REPORTING ON RAPE:
MYTHS, CONTEXT AND SOURCES

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REPORTING ON RAPE:  
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ABSTRACT  

This content analysis study examines how rape was portrayed in print news articles from 1996 to 2012. The study explores this topic from three perspectives. First, it examines whether four particular rape myths were present: rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust, victims are to blame for their own rape, men of good standing don’t rape women and innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about it. Second, this study takes note of which sources were selected for each news story. Third, it reviews whether the context, prevention measures or risk factors were incorporated in news articles.  

This study predicted that at least one-third of the articles would include rape myths and found that rape myths were present in 79.3 percent of the articles. This study also predicted that 50 percent of the articles would not include information regarding the context of the crime, prevention methods or risk factors. The analysis revealed that 93 percent of the articles did not include this information. This study also found that official sources were used more often than rape experts, even though rape experts provided context more frequently.
Chapter 1

Introduction

In March 2011 two major newspapers wrote about the gang-rape of an 11-year-old girl in Cleveland, Texas, that invoked rape myths and lacked context, prevention methods and risk factors. One of the newspapers, The New York Times, also did not rely on diverse sources. Members of the public, well-known feminists and an industry heavyweight, the Poynter Institute, expressed their dismay with The New York Times’ coverage in particular.

The case has rocked this East Texas community to its core and left many residents in the working-class neighborhood where the attack took place with unanswered questions. Among them is, if the allegations are proved, how could their young men have been drawn into such an act?

“It’s just destroyed our community,” said Sheila Harrison, 48, a hospital worker who says she knows several of the defendants. “These boys have to live with this the rest of their lives.”

(The New York Times, Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town)

In addition to quoting people in the community who felt bad for the accused boys and men, the author, James McKinley, went on to describe the alleged sexual assault victim’s looks.
They said she dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s. She would hang out with teenage boys at a playground, some said.

*(The New York Times, Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town)*

The other major newspaper, the *Houston Chronicle*, also described the 11-year-olds’ appearance in the story and pulled information from the girl’s Facebook page, in which the girl wrote about “sex.”

Sometimes she comes across like a little girl, such as when she talks of her special talent for making "weird sound effects" and "running in circles" to overcome nervousness.

But she also makes flamboyant statements about drinking, smoking and sex. Yet her vulnerability pokes through the tough veneer as she tells of "being hurt many times," where she "settled for less" and "let people take advantage" and "walk all over" her. She vows to learn from her mistakes.

*(The Houston Chronicle, Girl’s sex assault rocks Cleveland)*

The reporter, Cindy Horswell, also used statements from the police about the alleged rape victim having “sex” with the men.

Soon she was having sex with multiple young men there, the statement said.

Someone used a phone to invite four more men, who soon arrived.

*(The Houston Chronicle, Girl’s sex assault rocks Cleveland)*
She did state that, “investigators note an 11-year-old can never legally consent,” but she did not include any rape expert sources such as counselors, psychologists or rape crisis center advocates nor did McKinley.

In The New York Times’ case, the focus on sources who pitied the accused men and blamed the girl’s mother was problematic because it could encourage readers to think about rape myths such as victims are to blame for their own rape. The reporter described the girls’ appearance and wrote about how she dresses older than her age, which could also have brought this particular rape myth to the reader’s mind.

In the Houston Chronicle’s case, the description of the girl’s looks could have invited the readers to think about the victims are to blame rape myth. Referring to the alleged rapes as sex could have invited the rape myth rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust to the reader’s mind.

Both articles also describe some of the accused males’ school standing such as two high-school students who were members of “Cleveland’s state-ranked basketball team” and a 21-year-old who is the son of a school board member. These titles could have encouraged readers to think about the rape myth men of good standing don’t rape women.

The use of rape myths in news articles is of concern because these myths have been found to make readers more likely to think the defendant is not guilty (Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress & Vandello, 2008; Mullin, Imrich, & Linz, 1996) and that the victim is lying (Franiuk et al., 2008). They have also been found to make men believe sexually
violent behavior is not rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Myths about rape might also discourage the victim’s willingness to report (Brownmiller, 1975; Giacopassi & Dull, 1986; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004), might encourage the offender to carry out rape (Scully & Marolla, 1982; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004) and might discourage the criminal justice system from prosecuting rape (LeGrand, 1973).

Myth acceptance has been found to be higher for people who believe in sex role stereotyping (Burt, 1980), conservative gender-role attitudes and adversarial sexual beliefs (Fonow, Richardson, & Wemerus, 1992). Men also are more likely to accept rape myths than women (Field, 1978; Giacopassi & Dull, 1986; Fonow et al., 1992; Reilly, Lott, Caldwell, & DeLuca, 1992; Kopper, 1996).

These myths are particularly powerful when it comes to non-stranger rape. As Estrich (1987) writes:

Many women continue to believe that men can force you to have sex against your will and that it isn’t rape so long as they know you and don’t beat you nearly to death in the process. Many men continue to act as if they have that right. In a very real sense, they do (Estrich, 1987).

A U.S. Department of Justice report (2002) that measured sexual assault reporting to the police from 1992 to 2000 found that the closer the relationship between the victim and offender the less likely the victim would report the rape to the
police. When the offender was a current intimate partner, 77 percent of completed rapes were not reported to the police. When the offender was a friend or acquaintance, 61 percent of completed rapes were not reported and when the offender was a stranger, 54 percent of completed rapes were not reported (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). This is frightening because the majority of rapes — 73 percent — were said to be committed by a rapist the victim knew (U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Victimization, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2005).

The lack of diverse sources in the stories, especially the lack of experts, is also disappointing because this practice can limit the amount of context that is provided in the news articles (Bullock, 2008). Reporters who provided no context, prevention methods and risk factors, might not be giving readers the chance to see society’s role in the crime (Thorson & Coleman, 2002).

An example of context would be: In 2010 there were 76,322 forcible rapes — meaning one forcible rape every 6.2 minutes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2010).

The reporter could also provide estimates of how many rapes go unreported. For instance, the 2010, the National Victimization Survey revealed that 50 percent of rape or sexual assault was reported to the police (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010). A college campus victimization history survey of 4,446 women, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, found that a female college student has a one in four or one
in five probability of experiencing a completed or attempted rape over the course of her college career (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000).

Besides telling readers how frequently or infrequently rape is reported, reporters could tell readers about the likelihood of an alleged rapist going to prison. A study by the National Center for Policy Analysis, a non-profit public policy research organization, analyzed 1990s data from the FBI and the Bureau of Justice Statistics and found that if a rape is reported there is only a 50.8 percent probability that an arrest will be made, if an arrest is made there is an 80 percent probability of prosecution, if prosecuted only a 58 percent probability of conviction, if convicted only a 69 percent probability of a felony (Reynolds, 1999). Therefore, the overall probability of a rapist going to prison is only 16.3 percent (Reynolds, 1999). For a murderer or person committing non-negligent manslaughter the likelihood he or she will go to prison is more than double, 39.9 percent (Reynolds, 1999).

One way to include some of the context is for reporters to include diverse sources in their articles. Stevens (1998) and Bullock (2008) have found that reporters tend to report from official sources when reporting violent crime. Thus rape, which is most commonly written about when a case goes to trial (Cuklanz, 1996), reflects many of the negative stereotypes used in the courtroom by attorneys.

For instance, defense attorneys often jump on any mistakes or inconsistencies in the victim’s account to discredit her story (Martin & Powell, 1994.) In a criminal case, the defendant does not have to take the stand because he may claim his Fifth
Amendment right under the U.S. Constitution, which extends to state and local jurisdictions (FindLaw, 2012). This means he does not have to make any statement that would help determine whether he committed the crime (FindLaw, 2012).

Twenty advocates whom spoke with Meyers (1997) most commonly said that news coverage blamed the victim and that reporters regularly examined the women’s actions and asked what the victim did to provoke the rape.

This study will examine how frequently myths are used as frames in articles about arrests and rape court cases. The main questions include: depending on whether the perpetrator is a stranger or non-stranger, how often were myths used; and depending on the age of the victim, how often are myths used?

The gatekeeping theory will also be used to determine how often context, prevention methods and risk factors are included and which sources are primarily used to tell the story of rape.

To answer these questions, the researcher completed a quantitative content analysis of 434 articles from 1996 to 2012. Two coders, one of whom was the researcher, used codebooks to answer 26 questions about each article and the researcher calculated the results. The literature review will discuss how the framing theory could cause rape myths to be included in articles about rape and how the gatekeeping theory affects whether context is included and which sources are interviewed.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Framing and Agenda-Setting

Journalists and the media regularly use framing when covering political events, issues, and actors (Entman, 2004). “Frames are parts of political arguments, journalistic norms, and social movements’ discourse” (Vreese, 2005, p. 53). Framing involves selecting certain parts of reality and making them more prominent than others (Entman, 1993, p. 52; Gitlin, 1980; Vreese, 2005), which promotes certain interpretations, evaluations, or solutions (Entman, 2004, p. 5). Frames make sense of events and convey what the issue is (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Vreese, 2005). They organize the world for journalists and to some extent for their audience (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). For example, journalists may present the topic of oil drilling in the frame of the environment, gas prices, unemployment, or U.S. dependency on foreign energy (Zaller, 1992).

Entman breaks framing down into two categories, procedural and substantive. Procedural framing focuses on the legitimacy of political actors, by reporting on leaders’ “technique, success, and representativeness” (Entman, 2004, p. 6). It focuses on the political campaign or group instead of the issues (Wettstein, 2011). Journalists frequently “define news (although not editorials) as action described and predicted, rather than as ideas analyzed” (Entman, 2004, p. 74). Procedural framing does not give
the public much information to help it contribute to political discussions, but it could undermine a political leader’s legitimacy (Entman, 2004).

Procedural framing is also called “game” framing (Entman, 2004, p. 6). Game framing generally has four options, the candidate is “leading, or trailing, or gaining ground, or losing ground” (Patterson, 1980, p. 116). Game framing that focuses on who is winning and losing distances the public from the political process (Patterson, 1980).

Politics is a competitive struggle for power, and the overt forms of this struggle stand out in reporters’ minds. Issues and problems are a backdrop to the central drama until they push themselves to the forefront” (Patterson, 1980, p. 136).

This framing style that examines the legitimacy of politicians (Entman, 2004) by factors such as the ability to win the “game” (Paterson, 1980) could be used to understand how the media frames the competition between the victims’ story and the perpetrators’ in a rape court case.

The other type of framing, according to Entman (2004) is substantive framing. It involves two of the following functions: “defining effects or conditions as problematic, identifying causes, conveying a moral judgment and endorsing remedies or improvements.” (Entman, 2004, p. 5). For example, in the coverage of September 11th the problem was the “thousands of civilian deaths from an act of war against America;” the cause was the Taliban government, its leaders and al-Qaeda; the moral judgment was calling these groups and leaders evil and going to war against Afghanistan (Entman, 2004, p. 6).
Framing is also thought to occur in very subtle ways. Framing is minor alterations in judgment statements or in wording options (Iyengar, 1991, p. 11). Gitlin (1980) writes frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual (p. 7). Placing, repeating and connecting information to a person’s beliefs or schema creates prominence or salience (Entman, 2004, p.4)

Schema is a person’s cognitive framework of general knowledge about a certain concept (Fiske, 1984, p. 13). A schema for September 11th could include the World Trade Center, Osama bin Laden, airplane hijackers, the New York mayor Rudolph Guiliani and the New York fire department (Entman, 2004). Frames that use culturally understandable and emotionally charged words and images can make stories very influential (Entman, 2004, p. 6). An inkling of an idea already inside someone’s schema can make a small piece of information very salient (Entman, 1993, p. 4). On the other hand, when stories do not tap into a person’s schema it can be hard for the reader to interpret the story (Entman, 1993, p. 4).

Within the framing theory, “dominant meaning consists of the problem, causal, evaluative, and treatment interpretations with the highest probability of being noticed, processed and accepted by the most people” (Entman, 1993, p. 56). A text or idea that is dominant has the “most common audience schemata” (Entman, 1993, p. 54).

Journalists might try to be “objective” in their reporting, but it is easy to impart framing that uses the most common interpretation of the news, which hinders most
audience members from making balanced assessments (Entman, 1993). Many journalists do not share a common understanding of framing and it is easy for sources to force their perspective on the news (Entman, 1989).

Generally speaking frames are unavoidable due to organizational reasons (Gitlin, 1980). Frames allow journalists to organize large amounts of information routinely and quickly and to identify information, put it in “cognitive categories,” and package it with ease (Gitlin, 1980, p.7). When analyzing journalism, one must ask, “What is the frame here? Why this frame and not another?”...and “What difference do the frames make for the larger world?” (Gitlin, 1980, p.7).

Frames do not influence everyone in the same way, but they do influence many people in similar ways (Entman, 1993). Frames can have an effect on the reader (Goffman, 1974). A primary framework or frame lets readers “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences” according to the frame’s terms (Goffman, 1974). “Framing effects” refer to how frames alter opinions (Iyengar, 1991). A number of behavioral sciences have found that people are very sensitive to contextual cues when they make judgments, decisions or opinions (Iyengar 1991). Which problem is chosen to demonstrate and how that problem is framed may heavily influence decision outcomes (Iyengar, 1991). For example, Americans responded more positively when a question framed dissent as a democratic right versus when it focused on a particular dissenting group (Iyengar, 1991).
Scholars have also analyzed whether violence reporting is framed with the public health model (Dorfman, Woodruff, Chavez, & Wallack, 1997). The public health model says that death and injury can be preventable instead of inevitable (Coleman & Thorson, 2002) and that violence should be treated as a deadly disease, meaning it would include the “interaction between victims,” “the environment,” “the agent,” the risk factors and prevention methods. In a content analysis of 12 days of local television news in California, Dorfman et al. (1997) found that the context surrounding the youth violence was either ignored or understated in 84 percent of the stories they examined. When the violence included context it was more often about how a person could protect his or herself instead of explaining the “underlying risk factors or precursors to violence” (Dorfman et al., 1997, p. 1314).

Coleman and Thorson (2002) completed two experiments to find the effects of framing violence and crime news using the public health model versus a traditional news model. In their first experiment, they tested 89 university students on four “breaking news” stories about “domestic violence, youth violence, alcohol-related assault and, handgun-related homicide” (p. 408). These articles were presented in clip format, meaning individually, not within a newspaper. Some participants read stories that included public health information and others read traditional news stories. Coleman and Thorson found that when the public health model was applied, readers became more critical of society’s role in the crime or violence whereas the students who read the traditional news stories were not as critical of society’s role. The experiment
also showed readers of articles including the public health model attributed less
responsibility to individuals compared to students who read the traditional news stories.

In Coleman and Thorson’s second experiment of 127 university students, 
participants read articles about “youth violence, alcohol-related rape, and handgun-
related homicide.” The articles were presented in the pages of a newspaper as opposed 
to being individually cut out. Coleman and Thorson (2002) found that students who read 
the public health model stories were more likely to think education and community 
prevention programs were more effective at reducing violence than prisons compared 
to those who read the traditional news stories.

These studies are exploratory but provide examples of how framing can affect 
readers’ perceptions about who is responsible for crime and violence and how much 
they support prevention measures.

Western culture emphasizes the individuals’ role as opposed to society’s role 
(Coleman & Thorson, 2002) and attribution is used to explain the events of the world 
(Fiske, 1984). Based on Coleman, & Thorson’s study, the public health frame might help 
counter rape myths that place blame on the victim and dismiss the perpetrator’s 
(Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004) and society’s role (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993) 
in rape.

Along with framing, agenda setting also has an effect on what the public is 
thinking about and possibly believes about rape. Agenda setting theory explains which 
topics are written about or in the public’s eye while framing deals with how the topics
are written about or the angle journalists take when writing the story (Coleman & Thorson 2002; Vreese, 2005).

