  4. Not applicable
13. Race/ethnicity of the victim(s) discussed in the article: does the item indicate the race or ethnicity of the victim? Specify the racial/ethnic designation for each victim mentioned in the article.
1. White
  2. Black
  3. Other-Specify
  4. Unknown
  5. Not applicable
14. Occupation of victim: Does the article discuss the occupation of the victim?
1. Yes
  2. No
15. Number of assailants/suspects/accused discussed in the item (indicate gender for every one mentioned in the article):
1. One
  2. Two
  3. Three or more
  4. Unknown
  5. Not applicable
16. Gender of offender discussed in the item:
1. Female
  2. Male
  3. Unknown
  4. Not applicable
17. Occupation of offender: Does the article discuss the occupation of the offender?
1. Yes
  2. No

18. Relationship: Does the article indicate how the victim (s) and offender(s) are acquainted? Specify the form of relationship indicated by the article, for each victim and offender mentioned in the article.
1. Strangers (the victim and offender have had no known contact)
  2. Acquaintances (the victim and offender are known to each other)
  3. Friends (the victim and offender have had a previous relationship)
  4. Family (the victim and offender are related to each other, through birth or marriage)
  5. Unknown (the article doesn't specify the relationship, uses terminology such as 'some one', ' a person', etc.)
  6. Not applicable
19. Prevention: Does the article specify one gender that should make use of prevention and awareness campaigns? Specify which gender is mentioned in the article.
1. Female
  2. Male
  3. Both
  4. Not applicable
20. Responses to drug-facilitated sexual assaults (List first three that apply): modified from Lafleur, N (2004). Coding Manual for "Boys will be Boys and Girls will be Good". Indicate which responses listed below are stated in the item as ways to prevent sexual violence facilitated by date rape drugs.
1. Individualized Strategies (victims): Watching drinks, staying with friends, discarding drinks that have been left unattended, not accepting drinks from strangers
  2. Individual Strategies (assailant): Programs that teach violent males skills and abilities to control violence/ counselling
  3. Technical Strategies: Use of innovations (e.g. date rape drug coasters)
  4. Legal Strategies: Criminalization, arrests, swift interventions, strictness in punishment and consistency in punishment/treatment for all groups, any other way the CJS is involved. Also includes civil court suits, proceedings and all the actors involved in such proceedings punishment
  5. Social Intervention Strategies – provide resources and services for females (i.e. rape crisis centres, support groups)
  6. Educational Strategies – educate about the structural inequalities between females and males, history of violence against women, gender socialization
  7. Structural Strategies – change system/political activism/policy changes.
  8. Other specify
  9. Don't know / not applicable

21. Rape Myths: taken from Lafleur, N (2004). Coding Manual for “Boys will be Boys and Girls will be Good”. Does the item reiterate rape myths? Specify which of the rape myths distinguished by Benedict (1992) listed below are reiterated in the item (List all that apply). Reiteration includes statements that directly or indirectly discuss rape myths without challenging them.

- A. Rape is sex
- B. The assailant is motivated by lust
- C. The assailant is perverted or crazy
- D. The assailant is usually black or lower class
- E. Women provoke rape
- F. Women deserve rape
- G. Only loose women are raped
- H. A sexual attack sullies the victim; the victim is tainted or dirty
- I. Rape is a punishment for past deeds
- J. Women cry rape for revenge

- 1. Yes, Specify
- 2. No
- 3. Not applicable-item not related to rape/sexual assault or not enough information

22. Rape Myths: Does the item challenge rape myths as specified by Benedict?

- 1. Yes, Specify
- 2. No
- 3. Not applicable

23. Virgin or Vamp (list first three that apply): modified from Lafleur, N (2004). Coding Manual for “Boys will be Boys and Girls will be Good”. Does the item portray the victim in either the virgin or vamp categories as established by Benedict (1992)? Specify which factors are discussed or implied in the item. Eight factors which influence the media and the public to blame the victim and place her in the vamp category:

- A. If the victim knows the assailant
- B. If the assailant did not use a weapon
- C. If it was an interracial rape
- D. If the victim and assailant are from the same socio-economic class
- E. If the victim and the accused are from the same ethnic group
- F. If the victim is young
- G. If the victim is pretty
- H. If the victim has strayed from the traditional female sex role

- 1. Yes, virgin, specify
- 2. Yes, vamp specify
- 3. Yes, 2<sup>nd</sup> victim virgin specify
- 4. Yes 3<sup>rd</sup> victim virgin specify
- 5. Yes 2<sup>nd</sup> victim vamp specify
- 6. Yes 3<sup>rd</sup> victim, vamp specify
- 7. No but item is about rape/sexual assault
- 8. Not applicable, item not about rape/sexual assault

24. Explanations of date rape druggings (list the first three that apply): indicate which of the explanations listed below are used in the article to explain the occurrences of drug-facilitated sexual assault.