Agenda setting tells people what to think about, not what to think (Cohen, 1983). However, emphasizing one issue over another influences what issues the audience thinks about as important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The myth *innocent men are commonly accused of rape or sexual assault and women often lie about it* will be explored from an agenda setting perspective. Examining how frequently it is reported that men are innocent of rape will help determine how often the public is asked by the media to think about this myth. The other three myths *rape is sex and the perpetrator is motivated by lust, victims are to blame and men of good standing do not rape* will be analyzed from a framing perspective. By looking at journalists’ word choices for describing rape, coders will determine how frequently these myths are used to frame stories about rape. The next section expands on what rape myths are, and which words or phrases scholars have determined express rape myths.

**Rape Myths**

Rape myths are generally false beliefs and attitudes about rape that are firmly held and widely accepted in order to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Myths are appealing for society because they “reduce a very complex behavior to a very simple, single motive (Groth, Birnbaum, 1979, p 10). Myths are more often accepted by people who believe in sex role
stereotyping, have adversarial sexual beliefs and accept interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980).

Brownmiller (1975), who wrote one of the first comprehensive books on rape identified the following fundamental rape myths: “all women want to be raped,” “no woman can be raped against her will,” “she was asking for it,” and “if you’re going to be raped, you might as well relax and enjoy it” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 346). Brownmiller’s research led her to conclude that men rape in the name of masculinity and, therefore, it is in men’s interests to think that women want to be raped in the name of femininity (1975). It is also in men’s interest to convince women that rape is natural (Brownmiller, 1975).

After Brownmiller’s work, scholars have examined how rape myths are conveyed in the mass media. Benedict’s work as a journalist covering sex crimes and later a journalism professor led her to be concerned about the journalists’ lack of rape knowledge.

My journalist colleagues, I found, tended to perpetuate rather than debunk the myths and misunderstandings that so hurt victims, not intentionally, perhaps, but through habit and ignorance (Benedict, 1992, p. vi).

Therefore, she analyzed how the press portrayed prominent sex-crime articles and interviewed the reporters and editors who worked on the particular stories.

Meyers (1997) completed a qualitative, textual analysis of articles in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and news from ABC, NBC and CBS television network affiliates in
Atlanta and documented stereotypes and external details in articles about rape that should not be included. One of her research questions was: how are female victims of male violence represented in the news? She found that the news used traditional ideas of gender roles when it documented violence against women. Meyers (1997) also interviewed newspaper, television and radio journalists as well as 20 women’s advocates. She found that journalists believed advocates were biased and that advocates wanted journalists to stop including irrelevant details such as what the victim wore.

Sampert (2010) used Benedict’s, Meyers’ and other scholars’ work to conduct a content and critical discourse analysis of 1,532 stories by six English-Canadian newspapers. Sampert (2010) found that 56.8 percent of the stories published in 2002 included at least one sexual assault myth. Based on previous scholars’ work, this study chose four of the rape myths, for further examination.

**Rape is sex and the perpetrator is motivated by lust.**

The myth at the backbone of all other myths is that rape is sex (Benedict, 1992). By calling rape “sex,” the press perpetuates the idea that rape does not hurt the victim and that it is not really a physical attack (Benedict, 1992 p.14). People do not take rape seriously when they are told to think of it as sex instead of an aggressive act (Benedict, 1992). Rape should not be described as a man’s uncontrollable urge for sex but rather as men’s attempt to control and humiliate women (Meyers, 1997).
The second part of the myth is that the perpetrator was motivated by lust (Sampert, 2010). If rape is assumed to be sex then people can easily conclude that men rape women because they cannot control their sexual urges (Benedict, 1992).

Referring to the sex offender as a lusty male falling victim to a sexy woman, as a sexually frustrated man with needs or a sex-fiend with perverted desires all incorrectly assume that the offender’s actions are primarily driven by sexual desire and that rape is about sexual need (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979 p. 2).

Quite to the contrary, careful clinical study of offenders reveals that rape is in fact serving primarily nonsexual needs. It is the sexual expression of power and anger (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979, p. 2).

Defining “rape” as an expression of sexual desire is inaccurate and deceitful because it shifts the blame for the offense to the victim instead of the assailant (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979; Meyers, 1997); the offender’s arousal is said to come from a victim that intended to or carelessly aroused him with her actions or dress (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979).

In Sampert’s study (2010) she combined the “rape is sex” myth and the “perpetrators are motivated by lust” myth. To code for this myth, some of the words she looked for were, “partying,” “grouping,” “luring” and phrases that conveyed “romantic overtones” or “sexual misunderstanding” (Sampert, 2010, p. 305). This combined myth was found in 21 percent of the total stories (Sampert, 2010).
Another way that rape is sexualized in the news is by describing the woman as vivacious, flirtatious or pretty (Benedict, 1992). For example, it is more accurate and less sexualizing to describe a woman as wearing only a jacket and a sock as opposed to being naked from the waist down (Benedict, 1992). Rape or sexual assault should also not be called “had sex with” but instead “raped” or “penetrated” (Benedict, 1992, p 260). Words that convey that the rape or sexual assault was pleasurable to the victim should not be used, nor should titillating words be used to demean the rape (Benedict, 1992).

Choosing the word “sex” instead of rape, sexual assault, alleged rape or alleged sexual assault to describe court cases about rape or sexual assault activates the myth and essentially frames the story using a myth. By using the word “sex,” a schema about sex pops up instead of a schema about violence and sexual abuse, which might affect readers’ opinions about the rape or sexual assault.

**Victims are to blame for their own rape.**

The next myth is that a woman provokes her own rape, (Sampert, 2010; Benedict, 1997) that she got what she deserved (Benedict, 1992) or is to blame for her own rape. This belief is also based on the first myth that rape is sex. Because of the first myth, people often believe that a woman lures her rapist and therefore causes her own rape (Benedict, 1992). Or if the women didn’t purposefully entice the rapist, she must have gotten into the situation because she was careless and did not prevent herself from attracting him (Benedict, 1992).
Soothill’s study of newspaper articles in 1985 found that women were regularly blamed for their own rape and murder (Soothill, 1991). If the victim was murdered or lived, it was the man’s account that was prominent in headlines (Soothill, 1991). One common theme in the articles was that women’s sexuality caused men’s violent sexual response (Soothill, 1991). If the rape was not due to the woman’s actions during the sexual assault, people move on to say it is her lifestyle that is the cause (Benedict, 1992).

Included in this myth is the reference to the victim’s previous sexual history, her attractiveness, her drug or alcohol use, self-blame by the victim, prevention measures that address women’s behaviors and details about her behavior before the rape.

In the past, a woman’s sexual history was announced for the jury to review while the man’s sexual history was kept quiet (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 417). Her credibility was judged based on her sexual activity and his was not (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 417).

Today there are rape shield laws that are supposed to prevent witnesses and the defense from talking about a victim’s sexual past, but this does not prevent the news media from describing the woman in sexual terms or insinuating she is promiscuous. Sampert (2010) wrote that the new way of examining a victim’s poor reputation is through her alcohol habits, drug use or prior convictions. If a victim was previously a prostitute this can also be included in the trial (Sampert, 2010). In Sampert’s study, the victim’s poor reputation was mentioned in 4.5 percent or 75 stories (2010).

Meyers (1997) found that victims who were on drugs, drunk or acting outside of the traditional female role were blamed for their rape while young, elderly, gang raped.
or women attacked by a man characterized as mentally ill were portrayed as innocent by news anchors (Meyers, 1997). Sampert’s (2010) study found that the myth “the victim provoked the assault” was in 10.6 percent of stories.

When the news media covers non-stranger rape the victim is likely coming up against a lot of negative biases. Benedict (1992) found that the public and the press are more likely to blame the victim and put her in the “vamp” category “if she knows the assailant,” “if no weapon is used,” “if she is of the same race as the assailant,” “if she is of the same class as the assailant,” “if she is of the same ethnic group as the assailant,” “if she is young,” “if she is ‘pretty,’” or “if she in any way deviated from the traditional female sex role of being at home with family or children” (p. 19).

The media covers acquaintance rapes as though these assaults are an anomaly and less painful when it could be said that a rape or a sexual assault by someone the victim knows and trusts are more psychologically harmful (Soothill, 1991).

The advocates that Meyers interviewed said that journalists should not use irrelevant details such as what the victim wore, whether she was involved with the man or what she did because it encourages the idea that she was asking for it (Meyers, 1997). Benedict (1992) has questioned whether descriptions of the victim or her behavior should be left out of crime stories completely. For example, in one story a former police chief, who was found guilty of rape, is quoted saying the 14-year-old “girl made advances before he fondled her” (Sampert, 2010, p.327). Focusing on the behaviors of the victim instructs the victim to control herself instead of the male
perpetrator (Sampert, 2010). Not assigning responsibility to male perpetrators, lets the men off the hook (Meyer, 1997).

Although Sampert did not examine self-blame language by the victim in news articles, such as the victim saying she made a mistake, she did code for when others blamed the victim, such as the mother of the victim. She found the mother of an 11-year-old girl quoted saying, “I told her not to go into chat rooms,” regarding her daughter that had been sexually assaulted by a 33-year-old man. This study will code for any victim blaming language including the victim’s own self-blaming language.

Sampert (2010) also considered warnings to women about what not to wear, how late to stay out and where they shouldn’t be to be invoking the victim-blaming myth.

These warnings reflect male rapists’ belief that anything other than their own behavior is the cause of rape (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979).

He projects the responsibility for his own behavior onto external objects like liquor, drugs, the dress and behavior of his victim, and the like—anywhere but where it really belongs. What he cannot face is that he himself has serious psychological handicaps which lead him, under certain circumstances, to behave in this inappropriate, antisocial fashion (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979, p. 9).

Focusing on the woman’s actions might let other women think they cannot be raped because they have been “good” (Benedict, 1992, p. 17; Brownmiller 1975).

However, this is not rational because crime happens at random (Benedict, 1992, p.17)
There is no place, season, or time of day in which a rape has never occurred, nor any specific type of person to whom it has never happened (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979, p. 7).

Sampert also coded for when articles mentioned the woman was walking alone, out late at night or drinking before the sexual assault (Sampert, 2010). This study will code for warnings to women and descriptions of the women’s actions before the rape.

Journalists, who report that the rape happened because of the victim’s actions, such as being out at night, are blaming the victim (Meyers, 1997). If a raped women, has not followed “discriminatory societal expectations” and has a sexual past she is even more severely blamed (Sampert, 2010, p. 323).

This myth that victims are to blame for their assault, especially when compared with the following myth that “men of good standing do not rape women,” illustrates just how differently the news media frame women and men in rape cases. The woman is frequently framed by her activities before the rape or lifestyle, which makes her look like she asked for it while the man is often framed by his job or marriage, which makes him look credible.

**Men of good standing do not rape women.**

The myth that *men of good standing do not rape* is seen when positive societal attributes are used to describe the rapist, such as a man’s good job or marriage, which suggest that he is a good citizen and could not possibly be a rapist (Sampert, 2010).
basic observation found by Groth and Birnbaum (1979) was that not all offenders were alike.

It would be difficult for anyone to identify a rapist based on characteristics such as marriage or job status but Groth and Birnbaum (1979) have found some behavioral patters related to rapists. The patters were: “(1) the anger rape, in which sexuality becomes a hostile act; (2) the power rape, in which sexuality becomes an expression of conquest; and (3) the sadistic rape, in which anger and power become eroticized” (Groth, & Birnbaum, 1979, p. 12). Referring to sadistic rapists, “one of the disconcerting features of such offenders is that they are often quite personable, an impression in sharp contrast to the expected stereotype of the vicious ‘sex fiend’ and a quality they capitalize on to gain access to unsuspecting victims” (Groth, & Birnbaum, 1979, p. 46)

The accused rapist’s great reputation or marital status is often used in the media to clear him of responsibility even though intelligent, friendly and married men have all committed rape before (Sampert, 2010). The discussion of his marriage in news stories plays on the myth that “rape is sex,” and it insinuates that he has a sexual outlet so why would he need to rape (Groth & Burgess, 1980). As Groth and Birnbaum (1979) write rape is not about sexual desire. In Sampert’s research (2010), the focus on the husband’s marital status or good reputation was used in 11.9 percent of stories.

Another rape myth that needs to be explained to completely understand how the myth men of good standing to not rape is so effective is the myth that the rapist is crazy, perverted (Benedict, 1992) or the “other” (Sampert, 2010). This myth that
strangers are the greatest threat reinforces the idea that “gender violence occurs on the margins of society, rather than at its core” (Worthington, 2008, p. 362). It ignores the fact that most rapes are committed by someone known to the victim (U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Victimization, 2005) and also ignores the “social roots” of violence against women (Meyers, 1997, p. 10).

In a study of 53 male college students at the University of California, Los Angeles, 51 percent said they would likely rape a woman if guaranteed they would not be punished (Malamuth, Haber, Feshbach, 1980). This study supported the idea that rape is a continuation of socialization practices instead of sick minds (Malamuth et al., 1980). Reilly, Lott, Caldwell, and DeLuca’s (1992) survey findings with a larger sample similarly found that 31 percent of 371 male students reported that under some circumstances they might “force someone to engage in a sexual act” (p. 129). These surveys suggest that if men do not perceive there will be consequences, they think it is acceptable to rape.

In the case of child abuse, the child frequently knows the person that abuses them or the abuser is a family member (Grubin, 1998). Greer (2003) was told by a spokesperson at the Belfast Rape Centre that nearly 50 percent of people who came to the center and were sexually abused as children were abused by their fathers (Greer, 2003). In Greer’s study, he found that only 5 percent of the 233 stories about child sexual offenses in Northern Ireland from 1985 and 1997 were about incest. What is most heavily reported on is the “stranger-danger” situation (Soothill & Walby, 1991;
Benedict, 1992). Therefore, even though the most common type of child abuse is by someone the child knows (American Psychological Association, 2014), the news media reports primarily on child abuse from strangers.

The combination of the myth “men of good standing do not rape women” with the myth that the rapist is crazy, perverted or the “other” provides a limited frame for which the perpetrator can fit.

**Innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about.**

Another part of the myth above is that *innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about it* (Sampert, 2010) for revenge (Benedict, 1992).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation finds 8 percent of forcible rape to be unfounded (Crime index offenses reported, 1996). It reports that the unfounded rate is higher for forcible rape than other index crimes, which are 2 percent (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime index offenses reported, 1996). Unfounded means to be found false or baseless (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime index offenses reported, 1996).

Lonsway, Archambault and Lisak (2009) examined multiple studies on false rape reporting and found the range for false rape reporting to be from 2 to 8 percent. However, the authors point out that these studies were often based on the ideas of police detectives and prosecutors about what makes a rape true or false. “In reality, investigators and prosecutors cannot determine that the sexual assault did not happen, simply because they suspect that the report is false, view it with suspicion, or because the victim changes his or her account of what happened” (Lonsway, Archambault, &
Lisak, 2009, p. 4). Simply because the woman was drunk, on drugs or young does not mean the rape did not happen (Lonsway et al., 2009).

When Sampert (2010) looked at the myths that innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about it she found that 7.7 or 118 articles enforced the myth that women lie about rape. She also found that 12.1 percent of stories specifically used the myth that innocent men are commonly accused of rape or sexual assault in the stories. She considered coverage of not guilty findings and DNA exonerations as examples of this myth and found that the myth was seen most frequently in coverage of prominent men (Sampert, 2010).

In one article Sampert (2010) found that a well-known con man, who had been accused of rape but was found not guilty, was quoted saying, “She didn’t care what her lies would do. Someone can just say something and that’s it…. She could do it to someone else who may not have the money to fight it. The poor guy will go through the same thing as me” (p. 310). No other crime questions the authenticity of the victim and portrays her as lying as rape coverage does, advocates told Meyers (1997).

The emphasis on the accused and defense lawyers in news reports ignores the challenges rape victims go through to get to trial and the investigation that takes place (Sampert, 2010). The news media has a long tradition of slighting women and anti-female language and rape myths strongly determine how sex crime victims are presented in the press (Benedict, 1992).
The focus on the trial itself instead of the many times perpetrators pleaded guilty before even going to trial also misrepresents the overall picture of rape in America. This is because trial coverage misses the majority of cases where defendants plead guilty. For example, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, out of violent crime defendants with public counsel 71 percent are found guilty by plea, 4.4 percent are found guilty by trial, 23 percent have their case dismissed and 1.3 percent are acquitted. When the defendant uses private counsel 72.8 percent are found guilty by plea, 4.3 percent are found guilty by trial, 21.2 percent have their cases dismissed and 1.6 percent of defendants are acquitted (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000).

By using the myths such as, victims are to blame, men of good standing don’t rape or male rapists are the ‘other’ journalists are using frames that encourage the reader to believe that rape is caused by the “crazy” man or the sexually promiscuous and/or careless woman instead of helping the reader to understand root causes of rape.

It is important to discover and dispel the persistent misconceptions and fallacies about rape which, although they prove comforting in their simplicity, ultimately serve only to perpetuate the jeopardy and danger that this form of sexual psychopathy poses to us all by leading us to adopt preventatives which, in truth, are ineffective (Groth, Birnbaum, 1979, p. 11).

Presenting actual risk factors, context and prevention strategies might help readers understand society’s role in perpetuating crime and violence (Coleman, &
Thorson, 2002), which in turn could lead to better prevention measures and cultural changes.

If society continues to believe in rape myths (Burt, 1980), which encourage women to blame themselves for rape and not report rape and encourage men to dismiss their behavior as rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004), rape will remain prevalent and victims will continue to be blamed.

But if the public were to examine its belief in stereotypical sex roles, for instance — that women are to refuse sex and men are to convince them to have it (Clark & Lewis, 1977); distrust between the sexes (Burt, 1980); the acceptance of interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980); and traditional masculinity (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005), maybe society would choose to change and reduce rape. An example of distrust between the sexes is when people believe that women say they were raped only to be vindictive or cover up a pregnancy (Burt, 1980) and an example of traditional masculinity is when society teachers men to not take no for an answer (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005).

In this review, I have explained and examined four major rape myths that scholars have found to be used as journalistic frames in articles. To further understand how these myths might be selected by journalists and how journalists may unwittingly or complicity omit context, gatekeeping theory is explained.

**Gatekeeping Theory**

Gatekeeping is the theory that journalists, editors, sources, organizations and routines affect which news stories are published and which stories are ignored
(Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Shoemaker, Vos & Reese, 2008; Shoemaker, Salwin & Stacks, 1996; Lewis & Cushion, 2009). Therefore, gatekeepers determine whether context, risk factors or prevention methods are included in stories and also which sources are interviewed.

The general process of gatekeeping involves cutting, shaping and pushing news messages from source to reporter to editors (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, Wrigley, 2001).

The individual reporter’s professional background, beliefs, values and role conception can influence what goes in the news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The reporter’s gender, ethnicity, religious upbringing and socioeconomic status affect the journalist’s educational decision and thus their standards and ethics (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Within journalists’ paradigm or way of making sense of the world, journalists assume the status of dispassionate observers of world affairs, but this paradigm is confirmed for them by consensus (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Therefore, the journalists’ paradigm focuses attention on some things while it prevents some questions, thought to be outside of the paradigm, to be asked (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Being a dispassionate observer involves the idea of objectivity. With the use of objectivity, the complexity of “social, economic and political problems are reduced to the same banal, stereotypical themes”(Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 23). The media has been coming to terms with this and emphasizing accuracy, balance and fairness instead (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), but this adjustment hasn’t necessarily allowed journalists to define news or newsworthiness outside of the hegemonic culture.
Hegemony, which means that elite leaders keep their position by successfully obtaining the consent of the governed (Gramsci, 1983), plays a role in consensus and paradigms. Under the umbrella of hegemony, we can posit that if a journalist uses official sources he or she is considered objective but if the journalist uses personal experience he or she is considered biased (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Therefore, by accepting the notion that official sources are the only credible sources, the media are accepting the boundaries and rules as defined by the elite (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Editors are also under the sway of hegemony and are considered even closer to official sources and further from reality, or bias, than reporters (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Routines are repeated practices within a news organization that journalists use to do their job (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). To be efficient journalists rely on routine channels (Sigal, 1973; Shoemaker, Vos & Reese, 2008). Some of these include writing on deadline and using inverted pyramid style writing, which means putting the most pertinent information at the top.

Routines or news imperatives have specific impacts on crime news reporting (Chibnall, 1977; Lewis & Cushion, 2009). For example, the practice of reporting “immediate” news excludes the history of events and journalists’ interpretations are unlikely to be questioned (Chibnall, 1977; Lewis & Cushion, 2009). The need for drama in part to make a profit encourages journalists to focus on actions as opposed to thoughts (Chibnall, 1977; Livingston & Bennett, 2003; Lewis & Cushion, 2009). For
example, the protest itself is more important than what people are protesting about (Chibnall, 1977). The practice of simplifying news reduces complexities and emphasizes clichés and common sense (Chibnall, 1977; Lewis & Cushion, 2009). Increasing breaking-news crime coverage is decreasing journalists’ abilities to tell a story well (Lewis & Cushion, 2009).

At the organizational level, researchers analyze discrepancies in news beyond the individual and routine levels (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The organization level takes into account the company and how organizational leaders influence the organization’s goals (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

The next level of gatekeeping includes social institutions, special interest group and public relations campaigns that influence what information comes out, how usable it is and what information is withheld (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). News more frequently comes from officials than from other sources (Sigal, 1973; Bullock, 2008). This might be because official sources are more available (Shoemaker, Salwin & Stacks, 1996).

This explains why professionals from universities or hospitals are in the news more often than women’s and civil rights groups (Soley, 1992). For these unconventional groups to get attention they have to create events or protest; this gets them some attention, but protests confirm many journalists’ beliefs that the group is not legitimate (Soley, 1992).
Big business is another type of source that frequently makes it in the news. This is because companies have more resources to get their message across compared to unfunded and politically inexperienced citizen groups (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Businesses may also keep more regular hours and staff than citizen groups (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These structures make it easier for journalists to contact businesses or government officials than regular individuals (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Powerful people, politicians and government officials, are more desirable to the media in part because they have the power to threaten or benefit the average American (Paletz & Entman, 1981). Journalists also think official bureaucracies are more reliable and factual than other sources and thus they dominate the media. Therefore, journalists do not tend to often question the validity of their official sources’ statements and can save time (Gandy, 1982).

Sources can also be broken down into newsmakers, such as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who has a specific role and specific information, and news shapers, such as analysts and experts. It is harder to explain why some experts get picked over others and how their credibility is determined (Soley, 1992). For example, CBS Evening News, called Ronald Payne a terrorism expert even though none of his books use footnotes, documentation or other proof that he had done any real research (Soley, 1992). As more journalists quote an expert the more credible he or she becomes in the eyes of journalists (Soley, 1992). Status of the news source or shaper is determined by “pack journalism” not necessarily by how much the news shaper knows (Soley, 1992).
is also likely that the news shaper has a particular viewpoint or ideology and has no reason to be objective (Soley, 1992).

Journalists also tend to work with sources that come from a similar class position, age, race and other qualities as they do, which contributes to making news homogeneous (Gans, 2004). Lower socioeconomic status people often do not feel comfortable around professionals, so they may not contact the media for fear of rejection (Gans, 2004).

Interest groups also play a role in gatekeeping. They want to get their opinion across to the public and may even seek to influence media’s content by providing guidelines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Interest groups can also create public relations campaigns and use the media to get the public’s attention (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

The ideology level of gatekeeping refers to how the media reproduces social values and beliefs (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). All the other levels below it contribute to “an ideologically related pattern of messages and on behalf of the higher power centers in society” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 184). One area of ideology that has been frequently studied is how the media communicates deviance. Deviance is regularly redefined depending on the interactions of new ideas and social norms (Pritchard & Hughes, 1997; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Therefore, the individuals, newsroom routines, organization leaders, social institutions and ideology all contribute to what is considered news. Gatekeeping
practices and news imperatives help to explain why historical or contextual information is frequently left out of news and specifically crime news.

**Routines and Practices**

News routines and practices contribute to which stories are reported, how in-depth the story goes and which sources are interviewed. When it comes to covering violence against women, the news uses gender roles and stereotypes based on patriarchy, which institutionalizes “women’s inequality within social, political, economic and cultural structures” (Meyers, 1997, p. 3). News agencies frequently cover unusual violent incidents instead of issue pieces on violence (Stevens, 1998). Part of the reason statistics and context that provides the big picture are not emphasized is that crime reporters tend to report from a criminal justice and law enforcement perspective (Stevens 1998). When journalists present a crime as an isolated, random event, the public learns little about the “public health approach” to preventing violence (Stevens, 1998, p. 38; Coleman, Thorson, 2002; Benedict, 1992). The public is not informed of the status of certain types of violence in their communities or the economic and psychological consequences of that violence (Stevens, 1998). Stevens also found that writing about epidemiology dispelled some myths of violence; therefore, journalists who add statistics and context to rape stories might also help to debunk rape myths.

An example of a relevant statistic that journalists might include is: in a study of 1,179 urine samples collected from law enforcement, emergency room personnel and rape crisis centers around the U.S., in which the victim claimed to be sexually assaulted
and a drug was suspected, 40.8 percent of the samples tested positive for alcohol (ElSohly, 1999). In a survey by Mohler-Kuo, Koss, and Wechsler (2004) 72 percent of the reported rapes occurred when the victim was so intoxicated she was unable to consent. By providing a statistic on how often men rape women when they are too intoxicated to consent, journalists could provide a trend for the public instead of an article about one woman who was raped when she got drunk.

A content analysis of 12 days of local television news revealed that the context of the violence was ignored or understated in 84 percent of the examined stories (Dorfman et al., 1997). Iyengar (1991) also found that television networks framed crime and terrorism news stories in episodic terms, meaning they focused on specific events or cases, 89 percent of the time compared to thematic terms, which involves placing “political issues and events in some general context” (Iyengar, 1991, p. 2). In a study of crime television news from 1981 to 1986, Iyengar (1991) found that crime framed one way led people to assign responsibility to individuals while crime framed another way encouraged people to assign responsibility to society (Iyengar, 1991). For example, stories about white crime and the judicial process that used episodic framing as opposed to thematic framing caused participants to attribute more responsibility to individuals (Iyengar, 1991). Coleman and Thorson (2002) found that readers became more critical of society’s role in crime and violence and blamed individuals less when they read stories with public health information such as context surrounding the crime, risk factors and prevention measures.
Coleman and Thorson (2002) also explain in their study that the public health model of reporting also calls for risk factors and prevention strategies. Many of the prevention strategies given in the case of rape often suggest women change their behavior as opposed to men (Sampert, 2010; Benedict, 1992; Meyers, 1997; Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005). These prevention methods, such as telling women to not go out at night, do not work the same way warnings against identity theft or assault do because of rape myths (Sampert, 2010). Instead, the warnings help encourage the idea that women are responsible for not preventing sexual assault (Sampert, 2010). The framework for understanding rape as a “social problem” is lost and the woman’s experience is trivialized (Byerly, 1994).

Scholars have identified societal factors that contribute to rape culture. These include people’s belief in stereotypical sex roles (Clark & Lewis, 1977; Burt, 1980), acceptance of interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980), traditional masculinity (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005) and belief in male dominance (Stevens, 1998; Coleman & Thorson, 2002).

For example, Kilmartin’s and Berkowitz’s book, “Sexual Assault in Context: Teaching College Men About Gender,” explains how college sexual assault programs could address the culture of masculinity, which supports sexual assault and behaviors and attitudes of potential perpetrators (2005, p. 2). “Males are pressured to avoid ‘feminine’ behaviors, dominate women, take risks, be sexual conquerors, eschew any appearance of dependence, get the job done and never take ‘no’ for an answer”
Most men view sexual assault as an isolated event instead of an outgrowth of masculine culture that they are a part of (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005). However, “masculine peer culture can encourage negative behaviors such as sexual coercion” (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005, p. 3). Men who participate in negative attitudes toward women, such as misogynist jokes and demeaning pornography all contribute to sexual assault even if they, themselves, don’t ever sexually assault someone (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005).

Many men refuse to acknowledge the violence and abuse they commit against women. In Koss’s 1980s study of over 2,000 college men, “88 percent of men who reported an assault that met legal definitions of rape were adamant that their behavior was definitely not rape” (Koss, 1995, p. 45). Of men who raped, 47 percent said they predicted they would engage in a similar assault again (Koss, 1995, p. 45).

Kilmartin and Berkowits argue that men influence men and can be a big part of the needed social change and prevention of rape and sexual assault (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005). Teaching men about their gender and powerful social forces can give them the tools they need to have respectful relationships (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005).

These societal risk factors, male focused prevention methods and statistics could be discussed in news articles to fill the knowledge gap that both men and women have with regard to rape and sexual assault.
The next section looks at source selection, a part of gatekeeping theory, to further understand how sources might affect how stories on rape and violence against women are framed.

Source Selection

The sources that reporters select to interview contribute to which type of information is disclosed or highlighted in an article. For instance, a reporter who only interviews official sources such as police officers would write a different story than a reporter who interviewed a rape advocacy counselor and the rape victim. Benedict (1992) found that women reporters didn’t necessarily do a better job covering sex crimes than men; it was more important how much the person knew about rape myths and sex crimes (1992). These reporters said that they thought rape experts, such as advocates were weak sources (Benedict, 1992).

Reporters Meyers spoke with also thought advocates were biased and looked to them with suspicion (Meyers, 1997). Therefore, on women’s topics such as battering and rape, women’s advocates, many of whom have experienced violence first hand, are omitted (Meyers, 1997). “The mainstream press is unwilling to consult feminist sources and has crippled its chance of covering sex crimes properly (Benedict, 1992, p. 266).

In a study of domestic violence murder and attempted homicide articles from 70 Utah newspapers, during a one-year period, more than half of the articles used only official sources or unattributed information (Bullock, 2008). Personal sources, family
members, friends or co-workers were used in one-third of the stories, and domestic violence experts were used in 4.8 percent of the stories (Bullock, 2008).

Of the 20 advocates that Meyers spoke with, many recommended that reporters come to them in order to learn more about the dynamics and context of domestic violence (Meyers, 1997).

Only 8.9 percent of the articles included context (Bullock, 2008). Out of the 636 stories where official sources were used, context was only attributed to official sources 5 percent of the time. Out of the 37 stories where domestic violence experts were used, context was attributed to domestic violence experts 73 percent of the time (Bullock, 2008).

Police departments are reporters’ main source of information on criminal activity (Paletz & Entman, 1981; Meyers, 1997). The accused aren’t considered credible, and victims are not normally asked by journalists how the police handled their case (Paletz & Entman, 1981). Currently, convicted felons who write books about their experience are the only competition to the police’s control of information (Paletz & Entman, 1981). The media does not question the police’s authority and the police maintain existing power relations (Paletz & Entman, 1981).

Police officers are not without bias (Schuller, 2000); therefore, it makes sense to include rape crisis center advocates to provide another perspective. Statistics show that out of the rapes that are reported only 50.8 percent lead to arrests. Some of this might have to do with police officers’ opinions about how credible the woman is and whether
they think the assailant will be found guilty in court (Schuller, 2000). In Schuller’s study of 212 police officers, she discovered that the more intoxicated the officers perceived the female victim to be the less credible she was (2000). They thought the more intoxicated she was, the more interested she was in sex and the more responsible she was for the victimization (Schuller, 2000). Police officers also blamed the perpetrator less the more intoxicated the victim was. Her heavy intoxication made police officers more likely to believe that the perpetrator honestly thought that the complainant was willing to have sex (Schuller, 2000). This is unfortunate considering alcohol is the most prevalent drug found in victims who say they have been sexually assaulted (ElSohly, 1999).