1. Structural: The explanation provided focuses on men's violence against women and other men as a product of the heterosexist patriarchal nature of society, whereby men's privileged position of power over women, and other marginalized groups, including homosexuals, encourages a sense of entitlement and fosters misogynistic ideologies and actions.
2. Cultural: The explanation provided is an embodiment of commonly held values and norms held by society, which attempt to normalize, or 'explain away' violence against women and other marginalized groups. For example "the notion that 'boys will be boys' or it's a 'guy thing'...are cultural stories that permit males to be sexually and physically aggressive" (Lafleur, 2004: 170).
3. Offender Focused: The explanation provided focuses on the characteristics of the assailant or on some aspect of his life. Explanations may depict the offender as: pathologized (i.e. sex crazed and perverted), party to the cycle of violence, an addict (drug/alcohol dependency)
4. Victim Focused: The explanation provided focuses on the characteristics and/or actions of the victim that may have precipitated the victimization. The explanation may indicate that the victim was somehow culpable by their mode of dress, leaving a beverage unattended, their location.
5. Other- specify
6. Don't know/not applicable- items that are unable to distinguish the explanations or items not addressing explanations of violence against females



## APPENDIX D: LIST OF ITEMS

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### Daily News

1. Nolte sued over alleged sex assault. [Daily Edition], December 4, 2004, pg. 35
2. Birds Hill Park, Man., Women warned at festival. [Daily Edition], July 12, 2004, pg.8
3. Makeup heir must pay rape victim; Luster ordered to pay \$19m to woman attacked on tape. [Daily Edition], August 17, 2003, pg. 16
4. Max Factor heir, fugitive rapist caught in Mexico. [Daily Edition], June 19, 2003, pg.21
5. Concerns about coaster: Date-rape detector doesn't work for all drinks, says lab. [Daily Edition], October 11, 2002, pg. 4
6. Don't rely on frosh-pack coasters – students. [Daily Edition], October 11, 2002, pg. 4
7. Rape-drug complaint under investigation. [Daily Edition], October 5, 2002, pg. 5
8. Campuses order up date-rape drink coasters. [Daily Edition], July 9, 2002, pg. 23
9. Man may have prowled Internet chat rooms for victims – source: RCMP probing possible Net link in Valley date-rape drug assaults. [Daily Edition], May 3, 2001, pg. 3
10. Police track date-rape drug rapist in Valley. [Daily Edition], May 2, 2001, pg. 3
11. Under every drink, a date-rape warning; But some say men should be target of coaster campaign. [Daily Edition], December 30, 2000, pg. 35
12. Man sentenced for date-rape drug. [Daily Edition], February 5, 2000, pg. 8
13. Daters should know when no means no. [Weekly Edition], July 1, 1998, pg. B.2
14. Date-rape drug traces found in metro bar. [Daily Edition], May 26, 1998, pg. 4
15. Letters: Radcliffe should apologize. [Daily Edition], May 10, 1998, pg. 14
16. Getting roofied: There is some evidence that date-rape drug is available in metro. [Daily Edition], May 3, 1998, pg. 26
17. In Brief: Quebec prepares for more blackouts. [Daily Edition], February 1, 1998, pg. 14
18. Date rape drug may be closer than you think. [Weekly Edition], December 3, 1997, pg. B.2
19. Date rape drug shows up more. [Daily Edition], April 5, 1997, pg. 11
20. Women warned of 'date-rape' drug. [Daily Edition], December 8, 1996, pg. 27
21. Campus sex assaults linked to tranquilizer. [Daily Edition], September 12, 1996, pg. 32
22. In Brief: Terrorist haven reported. [Daily Edition], July 30, 1996, pg. 10
23. Health: Breast-cancer lecture at MSVU. [Daily Edition], March 7, 1996, pg. 28
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