Female police officers were more likely to believe the alleged victim’s claim and less likely to assign blame to the victim than male officers (Schuller, 2000). Female officers were also more likely than male officers to assign blame to the perpetrator, state that the perpetrator was guilty and say that they would charge the assailant (Schuller, 2000). However, women are the minority in most police offices. In 2007, approximately 1 in 8 local police officers were women (Bureau of Justice Statistics).

In Goodman-Delahunty’s study of 125 police officers in New South Wales, Australia, she found that attributing blame to the date rape victim increased when the victim was shown wearing “provocative” attire (Goodman-Delahunty, Graham, 2010). The more rape myths an officer believed in, the less credible the officer perceived the complainant to be (Goodman-Delahunty & Graham, 2010).
With regard to rape court trials, the defense, prosecution and judges are also not without bias against rape victims. In a Canadian sexual assault case, which would be similar to an American one because both systems are based off of common law, judges were found to have very limited language when describing sexual assaults (Coates, Bavelas, Gibson, 1994). When they described stranger rapes judges spoke of violence and assault, but when they described non-stranger rapes they spoke of consensual sex (Coates, Bavelas, & Gibson, 1994). When the defendant was known to the woman, unwanted touching of a young girl’s vagina was described as fondling. In another sexual assault case, a judge said the defendant offered his penis to the victim’s mouth, which makes sexual assault sound like affectionate sex (Coates, et al., 1994). Lees (1997) wrote that British prosecutors were unable to counter myths and stereotypes about women given by the defense because they themselves often believed in the myths and prejudices. Therefore, if journalists are mostly quoting judges and attorneys and not including advocates, they are only telling part of the story.

Benedict (1992) also found that crime and court reporters were too easily manipulated by lawyers and did not conduct their own research. When attorney’s statements were used in the body of the story or the lead there should be attribution (Benedict, 1992). Journalists should also explain how the trial works and why attorneys use certain strategies (Benedict, 1992).

For example, a common tactic of the defense is to focus on the victim’s sexual history to suggest that because she consented to sex with men other times she
consented this time (Tiersma, 2007). The other argument is if the woman has said yes to so many men before and not complained later that she was raped, why would she say she was raped now unless it was true (Tiersma, 2007).

Most states have created rape shield laws because of criticism that discussing the victim’s previous sexual history puts her on trial (Tiersma, 2007). However, this myth that *if she has a sexual history, she is not credible or to blame for being raped* is still activated when defense attorneys and the media describe her as sexy or having a bad reputation (Benedict, 1992; Sampert, 2010).

Another area where rape crisis center advocates voices would be important is in the interpretation of victims’ own language. Victims of non-stranger rape sometimes do not know how to put their own experience into words. For example, in a Canadian civil case a 28-year-old woman sued her father for incest. Instead of referring to the incest as rape, she said her father was having sex with her (Ehrlich, 2007).

It is not only child victims of incest who have a hard time calling their experience rape. In a study of “eight women who had been raped by dates or acquaintances” and never reported them to the police, Wood and Rennie (1994) found that the women had a hard time naming the experience rape and that the men’s accounts of what happened were important to the women in determining what had happened to them.

If reporters are not going to become experts on rape, they should use rape experts the same way a reporter on the science or health beat would use experts (Benedict, 1992). Journalists have to rely on experts for knowledge and to get past their
own gender, race and class biases (Benedict, 1992). Alternative sources are also the way to get away from sexist quotes that journalists say are OK to use because they got them from their sources (Benedict, 1992).

On the other hand, reporters told Greer that improving the way rape is covered is out of their hands because senior managers decides how many resources go to which stories and which stories are cut (2003). Reporters who wanted improvement said that changes would have to come from upper level ranks (Greer, 2003). These journalists also wanted the advocates to be more proactive (Greer, 2003).

In conclusion, gatekeeping, such as source selection and newsgathering routines, plays a large role in how crime or rape is covered. Journalists, who are still predominantly white and male (American Society of News Editors, 2010; Poynter, 2011), often decide what is unusual or newsworthy. This idea of unusualness or novelty has been used to excuse journalists from being called gender, class or race biased (Meyers, 1997). This is a problem because a reporter who is unaware of his or her own biases or ignorance might pick topics or frame stories using stereotypes. These stereotypes are often biased against women, lower class people or people of other races (Myers, 1997). Selecting crimes or rapes that are unusual also ignores the more frequent types of crime or rape that will most likely affect a large number of people in society (Meyers, 1997; Stevens, 1998) and is a disservice to the community (Stevens, 1998). Therefore, adding context, such as how atypical or typical the crime is could help provide the public with more accurate and useful crime news (Benedict, 1992; Stevens, 1998).
The next section explains how myths, context and source selection will be examined together in a content analysis.

**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

**Overarching question:** How accurately, fairly and comprehensively is rape reported in rape court trial reporting?

**H1:** At least one-third of stories will have one or more rape myths.
   1. *Rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust*
   2. *Victims are to blame*
   3. *Men of good standing don’t rape*
   4. *Innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about it*

**H2:** Journalists will use even more rape myths when framing rape articles about women of age 18 to 49 and victims of non-stranger rape.
   a. Myths one, two, three and four will be more heavily present in non-stranger rape than stranger rape.
   b. Myths one, two, three and four will be more heavily present in rapes involving women age 18 to 49 than rapes involving children or elderly women.

**RQ1:** Which source is most often evoking rape myths one and two?
   - Official sources, prosecutor, defense, journalist, person accused of sexual assault, alleged sexual assault victim, sexual assault expert, community member, academic person or “all others.”

**RQ2:** When myths are present, which myth most often has context, defined as statistics, prevention methods or risk factors, also in the article?

**H3:** More than 50 percent of the total articles will not include any context.

**H4:** Official sources’ voices will be used more frequently in rape articles than will rape experts.

**RQ3:** When context is included, which source provides it?

**RQ4:** Is the victim or the accused more frequently quoted or paraphrased in the story?

**H5:** Stranger rapes or sexual assaults will be written about more frequently than non-stranger rapes or sexual assaults.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Overview

The overall purpose of this study is to examine whether and how rape myths are employed in news coverage and the extent to which that coverage includes the type of context and sourcing considered important to accurate representation. This study used content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) to assess the image of rape, female victims and male perpetrators in newspaper articles.

Many scholars have used content analysis to interpret news frames (Vreese, 2005; Entman, 2004). For example, studies have been completed of the women’s movement (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997), labor disputes (Simon & Xenos, 2000), budget issues (Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, & Fan, 1998) or the Persian Gulf conflict (Bennett & Manheim, 1993).

The scholars who have analyzed rape myths in the news often have used qualitative methods (Meyers, 1997; Benedict, 1992), such as textual analysis and or in-depth interviews, which allowed researchers flexibility in drawing conclusions. In qualitative studies, researchers use an “inductive method,” which means data, relevant to a topic are gathered and grouped into meaningful categories and explanations emerge from the data, whereas in quantitative studies, a “deductive model” is used (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 119). This means hypotheses are designed before the
study and data are later collected and analyzed to figure out whether their hypotheses are correct (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

These qualitative studies already provide information about which false beliefs or myths are present in some news articles; therefore, this study will build off of their findings to quantitatively measure how frequently these myths appear in a wide selection of articles about rape court cases. This study will be similar to Sampert’s (2010) study in that regard and will also quantitatively analyze the presence or absence of context and which sources are selected for this type of news.

Content analysis is the best choice for this type of study because it allows the researcher to generate results based on specific rules and procedures, which aim to prevent personal biases from entering the findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis also helps the researcher quantify his or her results using precise statements, such as rape myths were present in one-third of the news articles and to statistically interpret results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). It also is designed to give reliable and replicable findings (Krippendorff, 2004).

**Sample**

The article sample was gathered by applying the percentage of rape crime in a particular geographic region to each newspaper in each geographic region. In 2010, the South had the highest percentage of forcible rapes, 37.7 percent; the West had the second highest percentage of rapes, 25.1; the Midwest had 24.6 percent and the Northeast had 12.7 percent of the nation’s forcible rapes (Federal Bureau of
Investigation, Uniform Crime Report, 2010). In order to include a newspaper from each geographic region, the researcher selected the highest-circulation newspaper per region that also had the most articles about rape available in the LexisNexis Academic database. Newspaper circulation figures are from the Audit Bureau of Circulations list of “Top 25 U.S. Daily Newspapers” (Poynter, 2011; Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2012). The newspapers selected were:

The Houston Chronicle (total average circulation: 916,934); the Star Tribune (total average circulation: 544,186); The Denver Post (total average circulation: 595,363); The New York Times (total average circulation: 2,003,247).

Articles between May 1996 to May 2012 were gathered using LexisNexis Academic. A keyword search was conducted for articles of at least 450 words that included the words “court” or “trial” and at least one of the following keywords in the lead or headline: “rape,” “sexual assault,” “forcible rape,” “statutory rape,” “alleged rape,” “alleged sexual assault,” “sex assault,” “sex attack,” “sex crime,” “forced sex,” “date rape,” or “acquaintance rape.” This search yielded 394 articles about rape and sexual assault in the Star Tribune, 855 articles in The Denver Post, 1,025 articles in the Houston Chronicle and 1,345 articles in The New York Times.

Next, articles about rape and murder; male rape; rape in foreign countries and movie, book or theater reviews about rape, and articles containing less than two sentences about a rape case were removed from the sample. (Rapes that occurred in a foreign country, had to involve an American to be a part of the study.) Repeat articles
from the same newspaper also were removed; however, repeat articles across newspapers were retained. For example, if *The Houston Chronicle* and *The New York Times* published the same wire-service stories, I kept both articles because people from two different regions were reading the article. After this process, 224 articles from the *Star Tribune*, 474 articles from *The Denver Post*, 474 articles from the *Houston Chronicle* and 641 articles from *The New York Times* remained.

Next, I applied the rape crime percentage of each region to each corresponding regional paper. For example I applied the rape crime percentage of 37.7 percent to the 474 Houston Chronicle articles, which gave me 179 articles. I did this for each newspaper based on the rape crime percentage in the newspaper’s region and added up the results, which gave me 434 articles in total. These calculations provided me with a sample size of 434 articles.

I next applied each of the rape crime percentages to 434 and determined that I would have 164 articles from the *Houston Chronicle*, 109 articles from *The Denver Post*, 107 articles from the *Star Tribune* and 55 articles from *The New York Times*. Due to rounding, the total number of articles for the final sample was 435 articles.


**Coders**
One journalism college student was hired to code 214 articles and the researcher coded the remaining 298 articles. A female coder was chosen due to availability. Prior research shows that female coders might be better at recognizing victim blaming and other rape myths than males. Studies have found that females are more pro-victim in their judgments (Pollard, 1992) and less accepting of rape myths (Giacopassi, & Dull, 1986). Giacopassi and Dull (1986) found that females were more likely to reject the idea that women commonly falsely accused men of rape, that females fantasize about rape or that victims are normally a little at fault. Females also more frequently disagreed with males on the idea that “normal males” do not rape (Giacopassi, & Dull, 1986). Because females have been found to be less accepting of myths such as it is the rape victim’s fault or that innocent men are regularly accused of rape, the researcher thought a female might code more accurately.

Reliability and Validity

Holsti’s agreement and Perreault & Leigh was used to test for intercoder reliability. I conducted an intercoder reliability pretest on a sample of 44 articles, which was 10 percent of the final sample of 435 articles. I also conducted a posttest on 75 articles or 17 percent of my final sample. This study will require an intercoder reliability score of greater than 0.75 because a score of 0.80 or greater is acceptable in most situations (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Neuendorf, 2002).

To assure that the data under consideration are similarly interpretable by two or more scholars, it is customary to require $\alpha \geq .800$. Where tentative conclusions
are still acceptable at $\alpha \geq .667$, the lowest conceivable limit (Krippendorff, 2004).

**Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for myth and context were the news articles and the unit of analysis for source was the source. Sources will include official source, prosecutor, defense, journalist, person accused of sexual assault, alleged sexual assault victim, sexual assault expert, community member, academic person and all others.

**Operational Definitions**

*Rape*: is an act of violence that includes forcible male penile penetration of a female vagina and “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part of object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim” (Attorney General Eric Holder, 2012). The new definition includes male victims.

*Statutory rape*: is rape “in which no force is used but the female victim is under the age of consent” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2010). This study will consider statutory rape to be rape.

*Incest*: “is sexual contact between persons who are so closely related that their marriage is illegal,” for example parents and children (RAINN). State laws vary as to what is considered incest, child sexual abuse, sexual assault or rape (RAINN). This study will consider incest to be sexual assault or rape.
**Sexual assault:** is an act of violence that includes “attacks such as rape or attempted rape, as well as any unwanted sexual contact or threats” (The National Center for Victims of Crime).

**Alleged:** is a word that means “so declared, but without proof or legal conviction (the alleged assassin)” (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 2008)

**Context:** is a word that means statistics or statements on rape reporting, arrests, prosecutions, pleas, convictions and sentences.

**Risk factors:** are societal beliefs or norms that put women at risk for rape and sexual assault such as society’s belief in male dominance.

**Prevention methods:** are ways society can prevent rape and sexual assault such as teaching men about how traditional masculinity encourages rape.

**Official sources:** are sources that include police, attorney, judges, police document and court documents.

**Rape experts:** are experts that include rape crisis center advocates; women’s center rape victim advocates, rape survivors; or psychologists or counselors. These choices are based off of Bullock’s definition of “domestic violence experts.”

**Stranger rape/sexual assault:** is a rape or sexual assault that involves a man the woman has never met before.

**Non-stranger rape/sexual assault:** is a rape or sexual assault that involves a man the woman has met before, such as an acquaintance, a friend, a date, fellow partygoer, an intimate partner, a husband or a family member.
**Sex crimes:** are crimes that include rape, molestation or sexual abuse. It involves “illegal or coerced sexual activity.”

**Human sex trafficking:** is when pimps traffic “young women (and sometimes men) completely against their will by force or threat of force” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.).

**Victim recantation:** “is a retraction or withdrawal of a reported sexual assault. Recantations are routinely used by victims to disengage the criminal justice system response and therefore NOT, by themselves, indicative of a false report” (Sexual Assault Task Force Oregon, n.d.).

**False allegation/report:** “is a reported crime of sexual assault, to a law enforcement agency, that an investigation factually proves never occurred” (Sexual Assault Task Force Oregon, n.d.).

**Unfounded:** is a term for a closed case. “Unfounded is not synonymous with false allegation” (Sexual Assault Task Force Oregon, n.d.). Unfounded means no evidence was identified or disclosed (Sexual Assault Task Force Oregon, n.d.). Unfounded means an investigated case that is found to be false or baseless (Federal Bureau of Investigation). This study used both definitions.

**Age groups of interest:** are age groups categorized by baby to 17-year-old, 18-year-old to 49-year-old and 50-year-old to older. The legal age of consent varies by state, but all states prohibit sex with a minor (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2005). A minor is usually someone under age 18 or 21.
(Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 2008). Age 50 and older was chosen to define older women because the National Crime Victimization Survey in 2010 showed slightly lower reports of rape for women 50 years old and older than girls or women ages 12 to 49 (National Crime Victimization Survey, Criminal Victimization, 2010).

**Journalist:** is unattributed information. Coders were instructed to consider unattributed information as “the journalist.” This is based on the newsroom norm that if the information isn’t attributed to anyone, the reporter is accountable for it.

**Procedures**

The codebook had four sections: 1) general information, such as the type of rape or sexual assault and the age of the victim; 2) sources, for example, whether the victim or accused are quoted or paraphrased in the article or whether official sources or rape experts are quoted or paraphrased in the article; 3) whether any of the four myths are present, who provided the myth information for the two myths specifically involving victims, and whether context related to the myth was included; and 4) whether context, such as statistics, prevention methods or risk factors were included and if so which source provided this information.

**Analysis**

I collected nominal data and used frequency tables in SPSS to determine the proportion of articles containing myths and context. I also used frequency tables to determine which sources were quoted or paraphrased frequently and which sources most often provided a particular myth or context, prevention methods or risk factors.
I used cross-tabulation and goodness-of-fit chi-square tests in SPSS to find out whether rape myths were used more frequently in articles about non-stranger rape compared to articles about stranger rape. I also used cross-tabulation and goodness-of-fit chi-square tests in SPSS to find out whether rape myths were cited more often in articles about females ages 18 to 49 compared to females who were babies to age 17 and female who were age 50 and older.
Chapter 4

Results

The goal of this thesis was to determine whose voice was most often quoted or paraphrased in articles about rape, how often rape myths were used in articles about rape and how often context, prevention methods or risk factors which could counter the myth’s message were used in articles about rape. This study required a significance level of \( p < .05 \).

H1, which predicted that one-third of the news articles would contain a rape myth, was supported. Simple frequencies demonstrated that 79\% of the 435 articles contained a rape myth. A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit determined the results were significant, \( \chi^2 = 503.67 \) (d.f. = 1) at \( p < .05 \).

H2a-1, which predicted that articles would contain the *rape is sex myth and perpetrators are motivated by lust* more often when the article included non-stranger rapes compared to stranger rapes, was supported. After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence demonstrated a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction, \( \chi^2 = 35.59 \) (d.f. = 1) at \( p < .05 \). Refer to Table 1 in Appendix C.

In cases where the type of rape, stranger versus non-stranger, could be identified, data showed that rape was called sex in 45 percent of all stories. But rape was called sex more frequently in articles about non-stranger rape, 57 percent, compared to articles about stranger rape, 20 percent.
H2a-2, which predicted that articles would contain the *victim is to blame* myth more often when articles pertained to non-stranger rapes, was supported. After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence showed a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction, $\chi^2=18.18$ (d.f. = 1) at $p<.05$.

In cases where the type of rape, stranger versus non-stranger, could be identified, data showed that the rape victim was blamed in 31 percent of all stories. But the frequency of victim blaming was much higher in articles about non-stranger rape, 39 percent, compared to articles about stranger rape, 14 percent. Refer to Table 1 in Appendix C.

H2a-3, which predicted that articles would contain the *men of good standing, don’t rape* myth more often when the article was about non-stranger rapes, was supported. After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence revealed a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction, $\chi^2=50.08$ (d.f. = 1) at $p<.05$.

In cases where the type of rape, stranger versus non-stranger, could be identified, data showed that the *men of good standing, don’t rape* myth was used in 49 percent of the articles. Non-stranger rape articles contained the myth much more frequently, in 63 percent of the articles, compared to stranger rape articles, in 19 percent of the articles. Refer to Table 1 in Appendix C.

H2a-4, which predicted that articles would contain the *innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about it* myth more often when the article included non-stranger rapes compared to stranger rapes, was not supported.
After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence determined an association between variables that approached significance, $X^2 = 3.895$ (d.f. = 1) at $p<.05$.

In cases where the type of rape, stranger versus non-stranger, could be identified, data showed that the *innocent men are commonly accused and women often lie about it* myth was used in 31 percent of the articles. Stranger rape articles used the myth more often, 39 percent, compared to non-stranger rape articles, 28 percent. Refer to Table 1 in Appendix C.

H2b-1, which predicted that articles would contain the *rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust* myth more often when the article included a victim who was 18 to 49 years old, was supported. After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence determined an association between variables that approached significance, $X^2 = 3.042$ (d.f. = 2) at $p<.10$.

In cases where age could be identified data showed that the *rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust* myth was used in 46 percent of the articles. Articles with a victim who was age 18 to 49 years old included the myth slightly more often, 49 percent, compared to articles with a victim who was a baby to age 17, 45 percent. Articles in which the victim was 50 years old or older did not include this myth at all. There were only three articles involving the rape of women who were 50 years old and above. Refer to Table 2 in Appendix C.

H2b-2, which predicted that articles would contain the *victim is to blame* myth more often when the article included a victim who was 18 to 49 years old, was
supported. After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence revealed a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction, $\chi^2=11.360$ (d.f. = 2) at $p<.05$.

In cases where age could be identified data showed that the *victim is to blame* myth was used in 29 percent of the articles. Articles with a victim who was age 18 to 49 years old included the myth more often, 39 percent, compared to articles with a victim who was a baby to age 17, 19 percent. Articles with a victim who was 50 years old used the myth 33 percent of the time. There were only three articles involving the rape of women who were 50 years old and older. Refer to Table 2 in Appendix C.

H2b-3, which predicted that articles would contain the *men of good standing don’t rape* myth more often when the article included a victim who was 18 to 49 years old, was supported. After a cross tabulation, the chi-square test of independence revealed a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction, $\chi^2=32.029$ (d.f. = 2) at $p<.05$.

In cases where age could be identified data showed that the *men of good standing don’t rape* myth was used in 50 percent of the articles. Articles with a victim who was age 18 to 49 years old included the myth more often, 68 percent, compared to articles with a victim who was a baby to age 17, 33 percent. Articles with a victim who was 50 years old or above did not include this myth at all. There were only three articles involving the rape of women who were 50 years old and above. Refer to Table 2 in Appendix C.
H2b-4, which predicted that articles would contain the *innocent men are commonly accused and women often lie about it* myth more often when the article included a victim who was 18 to 49 years old, was not supported. After a cross-tabulation, the chi-square test of independence revealed an insignificant association between the variables, $X^2=1.331$ (d.f. = 2) at $p<.30$.

In cases where age could be identified data showed that the *innocent men are commonly accused* myth was used in 29 percent of the articles. Articles with a victim who was a baby to age 17 years old included the myth more often, 31 percent, compared to articles with a victim who was age 18 to 49, 29 percent. Articles with a victim who was 50 years old and above did not include this myth at all. There were only three articles involving the rape of women who were 50 years old and older. Refer to Table 2 in Appendix C.

RQ1a asked which source most often used the *rape is sex* myth. Sources did not describe rape as sex in 58.4 percent of the articles. However, when sources did describe rape as sex, journalists perpetuated this myth most often, 28.2 percent. Journalists were followed by: the alleged sexual assault victim, 17.7 percent, the person accused of sexual assault, 16 percent, and official sources, 12.7 percent. Refer to Table 3 in Appendix C.

RQ1b asked which source most often used the *victim is to blame* myth.

Sources did not blame the victim in 73.6 percent of the articles. However, when sources did blame the victim, the alleged sexual assault victim perpetuated this myth the most, 27.8 percent. The alleged sexual assault victim was followed by: official
sources, 22.6 percent, journalists, 20.0 percent, and defense attorneys, 12.2 percent.

Refer to Table 3 in Appendix C.

RQ2 asked which rape myth, one through four, most frequently had context accompanying it. Context accompanied, rape myth one, *rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust*, and rape myth two, the *victim is to blame*, most frequently, 9 percent of the time for both myths.

In cases where rape myth one, *rape is sex and perpetrators are motivated by lust*, was identified, simple frequencies demonstrated that context was present in 9 percent of articles. In cases where rape myth two, *victim is to blame*, was identified, simple frequencies demonstrated that context was present in 9 percent of articles. In cases where rape myth three, *men of good standing don’t rape*, was identified, simple frequencies demonstrated that context was present in 5 percent of articles. In cases where rape myth four, *innocent men are commonly accused and women often lie about it*, was identified, simple frequencies demonstrated that context was present in 7 percent of articles. Refer to Table 4 in Appendix C.

H3, which predicted that more than 50 percent of the total articles would not include any context, was supported. Simple frequencies demonstrated that 93 percent of the articles did not included context. The results were significant, \( \chi^2 = 323.276 \) (d.f. = 1) at \( p < .05 \).

H4, which predicted that official sources’ voices would be used more frequently in rape articles than rape experts’ voices, was supported. Simple frequencies
demonstrated that official sources were quoted or paraphrased in 90.8 percent of the articles while rape experts were quoted or paraphrased in 11 percent of the articles. The results for official sources were significant, \( \chi^2 = 289.713 \) (d.f. = 1) at \( p < .05 \). The results for rape experts were significant, \( \chi^2 = 263.235 \) (d.f. = 1) at \( p < .05 \).

RQ3 asked, when context was found, which source provided the context. Simple frequencies found that 93 percent of the articles did not have any context. However, when sources did provide context, journalists, 30 percent, provided context most often. Journalists were followed by: sexual assault experts, 20 percent, the “all others” category, 13.3 percent, and official sources, 10 percent, along with community members, 10 percent. Refer to Table 5 of Appendix C.

RQ4 asked whether the victim or the accused was more frequently quoted or paraphrased in the articles. Simple frequencies determined that the victim was quoted or paraphrased more frequently, 45 percent, compared to the accused, 36 percent.

H5, which predicted that stranger rapes would be written about more frequently than non-stranger rapes, was not supported. In cases where the type of rape, stranger versus non-stranger, could be identified, simple frequencies found that stranger rapes were written about 32.9 percent of the time and non-stranger rapes were written about 67.1 percent of the time. The results were significant, \( \chi^2 = 34.913 \) (d.f. = 1) at \( p < .05 \).

Although not one of the original research questions, an analysis of each newspaper compared to the percent of rape myths present, found that The Denver Post had the largest percentage of rape myths, 90 percent. The Denver Post was followed by
the *Star Tribune*, 77 percent, *The New York Times*, 76 percent and the *Houston Chronicle*, 75 percent.

How often each particular myth would show up in the articles was not an original question in this study, but it was found that myth three showed up 46.2 percent of the time; followed by myth one, 41.6 percent; myth four, 31.3 percent; and myth two, 26.2 percent.

It was also found that when rape experts were quoted or paraphrased, which was 11 percent of the time, they provided context 12.5 percent of the time. Whereas, official sources were quoted or paraphrased 90.8 percent of the time and provided context only 1.5 percent of the time.
Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusion

News coverage of rape and sexual assault remain problematic because journalists continue to frame their articles using rape myths and continue to leave out context. The majority of news articles analyzed in this study contained at least one rape myth. For the most part journalists did not diversify their sources and did not include public health model-type context in their news stories. These findings support previous scholarly research (Sampert, 2010; Dorfman et al., 1997; Iyengar, 1991) and should serve as a warning to journalists because the use of rape myths has been shown to encourage the public to find a defendant not guilty (Franiuk et al., 2008) and to make men believe sexually violent behavior is not rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

The lack of public health model-type context in articles about rape also shows that journalists are missing opportunities to examine society’s role in crime (Thorson & Coleman, 2002). The lack of context is likely because of the gatekeeping theory, which is about how reporters gather the news. Journalists are often on a tight deadline and use information that is readily available such as testimony from court or reports from police. Journalists also rely on official sources often because they believe they are objective sources (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This study and the public health model ask journalists and editors to take the time to add statistics as often as possible in order to
provide rape in a larger societal context. Journalists could at least add statistics, risk factors and prevention methods to second-day crime stories or a health reporter or an investigative reporter could write more in depth stories that include context after breaking news stories. The wide use of official sources, which often do not provide context, also demonstrate that journalists should expand whom they interview if they want to provide the context of the crime (Bullock, 2008).

The framing theory, which organizes the world for journalists and readers (Gitlin, 1980), could be used to explain how journalists end up including so many rape myths. Rape myths are a part of everyday language and societal interactions and many reporters probably buy into the myths themselves. Calling rape sex and blaming the victim is probably how many journalists, similar to members of the public, explain away a reoccurring violent act toward women that is perpetrated mostly by a loved one, friend or acquaintance. If the reporters can blame the rape on alcohol, a conversation between the victim and perpetrator or a sexy outfit instead of the fact that men rape women to overpower (Groth & Birnbaum, 1979) and hurt women, they can write a quick hit article instead of a lengthy analysis that requires a more phone calls. To overcome these myths, journalists would need to think outside of what their culture tells them regularly, which is why it would help if they were trained about rape before they wrote about it.

Journalists, which were defined as unattributed information, perpetuated the *rape is sex* myth most often, 28.2 percent of the time. Journalists provided the *victim is
to blame myth third most often or 20 percent of the time. Although it is disappointing that journalists provided these myths so frequently, it was a good to find that journalists provided statistics, risk factors and prevention methods most frequently compared to other sources, 30 percent of the time. Because some journalists are already finding ways to providing context, it is not an unreasonable request to ask them to provide it more frequently. However, they would need to provide it much more frequently to truly frame rape articles differently because 93 percent of the articles didn’t have any statistics, risk factors or prevention methods.

This study revealed that the majority of articles were about non-stranger rapes, which are the most common form of rape. This finding was contrary to the researcher’s hypothesis but it is considered a positive sign because it means that American news is reflecting the more common type of rape. Unfortunately, the articles about non-stranger rapes contained rape myths most frequently. Therefore, rape myths that blame the victim, call rape sex, emphasize the perpetrator’s good standing and the perpetrator’s innocence continue to be prominent in the news.

The prevalence of rape myths in articles about non-stranger rapes is alarming because scholars have found that people who read articles that include rape myths are more likely to believe the defendant is not guilty and that the victim is lying (Franiuk et al., 2008). Rape myths in newspaper headlines have also been found to make men more likely to find the defendant is not guilty and to support sexual assault in general (Franiuk et al., 2008).
If the news is saturated with rape myths, the public is being influenced to view the defendants as not guilty. This keeps defendants from being held accountable and does not deter rape.

Franiuk et al. (2008) provided 62 undergraduate students, 71 percent female, with a fictitious news article about the Kobe Bryant sexual assault case. Some students read a fictitious article that included rape myths and others read one that included information that challenged rape myths such as:

Reports have stated that the accuser knew she would be seeing Bryant that night and that she expected him to make a move on her. These statements, though, do not imply that she indeed wanted sex or that she didn’t change her mind once alone with Bryant. (Franiuk et al., 2008)

The choice to include information that challenges the rape myths is similar to the choice to include context, risk factors or prevention methods. It would be ideal if reporters would simply stop using rape myths. But as this study found the alleged sexual assault victim is the source that most often uses the rape myth, the victim is to blame, so it is difficult to not use them. Therefore, if reporters find it difficult to stop including rape myths because sources are providing them, they could include context, risk factors or prevention methods that would help the reader understand society’s role in the crime. Society’s role in causing rape might be described as men engaging in misogynistic jokes, encouraging their buddy not to take no for an answer or encouraging their friend to pursue an intoxicated woman. By including the potential societal causes many
members of the public might see their role in the crime and possibly be motivated to change their behaviors or at least analyze their behaviors instead of thinking that rape is some other person’s problem.

Rape myths in newspapers could also be the reason that male jurors who are exposed to pretrial information before sexual assault court cases are less likely to be against the defendant (Mullin, Imrich & Linz, 1996) than they would be in other court cases (Devine, Clayton, Dunford, Seying & Pryce, 2000).

Mullin, Imrich and Linz (1996) provided participants with pretrial publicity such as stories about acquaintance rape that portrayed men as sexual predators and then created a mock acquaintance rape trial. They found that exposing men to the “predatory acquaintance rape” stories made men more pro-defense whereas women who were exposed did not change their evaluation of the trial. Therefore, even though the man is portrayed as aggressively raping someone he knows, the men in this study sided with the defendant. Devine, Clayton, Dunford, Seying and Pryce (2000) reviewed empirical research on jury decision making from 1955 to 1999 about all types of court cases and found that pretrial publicity was more likely to influence prospective jurors to be anti-defense compared to prospective jurors who were not exposed to pretrial information.

If jurors who are exposed to crime articles before a trial tend to be more anti-defense, except for the case of rape, it could be that the rape myths in news articles are tilting the scale in favor of the defendant. These myths could be bringing to the
forefront of people’s minds the sex role stereotypes in people’s schemas that are patriarchal and unequal. Bringing to light these unequal beliefs, such as “she asked for it” because she was drunk or because she went to his apartment, keeps victims and survivors facing a courtroom that is stacked against them.

It has also been found that when men see a not guilty verdict their dismissal of men as perpetrators increases (Sinclair & Bourne, 1998). After providing undergraduate students with questionnaires about rape myth acceptance levels and a court case summary that either was a control, guilty verdict, not guilty verdict or no verdict, the researchers found that male student’s acceptance of rape myths increased when they read a not guilty verdict case. The male student’s acceptance of rape myths decreased when they read a guilty verdict (Sinclair, Bourne, 1998).

Therefore, the majority of newspaper articles about rape contain rape myths that have been found to make the general public and male jurors specifically believe the defendant is not guilty. And when the defendant is found not guilty, males’ acceptance of rape myths increases. Thus, there is a vicious cycle in place that upholds rape culture. Rape culture is the acceptance of and normalization of sexual violence against women.

Rape myths can also encourage men to think their sexually violent behavior is not rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) and make women think they personally are not vulnerable to rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Men who believe the rape myth that a woman who does not have bruises or scrapes cannot claim she was raped, might think that it is acceptable to coerce a woman
into having sex with him as long as he does not leave any bruises or scrapes (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Women who believe the myth that women who “sleep around” get raped, might think she can avoid being raped if she does not “sleep around” (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Accepting rape myths means limiting which behaviors “count” as rape and can discourage women from reporting their experience as rape (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004).

Peterson and Muehlenhard (2004) surveyed 86 female university students who had been raped according to Kansas law about their rape myth acceptance levels and whether they considered their rape to be rape. They found that when women believed women who are sexually teasing deserve to be raped and they thought their own behavior was sexually teasing they were less likely than other participants to label their experiences as rape. They also found that women who believed that rape isn’t rape if a woman does not fight back and they didn’t fight back were less likely to label their experience as rape (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2004).

This type of self-blaming by female victims and survivors was also found heavily in this study. The alleged sexual assault victim blamed herself more frequently than any other sources blamed the victim. When the victim is to blame myths was found, it was said by the alleged sexual assault victim 28 percent of the time. Whereas, it was said by official sources 23 percent of the time and journalists 20 percent of the time. The reason an alleged sexual assault victim would be using victim-blaming language frequently is likely because during a court trial she would have to go into detail about what happened
before the rape occurred and it is during a trial that rape is most commonly covered (Cuklanz, 1996). It should be enough to talk about the actual rape, but in a courtroom and at the police department official sources are allowed to ask the victim about the events before the rape such as how much alcohol was consumed and interactions before the rape. Reporters could choose not to write about events before the rape. But because reporters also live in rape culture and trust official sources (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), they most likely believe the amount of alcohol consumed or location the two people met is relevant to the crime of rape and thus include this information. Thus the gatekeeping theory, which involves routines and practices and source selection is in part why this victim blaming language is included. Journalists rely on and consider official sources to be objective, which influences their writing (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). When in fact official sources such as police officers are biased (Schuller, 2000). Because of the prevalence of official sources and rape myths — even from victims — this study calls for journalists to include rape victim advocates, psychologists, gender studies professors and sociologists, who know that rape culture is distorting reality, in rape articles.

When the *rape is sex* myth was found, journalists, followed by official sources and the alleged sexual assault victim, said it the most frequently.

It is not surprising that journalists and official sources frequently call rape sex because journalists tend to rely heavily on official sources, which have their own biases. It might, however, be surprising that alleged rape victims call rape sex so commonly. But
many scholars have found that there is not a great vocabulary for victims to choose from to talk about their experience (Tiersma, 2007; Ehrlich, 2007; Wood and Rennie, 1994). Victims often refer to rape or incest as sex (Tiersma, 2007; Ehrlich, 2007) and that the man’s account of what happened was important in determining whether to name it rape (Wood and Rennie, 1994). Victims live in and are inundated by American rape culture so it should not be shocking that they have trouble calling accepted sexual violence against women — rape.

When this study found that the alleged rape victim was quoted or paraphrased more frequently than the accused, the first assumption was that this is a positive sign. But considering it is often the alleged rape victim who is using victim-blaming language or calling rape sex there is still work to be done either through advocates working with victims to better verbalize their experience or by journalists interviewing advocates who have a better understanding of how rape saturates society than victims do. The alleged rape victim is likely undergoing shock and might not even understand how many rape myths she herself believes in.

This study also found that the majority of articles did not include context, prevention methods or risk factors involving men changing their behaviors (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005) as opposed to the women changing their behaviors (Sampert, 2010). This lack of context confirms the work of several scholars’ studies (Dorfman et al., 1997; Iyengar, 1991).
This study calls for journalists to use the public health model as frequently as possible when covering rape and sexual assault. The public health perspective seeks to empower people and communities to see violence as a problem that can be understood and changed instead of the inevitable (Mercy, Rosenburg, Powell, Broome, & Roper, 1993). Thorson and Coleman (2002) found that participants in their public health model study were more critical of society’s role, such as lax laws, when reading crime or violence news stories that included the public health model compared to participants who read traditional crime or violence news stories. Participants who read public health model articles also held individuals less responsible for crime and violence compared to participants who read traditional news stories (Thorson & Coleman, 2002). Therefore, if the public health model such as statistics on how frequently acquaintance rape occurs and risk factors, such as, misogynistic jokes contribute to rape in society (Kilmartin & Berkowits, 2005), were included in articles about rape, readers might blame the individuals less.

In another study Thorson and Coleman (2002) found that participants who read public health model stories were more likely to agree “education and community involvement prevention programs were more effective in reducing crime and violence than prisons” (p. 419). Therefore, using the public health model for articles about rape could be a useful way to educate the public about its role in preventing rape especially because men accused of rape are rarely sent to prison, 16.3 percent of the time,
(Reynolds, 1999), while rape or sexual assault happens every two minutes in the United States (Lauritsen & Rezey, 2013).

The researcher believes that including the public health model in articles would have an impact on how the public thinks and behaves because health media campaigns have been found to change behavior. Snyder, Hamilton, Mitchell, Kiwanuka-Tondo, Fleming-Milici and Proctor (2004) reviewed more than 300 publications about health media campaigns and found that health media campaigns changed the behavior of about 8 percent of the population. Although 8 percent might appear small, it could affect a large number of people. For instance, in a population of 100,000, about 8,000 people would be practicing the desired health behavior (Snyder et al., 2004).

This study found that rape experts were rarely quoted or paraphrased but that when they were quoted they provided context more frequently than official sources. Rape experts were quoted or paraphrased 11 percent of the time and provided context 12.5 percent of the time. Whereas, official sources were quoted or paraphrased 90.8 percent of the time and provided context 1.5 percent of the time. It is astounding that official sources, which included police officers, attorneys, judges and investigative documents, rarely include context. Apparently journalists need to be more proactive in obtaining data, statistics and cultural factors, from official sources because they aren’t readily providing it. It was somewhat disappointing that rape experts provided context only 12.5 percent of the time. Rape experts could certainly do a better job of reaching out to news agencies when rape court cases are happening as could journalists do a
better job of calling rape crises centers and other rape experts. Rape experts should also think about the type of information they are providing, whether it is only anecdotal or whether they are providing some relevant statistics.

In general rape articles lack context, risk factors and prevention methods. Bullock (2008) found similar results. Of the 37 articles where domestic violence experts were quoted or paraphrased, they provided context 73 percent of the time. Of the 636 articles where official sources were quoted or paraphrased, they provided context 5 percent of the time (Bullock, 2008).

Context is likely rarely included because reporters tend to interview whoever is most readily available and considered an objective source (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Journalists could be excluding rape experts because they are likely not reaching out to advocates and many reporters see advocates as biased (Meyers, 1997; Benedict, 1992). This is tragic because rape experts, victims advocates, gender studies professors and psychologists often have first-hand experience or in-depth knowledge of rape within a larger societal context.

To further this research it would be interesting to complete a content analysis and experiment that coded for rape myths and context in one newspaper’s articles before the journalists were trained by a sexual assault expert and after they were trained. That study could determine whether training would reduce rape myths and increase context in rape articles.
A researcher could also have a newsroom experiment that required its reporters to always call a rape expert when covering rape. A rape expert would be defined as a rape crisis center worker, a rape victim advocate, a counselor, a psychologist, a women’s center staff member or a professor who specialized in violence against women. The researcher could note how often a reporter contacted a rape expert for a story, how much information the reporter included from the rape expert, whether the rape expert provided context, risk factors or prevention methods, and whether the rape expert provided any additional information that would combat rape myths.

Another study could require a group of reporters to include a rape statistic in every story about rape and count how often they were able to succeed. This could determine how reasonable of an expectation it is to include statistics or how often the story had to be held for a second day story to get the statistic.

And lastly, as Thorson and Coleman (2002) mention in their study, more experiments could be done to determine if including context, risk factors and prevention methods affect whom readers blame for the crime: the victim, the perpetrator or society. For example the study could be an experiment that asked readers who they blamed after they read a traditional news story and asked a control group of readers who they blamed after they read a news story with context.

Limitations

It was somewhat difficult to have coders agree on what the definition of a non-stranger rape was. Ultimately a liberal definition of non-stranger was decided on, which
included examples such as the woman speaking to the male briefly, having a class with the male or living in the same dorm as the male. A future study could examine how non-stranger rape is defined more closely.

Coding for the myth, *innocent men are commonly accused of rape and women often lie about it*, was difficult because of the way DNA exonerations were written about. Sometimes it was written explicitly and sometimes it was written that the convicted rapist’s DNA did not match the crime scene material and therefore the convict was released from prison but he was not declared innocent. There were only a few of these cases but it would have been better to clearly define how to code these cases earlier on in the study.

The study had also aimed initially to code for more types of context. Ultimately the type of context had to be reduced to statistics and statements on the frequency of rape reporting, rape prosecutions, rape convictions, and so on, for each of the four rape myths, because the coders were having difficulty with so many different context examples. In the beginning, the study included more nuanced context in the codebook to find out whether statements that provided context about how rape most commonly happens or contradicted the myth were included. Some examples of statement that were removed from the codebook were, “if a judge makes an exception to the rape shield laws, is there an explanation as to why he or she made the exception” or “was there any context that explains that convicted rapists often have wives or sexual partners.”
There were five questions from the codebook that did not receive an intercoder reliability score of $\alpha \geq 0.75$.

**Recommendations to journalists**

There have been a number of recommendations made to journalists by former journalists, journalism professors and scholars to not including rape myths in news stories. They have also recommended quoting more diverse sources and using context, prevention methods and risk factors in news articles. This study recommends using at least one of these methods if not all three as a way to start reporting on rape accurately.

**Myths and words.**

Benedict (1992) recommended that journalists create a “Word to Watch For” list so that journalists and editors do not use words such as flirtatious, vivacious, fondled and stripped in articles. Editors along with crime, health and investigative reporters could come up with a list of words not to use in order to reduce the amount of rape myths in articles.

*To remove the rape is sex myth do not use the following words and information.*

Sex

Sex assault

Sex attack

Date rape

Acquaintance rape
Forced sex
Sex abuse
Sexual encounter
Sexual relations
Sexual relationship
Perform sex
Sexual contact
Sexual favors
Sex scandal
Sexual acts
To perform oral sex
Love-making
Fondling
Fooling around
Copping a feel
Sexual confusion
A misunderstanding
His attraction to the victim
His sexual urges
Anything about his sexual prowess
He said he had consensual sex with her
Words and information that should be used.

Rape
Sexual assault
Alleged rape
Alleged sexual assault
He said he did not rape her
He said he did not sexually assault her
The child was raped
The child was sexually assaulted
The child was sexually abused
Charges given by the police might come in many formats: sex crime, sex offense, sexual misconduct. It is still preferable to find out if the person is charged with sexual assault or rape instead of a broad charge that includes the word “sex” such as sex crime.

To remove the victim is to blame myth do not use the following words and information.

Previous sexual relationships of the victim
That she was a prostitute, stripper or sex worker
Clothes, makeup, hair, appearance
Whether she drank alcohol or did drugs
What she did with the alleged perpetrator before the rape or sexual assault
The victim talking about how much he regrets doing something before the rape or sexual assault

*Words or information that should be used.*

The actions during the alleged rape or sexual assault according to the victim and according to the perpetrator

*To remove the men of good standing, don’t rape myth do not use the following words and information.*

That the alleged perpetrator has a wife or a girlfriend

The alleged perpetrator’s good standing in the community, such as church, school board or City Council

The alleged perpetrator’s job, athletic status or celebrity status

The alleged perpetrator’s great character such as his warm personality, reputable character and leadership skills

*Words or information that should be used.*

Where the alleged perpetrator is from

The alleged perpetrator’s age

The alleged perpetrator’s name

What the alleged perpetrator says occurred during the alleged rape or sexual assault

*To remove the innocent men are commonly accused of rape or sexual assault and women often lie about it myth do not write the following articles or use the following information.*
Articles about men being exonerated for stranger rapes

Articles that have police officers calling rapes or sexual assaults unfounded

Quoting or paraphrasing someone calling the alleged rape victim a liar

Quoting or paraphrasing someone saying the woman changed her story without explaining that this is always the defense’s tactic

Reporting that the victim recanted the story without including a rape expert that might explain why a victim would recant

Articles that question the victim’s credibility without mentioning that this is the defense’ entire tactic all the time

*Articles that should be written and information that should be used.*

Articles about the most common type of rape, which is non-stranger rape

Articles that describe a non-stranger rape case within context of rape in America

Articles that describe how frequently non-stranger rapes occur compared to stranger rapes

Articles that explain how underreported rape is and why

Articles about how heavily American society practices victim-blaming in rape and sexual assault cases and why

Articles about how few alleged rapists are arrested, prosecuted, convicted and what their sentences usually are and why

Articles that describe how frequently alleged rapists pled guilty as opposed to go to trial

Articles about what rape is actually about, power, anger and sadism, instead of sexuality
If articles about DNA exonerations must be written about, journalists should include a
sentence that explains that the majority of DNA exonerations would involve the
uncommon type of rape, which is stranger rape

**Training and sources.**

The researcher also recommends that newsrooms have trainings in sexual
assault by rape crisis center staff annually. Rape is a very complex crime that is different
than a simple assault or theft. This crime is one in which the victim is blamed and her
sexual past, attractiveness, behavior, alcohol and drug consumption and criminal record
are often put on display for people to judge her credibility. If someone’s home were
robbed, the public and courtroom officials would not be questioning the victim’s
credibility. A training would help reporters put rape and sexual assault in context of
rape culture, the prevalence of the crime, the frequency of victim-blaming, the
regularity of perpetrators not being held accountable for their crimes and help reporters
understand why it is inappropriate to call rape sex. The training would also connect
journalists to rape expert sources and hopefully help journalists see rape victim
advocates as credible sources.

Reporters who cover other beats such as city hall and business have to speak
with experts and analysts for their stories and understand their beat; therefore,
reporters who cover crime should also speak with rape experts.

These rape victim advocates, other rape experts and academics such as sociology
or gender studies professors should also be interviewed to add statistics, risk factors and
prevention methods to rape articles. Journalists need to diversify their sources for stories about rape (Benedict, 1992; Meyers, 1997) in order to explain the context surrounding violence against women, which is rape culture, misogyny and patriarchy.

The press should also stop avoiding feminists (Benedict, 1992). The mainstream press has crippled its ability to cover sex crime properly because it is unwilling to consult with feminist sources, such as feminists in sociology, medicine and anthropology (Benedict, 1992). Too often journalists hide behind their sources and say they just reported what the source said (Benedict, 2012).

Rape experts at rape crisis centers, women’s centers, college campuses or public health officials at health departments (Thorson & Coleman, 2012) could also enhance news stories by reaching out to reporters and helping them gather data. It might be in public health professionals’ interests to help police departments and health departments organize records and make them more accessible to journalists (Thorson and Coleman, 2012).

**Context and databases.**

The first goal for journalists is to use less rape myth provoking words and sentences in articles and the second goal is to provide context, risk factors and prevention measures from diverse sources that would give readers an understanding of society’s role in rape and counter any rape myths that still end up in the story. Benedict (1992) also recommended that reporters include context and statistics in their news stories to explain the reality of the crime. Meyers (1997) emphasized that when
reporters answer the question “why” in their articles about rape, they must provide the answers within the larger framework, which is that American society is “steeped in patriarchal notions of appropriate gender roles and reflects male supremacist ideology” (Meyers, 1997, p. 123)

Reporting simply on the exchange between the alleged victim and the defense attorney or the alleged perpetrator and the prosecutor does not tell the whole story. Journalists should include as much context as they can in an article about rape but even one or two sentences that give the reader the big picture of rape in the U.S. would help. Journalists can obtain this contextual information from an array of sources such as rape crisis advocates, public health departments, data from police departments, public health and social science professors and national crime statistics.

**The context, risk factors and prevention methods that should be included.**

How frequently women are victims of rape or sexual assault; whether this is women in general, women in the military, women in prison or women or women on campus

How frequently women report rape or sexual assault

How frequently women press charges

How frequently the police make an arrest because of a rape charge

How frequently a rape case is prosecuted

How frequently rapists are convicted

How frequently rapists are sentenced to prison

How often a plea bargain is struck
Information about society’s role in rape such as the belief in sex role stereotypes, acceptance of male dominance, rape culture, anti-female language, rape jokes, lack of holding perpetrators accountable

Information on how to prevent rape through reeducating society such as information that describes masculinity programs in which all men examine their role in rape and discuss how Americans can redefine masculinity or re-think characterizing males as aggressors and the more important gender.

Organizations and sources that can provide context, risk factors and prevention methods.

Epidemiologists

Helen Benedict, author of How the Press Covers Sex Crimes: Virgin or Vamp

Marian Meyers, author of News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame

National Center for Policy Analysis

National Crime Victimization Survey

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports

Public Health Departments

Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

The National Center for Victims of Crime

U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Besides gathering national and regional data it would be very helpful if reporters started keeping track of rape and sexual assault in their own town or city. Journalists could keep a running Excel sheet of all of the rapes in their town or city and provide the number of rapes over a month or a year for each rape article. Journalists could also take the database they have created and follow up on one month’s worth of reported rapes to see how many perpetrators were arrested, took a plea bargain, were prosecuted, were convicted, were sentenced to prison and how many reported rapes were determined to be unfounded. This would take a bit of extra work but would provide very rich stories and likely a community debate. Because the crime beat is very deadline oriented, Thorson & Coleman (2012) suggested that the feature department and or the health reporter gather public health data and write the public health model stories. The researcher recommends that the health reporter, data reporter, investigative reporter and crime reporter include context, prevention methods and risk factors as often as possible. Perhaps the crime reporter would include one sentence while the health reporter would create and analyze a local database.

Conclusion

Without these changes rape victims will continue to be blamed for being raped, have their rape belittled and men’s responsibility for rape will continue to be dismissed in news stories.
If the news does not accurately report rape cases within context, and does not provide prevention methods and risk factors can contribute to a number of negative and dangerous outcomes: 1) Men will not see their actions as “real” rape and continue to perpetrate them; 2) Women also won’t see their rape as “real” and will be discouraged from reporting it; 3) The public and, therefore, potential jury members will draw erroneous conclusions about rape, which could lead to fewer convictions.

The media without acknowledging the rape myths it produces and without adding authentic information for violence prevention, is playing a role in keeping the status quo, which means one in five women will be victims of a rape or attempted rape in their lifetime (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010).
Appendix 1

Codebook

1. Newspaper code: a random number assigned to each newspaper (NYT=1, StarT=2, HoustonC=3, and DenverP=4): ________________
2. Article code: a numeric code assigned to each story in each paper (1, 2, 3, ...number at top of sheet): ________________
3. Coder’s ID: a number assigned to each coder (1=Maryann, 2=Nour): ________________
4. Headline: (write out first three words): ________________
5. Story size: (how many words are in the story): ________________
6. What kind of rape or sexual assault is it?  
   0=stranger rape (single stranger rape or multiple stranger rapes)  
   1=non-stranger rape (single non-stranger rape or multiple non-stranger rapes)  
   2=one victim(s) is stranger and one victim(s) is non-stranger OR don’t know
7. What is the biological sex of the alleged sexual assault victim?  
   0=female(s)  
   1=male(s)  
   2=both female(s) and male(s)  
   3=don’t know
8. What is the biological sex of the person accused of sexual assault?  
   0=female(s)  
   1=male(s)  
   2=both female(s) and male(s)  
   3=don’t know
9. What was the age of the victim(s)? (at the time of the rape or sexual assault)  
   0=baby to 17(one more more people)  
   1=18 to 49(one or more people)  
   2=50 and above(one or more people)  
   3=ages in more than one category/don’t know

Instructions: paraphrased includes said..., testified..., admitted..., asked..., alleged...

Sources
10. Is the victim quoted or paraphrased at all in the story?  
   0=no  
   1=yes
11. Is the accused quoted or paraphrased at all in the story?  
   0=no  
   1=yes
12. Are official sources (police (Sgt.), detective, investigator, military investigator, university investigator, judge, attorneys, prosecutor, defense, police documents, court documents, investigative documents, FBI documents, U.S. Dept. of Justice documents) quoted or paraphrased at all in the story?
13. Are sexual assault experts (counselor, psychologist, rape crisis center advocate, rape victim advocate, women’s center staff member, previous rape victim) quoted or paraphrased at all in the story?
0=no 1=yes

Instructions: Look only in the body of the article (not headline).

Myths
14. Is the myth, “rape is sex & perpetrators are motivated by lust” present in the article?
0=no 1=yes

This myth can be written in the following ways:
• Referring to or discussing the rape or sexual assault (or alleged rape/sexual assault) as: (it does NOT include the words sex crime(s), sex offense(s), charged with criminal sexual conduct, sexual misconduct charges, unlawful sexual contact, charged with sexual misconduct or sex trafficking, anything to do with specific charges ignore)
  o Sex
  o Sex assault (instead of sexual assault)
  o Sex attack (instead of sexual assault)
  o Date rape
  o Acquaintance rape
  o Forced sex
  o Sex abuse (instead of sexual abuse)
  o Sexual encounter
  o Sexual relations
  o Sexual relationship
  o Perform sex
  o Sexual contact
  o Sexual favors
  o Sex scandal
  o Sexual acts
  o To perform oral sex
  o Love-making
• Using words like these to describe the rape or sexual assault (or alleged rape/sexual assault).
  o Fondling
  o Fooling around
  o Copping a feel
  o Sexual confusion
  o A misunderstanding
• Are the following words used to explain the rape/sexual assault (alleged rape/sexual assault).
  o His sexual desire/for ex. horny
  o His attraction to the woman
  o He was aroused
  o Sexual urges
• Is the accused man described as the following?
  o A really sexual guy
  o A playboy
  o A ladies man
  o Has a lot of sex
  o Big man on campus

15. Please circle the source that provided the above myth, “rape is sex & perpetrators are motivated by lust.” Only circle a source for the first mention of the myth you saw.
0=official source (police, detective, investigator, military investigator(high ranking military official investigating the case), university investigator(ex. chair of disciplinary committee), judge, court document, police document, investigative documents, FBI, U.S. Department of Justice)
1=prosecutor (often referred to as attorney or attorney general – defends alleged rape victim)
2=defense (defense attorney – defends accused rapist) (might also defend univ. or military)
3=journalist, this would be when the information is not attributed to a source/person
4=person accused of sexual assault
5=alleged sexual assault victim
6=sexual assault expert (counselor, psychologist, rape crisis center advocate, rape victim advocate, women’s center staff member, previous rape victim) (Not an academic person writing a book or thesis.)
7=community member, such as friend or family of accused or victim, teacher, boss, co-worker, coach/public official, such as governor, mayor or city council (NOT police, attorney, investigative or court people)
8=academic person (someone working on a study, thesis or book on rape)(but if they are a psychologist, counselor, advocate, women’s center member or previous rape victim who is doing research – someone who works with victims - the answer is 6)
9=all others that don’t fit in a category above (fill in) __________
10=no myth words/phrases were present

16. When any of the above “myth words/phrases (rape is sex)” were used was there any additional context used that put the myth into perspective?
0=no  1=yes  2=no myth words/phrases were present
For example:
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women are victims of rape or sexual assault. Whether it is women as a whole, women in the military, women in prison or women on college campuses.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women report rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women press charges.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently the police make an arrest after a report of rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rape cases are prosecuted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists are convicted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists serve time in prison.
• A statement or stat: about how frequently plea bargains are struck as opposed to rape cases going to trial. (This would show an increase in the number of men determined to be guilty of rape because many rape cases are decided in a plea bargain as opposed to at trial in front of a jury.)

• Big picture causes of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim.)
  o A statement: about how society’s belief in or acceptance of male dominance causes rape or rape culture?
  o A statement: about how acceptance of anti-female language and rape jokes might lead to thinking a woman is less important and ok to rape.
  o A statement: about how cases of domestic violence or rape in general are not taken seriously. For example, men are often not arrested, charged or punished for these activities; therefore, men think violence against women and/or raping women is not really a crime.
  o A statement: about how not punishing sex offenders in general allows them to remain on the street and rape or abuse more people.

• Big picture prevention of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim)
  o A statement: that provides recommendations, such as having masculinity education programs for college men or community forums to discuss men’s role in rape and how better to contribute to ending rape.
  o A statement: about how to redefine masculinity. (For example, should men re-think being characterized as the aggressors and the more important sex/gender.)
  o A statement: about how on a policy level longer prison sentences or more civil commitment is needed to make it clear that these crimes will not be tolerated and to prevent these people from re-offending.
  o A statement: about how on a policy level more treatment programs or longer treatment programs, such as therapy are needed for sexual offenders.

17. Is the myth, “victims are to blame for their own rape” present in the article?  
0=no  1=yes  
This myth can be written in the following ways:
• Mention of victim’s sexual history or sex work
  o Previous sex or physical relationships with other men
  o Previous sex or physical relationship with the alleged rapist
  o She was a sex worker, prostitute or stripper

• Mention of the woman’s physical appearance, social life, lifestyle or behavior in general or before the rape
  o Clothes she wore at the time of the assault or in general (this has to be explicit – not just she went to a pool or was in a beauty contest – it has to say what she was wearing)
  o Her hair at the time of the assault or in general
  o Her makeup at the time of the assault or in general
  o How attractive, pretty, provocative or sexy she looked at the time or in general
  o She parties or went to a party/bar/nightclub before the assault
  o She does drugs or did drugs before the assault
  o She drinks alcohol or drank before the assault
  o She walked alone somewhere before the assault (Leaving this as is – not adding she went to his house alone… too complicated)
  o She was out late at night before the assault
  o She made advances toward him, she flirted with him or she seduced him

• Mention of the girl or woman’s regrets
  o She says she made a mistake
  o She regrets leaving her house that night

• Mention of measure(s) women can take to prevent rape
  o Don’t go out alone, go with a buddy
  o Be careful at night
  o Don’t drink too much alcohol
  o Watch your drink
  o Don’t take drinks from others
  o Don’t talk to strangers
  o Be careful about who you are friends with/hang out with
  o Be careful about where you go out, for example, fraternity parties
  o Don’t hang around older men

18. Please circle the source that provided the above myth, “victims are to blame for their own rape.” Only circle a source for the first mention of the myth you saw.
0=official source (police, detective, investigator, military investigator (high ranking military official investigating the case), university investigator (ex. chair of disciplinary committee), judge, court document, police document, investigative documents, FBI, U.S. Department of Justice)
1=prosecutor (often referred to as attorney or attorney general – defends alleged rape victim)
2=defense (defense attorney – defends accused rapist) (might also defend univ. or military)
3=journalist, this would be when the information is not attributed to a source/person
4=person accused of sexual assault
5=alleged sexual assault victim
6=sexual assault expert (counselor, psychologist, rape crisis center advocate, rape victim advocate, women’s center staff member, previous rape victim) (Not an academic person writing a book or thesis.)
7=community member, such as friend or family of accused or victim, teacher, boss, co-worker, coach/public official, such as governor, mayor or city council (NOT police, attorney, investigative or court people)
8=academic person (someone working on a study, thesis or book on rape)(but if they are a psychologist, counselor, advocate, women’s center member or previous rape victim who is doing research – someone who works with victims - the answer is 6)
9=all others that don’t fit in a category above (fill in) ___________
10=no myth words/phrases were present

19. When any of the above “myth words/phrases (victim is to blame)” were used was there any additional context used that put the myth into perspective?
0=no 1=yes 2=no myth words/phrases were present
For example:
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women are victims of rape or sexual assault. Whether it is women as a whole, women in the military, women in prison or women on college campuses.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women report rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women press charges.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently the police make an arrest after a report of rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rape cases are prosecuted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists are convicted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists serve time in prison.
• A statement or stat: about how frequently plea bargains are struck as opposed to rape cases going to trial. (This would show an increase in the number of men determined to be guilty of rape because many rape cases are decided in a plea bargain as opposed to at trial in front of a jury.)
• Big picture causes of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim.)
  o A statement: about how society’s belief in or acceptance of male dominance causes rape or rape culture?
  o A statement: about how acceptance of anti-female language and rape jokes might lead to thinking a woman is less important and ok to rape.
  o A statement: about how cases of domestic violence or rape in general are not taken seriously. For example, men are often not arrested, charged or
punished for these activities; therefore, men think violence against women and/or raping women is not really a crime.

- A statement: about how not punishing sex offenders in general allows them to remain on the street and rape or abuse more people.

- Big picture prevention of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim)
  - A statement: that provides recommendations, such as having masculinity education programs for college men or community forums to discuss men’s role in rape and how better to contribute to ending rape.
  - A statement: about how to redefine masculinity. (For example, should men re-think being characterized as the aggressors and the more important sex/gender.)
  - A statement: about how on a policy level longer prison sentences or more civil commitment is needed to make it clear that these crimes will not be tolerated and to prevent these people from re-offending.
  - A statement: about how on a policy level more treatment programs or longer treatment programs, such as therapy are needed for sexual offenders.

20. Is the myth, “men of good standing don’t rape women” present in the article? (apply to any of the men mentioned in a gang rape/don’t code for female rapists)?

0=no
1=yes

This myth can be written in the following ways:

- Mention of the accused man’s current wife, fiancé or girlfriend
- Referring to his position of authority in the community or at work
  - ex: principal, police officer, school board, priest/religious leader, manager, supervisor, boss, chief of medicine, chief physician, attorney general, chief engineer, the head of “such and such” department, commander, officer, sergeant, captain, lieutenant,...etc. (DO NOT include soldier, seaman, aircraftman, airman, private, (these are all low ranking.).
- Referring to his “celebrity” status
  - movie star, politician, professional athlete, college athlete, high school athlete
  - or that he is the son of someone with “celebrity” status
- Referring to the accused man as doing a good job at work, showing leadership at work, being trustworthy at work, a good advisor at work (not just that he has a job.)
- Referring to his good work as an athlete
- Referring to his good grades and leadership at school or college
- He is described as a hero, charismatic, personable, good natured, warm, funny, a good man, reputable, respected, hard worker, intelligent – given a positive attribute
- Mention of him being religious or that he goes to church, mosque or temple
21. When any of the above “myth words/phrases (men of good standing don’t)” were used was there any additional context used that put the myth into perspective?  
0=no  1=yes  2=no myth words/phrases were present

For example:

- A statement or stat: on how frequently women are victims of rape or sexual assault. Whether it is women as a whole, women in the military, women in prison or women on college campuses.
- A statement or stat: on how frequently women report rape or sexual assault.
- A statement or stat: on how frequently women press charges.
- A statement or stat: on how frequently the police make an arrest after a report of rape or sexual assault.
- A statement or stat: on how frequently rape cases are prosecuted.
- A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists are convicted.
- A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists serve time in prison.
- A statement or stat: about how frequently plea bargains are struck as opposed to rape cases going to trial. (This would show an increase in the number of men determined to be guilty of rape because many rape cases are decided in a plea bargain as opposed to at trial in front of a jury.)
- Big picture causes of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim.)
  - A statement: about how society’s belief in or acceptance of male dominance causes rape or rape culture?
  - A statement: about how acceptance of anti-female language and rape jokes might lead to thinking a woman is less important and ok to rape.
  - A statement: about how cases of domestic violence or rape in general are not taken seriously. For example, men are often not arrested, charged or punished for these activities; therefore, men think violence against women and/or raping women is not really a crime.
  - A statement: about how not punishing sex offenders in general allows them to remain on the street and rape or abuse more people.
- Big picture prevention of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim)
  - A statement: that provides recommendations, such as having masculinity education programs for college men or community forums to discuss men’s role in rape and how better to contribute to ending rape.
  - A statement: about how to redefine masculinity. (For example, should men re-think being characterized as the aggressors and the more important sex/gender.)
  - A statement: about how on a policy level longer prison sentences or more civil commitment is needed to make it clear that these crimes will not be tolerated and to prevent these people from re-offending.
22. Is the myth, “innocent men are commonly accused of rape or sexual assault and women often lie about it” present in the article?
0=no 1=yes
This myth can be written in the following ways (this could apply to one of a few guys involved):
• Mention of a false rape accusation (whether current case or another case mentioned in the story)
• It says he was falsely accused
• Case called unfounded
• Declined to prosecute
• The charge was dismissed/dropped
• A DNA exoneration
• He was found not guilty/someone says he is not guilty
• He was found innocent/someone says he is innocent
• He was acquitted
This myth can be written in the following ways:
• She lied
• She changed her story
• Someone saying she lacks credibility
• She is a gold-digger/after money
• She has committed other crimes
• She took a long time to report the rape
• She declined to press charges
• She recanted the rape accusation
• She stayed with the man after the rape
• Mention of her poor mental state then or now
  o She is delusional
  o She has false memories
  o She imagined it

23. When any of the above “myth words/phrases(innocent men, women lie)” were used was there any additional context used that put the myth into perspective?
0=no 1=yes 2=no myth words/phrases were present
For example:
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women are victims of rape or sexual assault. Whether it is women as a whole, women in the military, women in prison or women on college campuses.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women report rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women press charges.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently the police make an arrest after a report of rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rape cases are prosecuted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists are convicted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists serve time in prison.
• A statement or stat: about how frequently plea bargains are struck as opposed to rape cases going to trial. (This would show an increase in the number of men determined to be guilty of rape because many rape cases are decided in a plea bargain as opposed to at trial in front of a jury.)
• Big picture causes of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim.)
  o A statement: about how society’s belief in or acceptance of male dominance causes rape or rape culture?
  o A statement: about how acceptance of anti-female language and rape jokes might lead to thinking a woman is less important and ok to rape.
  o A statement: about how cases of domestic violence or rape in general are not taken seriously. For example, men are often not arrested, charged or punished for these activities; therefore, men think violence against women and/or raping women is not really a crime.
  o A statement: about how not punishing sex offenders in general allows them to remain on the street and rape or abuse more people.
• Big picture prevention of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim)
  o A statement: that provides recommendations, such as having masculinity education programs for college men or community forums to discuss men’s role in rape and how better to contribute to ending rape.
  o A statement: about how to redefine masculinity. (For example, should men re-think being characterized as the aggressors and the more important sex/gender.)
  o A statement: about how on a policy level longer prison sentences or more civil commitment is needed to make it clear that these crimes will not be tolerated and to prevent these people from re-offending.
  o A statement: about how on a policy level more treatment programs or longer treatment programs, such as therapy are needed for sexual offenders.

24. In general, did one or more myths show up in this article? (Please go back and check through all four myths.)
0=no  1=yes

Big Picture Context
25. In all articles, those with myths and those without myths, were there any statistics, context, big picture causes or big picture prevention included?
0=no  1=yes

For example:

• A statement or stat: on how frequently women are victims of rape or sexual assault. Whether it is women as a whole, women in the military, women in prison or women on college campuses.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women report rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently women press charges.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently the police make an arrest after a report of rape or sexual assault.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rape cases are prosecuted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists are convicted.
• A statement or stat: on how frequently rapists serve time in prison.
• A statement or stat: about how frequently plea bargains are struck as opposed to rape cases going to trial. (This would show an increase in the number of men determined to be guilty of rape because many rape cases are decided in a plea bargain as opposed to at trial in front of a jury.)
• Big picture causes of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim.)
  o A statement: about how society’s belief in or acceptance of male dominance causes rape or rape culture?
  o A statement: about how acceptance of anti-female language and rape jokes might lead to thinking a woman is less important and ok to rape.
  o A statement: about how cases of domestic violence or rape in general are not taken seriously. For example, men are often not arrested, charged or punished for these activities; therefore, men think violence against women and/or raping women is not really a crime.
  o A statement: about how not punishing sex offenders in general allows them to remain on the street and rape or abuse more people.
• Big picture prevention of rape (not directed at the victim or potential victim)
  o A statement: that provides recommendations, such as having masculinity education programs for college men or community forums to discuss men’s role in rape and how better to contribute to ending rape.
  o A statement: about how to redefine masculinity. (For example, should men re-think being characterized as the aggressors and the more important sex/gender.)
  o A statement: about how on a policy level longer prison sentences or more civil commitment is needed to make it clear that these crimes will not be tolerated and to prevent these people from re-offending.
  o A statement: about how on a policy level more treatment programs or longer treatment programs, such as therapy are needed for sexual offenders.
26. If the above context is present, who said it? (Answer this question based off of the first context statement.) Only circle the source for the first example of context you saw.

0 = official source (police, detective, investigator, military investigator (high ranking military official investigating the case), university investigator (ex. chair of disciplinary committee), judge, court document, police document, investigative documents, FBI, U.S. Department of Justice)

1 = prosecutor (often referred to as attorney or attorney general – defends alleged rape victim)

2 = defense (defense attorney – defends accused rapist) (might also defend univ. or military)

3 = journalist, this would be when the information is not attributed to a source/person

4 = person accused of sexual assault

5 = alleged sexual assault victim

6 = sexual assault expert (counselor, psychologist, rape crisis center advocate, rape victim advocate, women’s center staff member, previous rape victim) (Not an academic person writing a book or thesis.)

7 = community member, such as friend or family of accused or victim, teacher, boss, co-worker, coach/public official, such as governor, mayor or city council (NOT police, attorney, investigative or court people)

8 = academic person (someone working on a study, thesis or book on rape) (but if they are a psychologist, counselor, advocate, women’s center member or previous rape victim who is doing research – someone who works with victims - the answer is 6)

9 = all others that don’t fit in a category above (fill in) ____________

10 = no context words/phrases were present
## Appendix 2

### Intercoder Reliability

Table 1: Hosti’s agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 6: Non-stranger v. everything else</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7: Sex of alleged victim</td>
<td>.946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions 8: Sex of person accused of sexual assault</td>
<td>.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 9: Age of victim</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 10: Whether victim quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 11: Whether accused quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 12: Are official sources quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 13: Are sexual assault experts quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 14: Is the rape is sex myth present</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 15: Who is the source of the rape is sex myth</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 16: When the rape is sex myth is used is there context</td>
<td>.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 17: Is the victims are to blame myth present</td>
<td>.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 18: Who is the source of the victims are to blame myth</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 19: When the victims are to blame myth is used is there context</td>
<td>.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 20: Is the men of good standing don’t rape myth present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 21: When the men of good standing don’t rape myth is present is there context</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 22: Is the innocent men are commonly accused myth present</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 23: When the innocent men are</td>
<td>.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 24: Were any of the four rape myths present</td>
<td>.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 25: Whether myths or not, was there any context</td>
<td>.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 26: Who provided the context</td>
<td>.973</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Perreault & Leigh’s agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6: Non-stranger v. everything else</td>
<td>0.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Sex of alleged victim</td>
<td>0.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Sex of person accused of sexual assault</td>
<td>0.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Age of victim</td>
<td>0.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Whether victim quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: Whether accused quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>0.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12: Are official sources quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>0.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13: Are sexual assault experts quoted or paraphrased</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14: Is the rape sex myth present</td>
<td>0.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15: Who is the source of the rape is sex myth</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16: When the rape is sex myth is used is there context</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17: Is the victims are to blame myth present</td>
<td>0.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18: Who is the source of the victims are to blame myth</td>
<td>0.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19: When the victims are to blame myth is used is there context</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20: Is the men of good standing don’t rape myth present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21: When the men of good standing don’t rape myth is present is there context</td>
<td>0.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22: Is the innocent men are</td>
<td>0.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commonly accused myth present</td>
<td>Question 23: When the innocent men are commonly accused myth is used is there context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 24: Were any of the four rape myths present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 25: Whether myths or not, was there any context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 26: Who provided the context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Results Tables

Table 1: Frequency of rape myths in articles, by type of perpetrator (stranger or non-stranger)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator</th>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
<th>Myth 3</th>
<th>Myth 4</th>
<th>Total articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-stranger</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Frequency of rape myths in articles, by victim age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
<th>Myth 3</th>
<th>Myth 4</th>
<th>Total articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby to 17</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 49</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and older</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Frequency of sources saying rape myths one and two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official source</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutor</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person accused of sexual assault</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleged sexual assault victim</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault expert</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community member</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic person</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Frequency of context being said, when rape myth one, two, three and four were present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
<th>Myth 3</th>
<th>Myth 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context was present</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Frequency of a source providing context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official source</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutor</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault expert</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community member</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic person</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Additional Findings

Table 1: Frequency of rape myths in articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth present</th>
<th>Myths Combined</th>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
<th>Myth 3</th>
<th>Myth 4</th>
<th>No. of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myth present</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Which newspaper had the highest percentage of rape myths in its articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NYT</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>HC</th>
<th>DP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

105
Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town

By JAMES C. MCKINLEY Jr.

Published: March 8, 2011

CLEVELAND, Tex. — The police investigation began shortly after Thanksgiving, when an elementary school student alerted a teacher to a lurid cellphone video that included one of her classmates.

The video led the police to an abandoned trailer, more evidence and, eventually, to a roundup over the last month of 18 young men and teenage boys on charges of participating in the gang rape of an 11-year-old girl in the abandoned trailer home, the authorities said.

Five suspects are students at Cleveland High School, including two members of the basketball team. Another is the 21-year-old son of a school board member. A few of the others have criminal records, from selling drugs to robbery and, in one case, manslaughter. The suspects range in age from middle schoolers to a 27-year-old.

The case has rocked this East Texas community to its core and left many residents in the working-class neighborhood where the attack took place with unanswered questions.
Among them is, if the allegations are proved, how could their young men have been drawn into such an act?

“It’s just destroyed our community,” said Sheila Harrison, 48, a hospital worker who says she knows several of the defendants. “These boys have to live with this the rest of their lives.”

The attack’s details remained unclear. The police have declined to discuss their inquiry because it is continuing. The whereabouts of the victim and her mother were not made public.

The allegations first came to light just after Thanksgiving, when a child who knows the victim told a teacher she had seen a videotape of the attack on a cellphone, said Stacey Gatlin, a spokeswoman for the Cleveland Independent School District.

The school district’s security department interviewed the girl, 11, who is a student at Cleveland Middle School, and her mother. The security department determined that a rape had taken place, but not on school property, and then handed the matter over to the police, Ms. Gatlin said.

On Dec. 9, the police obtained a search warrant to go through a house on Travis Street and a nearby trailer that had been abandoned for at least two years. An affidavit filed to support the search warrant said the girl had been forced to have sex with several men in both places on Nov. 28 and cited pictures and videos as proof, according to The Houston Chronicle.
The affidavit said the assault started after a 19-year-old boy invited the victim to ride around in his car. He took her to a house on Travis Street where one of the other men charged, also 19, lived. There the girl was ordered to disrobe and was sexually assaulted by several boys in the bedroom and bathroom. She was told she would be beaten if she did not comply, the affidavit said.

A relative of one of the suspects arrived, and the group fled through a back window. They then went to the abandoned mobile home, where the assaults continued. Some of those present recorded the sexual acts on their telephones, and these later were shown among students.

Residents in the neighborhood where the abandoned trailer stands — known as the Quarters — said the victim had been visiting various friends there for months. They said she dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s. She would hang out with teenage boys at a playground, some said.

“Where was her mother? What was her mother thinking?” said Ms. Harrison, one of a handful of neighbors who would speak on the record. “How can you have an 11-year-old child missing down in the Quarters?”

Cleveland, a town of 9,000, lies about 50 miles northeast of Houston in the pine country, near the picturesque Sam Houston National Forest. The town’s economy has always rested on timber, cattle, farming and oil. But there are pockets of poverty, and in the neighborhood where the assault occurred, well-kept homes sit beside boarded-up houses and others with deteriorating facades.
The abandoned trailer where the assault took place is full of trash and has a blue tarp hanging from the front. Inside there is a filthy sofa, a disconnected stove in the middle of the living room, a broken stereo and some forlorn Christmas decorations. A copy of the search warrant was on a counter in the kitchen next to some abandoned family pictures.

The arrests have left many wondering who will be taken into custody next. Churches have held prayer services for the victim. The students who were arrested have not returned to school, and it is unclear if they ever will. Ms. Gatlin said the girl had been transferred to another district. “It’s devastating, and it’s really tearing our community apart,” she said. “I really wish that this could end in a better light.”

Mauricio Guerrero contributed reporting from Houston.

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/us/09assault.html?_r=0&pagewanted=all

**Article 2**

Cleveland residents still reeling after gang rape of girl, 11

Girl's sex assault rocks Cleveland

11-year-old is in foster care and 17 men and boys face charges. The list of suspects could grow

CINDY HORSWELL, HOUSTON CHRONICLE | March 7, 2011

CLEVELAND - All Maria wanted was to see her 11-year-old daughter.
Weeks ago, the girl had been hushed away to a "safe house" for her own protection - after the phone calls started, and the disturbing, sexually explicit videos began surfacing in this town of 9,000 about 50 miles north of downtown Houston.

Seventeen men and boys, including a middle school student and adults in their 20s, have been charged with sexually assaulting Maria's daughter, a sixth-grader, in a dingy trailer. That number could grow to 28.

Last week, while hospitalized for an illness, Maria finally received a brief visit from the girl.

"My daughter was crying and crying and hugging on me," Maria said. "She didn't want to leave. She misses her family and wants to come home."

But the family's tiny gray wooden home off a long, dark forested road on the outskirts of town is no longer considered safe for the 11-year-old. Child Protective Services put the girl in a foster home for her protection and restricted her family from even speaking to her, the family said.

Local officials say the attack has devastated this close-knit community, leaving many to wonder who will be charged next. There's talk that a star athlete at Cleveland High School was seen sexually assaulting the girl on the video. The son of a local school board member is involved, too.

Someone has been making phone calls to Maria's house. Police fear they're coming from people seeking retribution.
"They keep calling and asking for her," said Maria, whose last name is not being printed to protect her daughter's identity. "They don't believe me when I say she's not here and cuss us out. They're trying to find her. This is the time when she needs us the most."

Music blaring

Cleveland, a town whose history dates to 1836, is nestled near the picturesque Sam Houston National Forest. Timber, cattle, farming and oil fuel the town's economy.

Normally a quiet place, the community recently has been in an uproar over a looming election to recall three City Council members accused of mismanagement.

When the sex assault story broke wide open in recent weeks, the town gained further unwanted attention.

The editor of the Cleveland Advocate, Vanesa Brashier, who has kept her hand on the pulse of this community, said, “Feelings are raw as these things keep happening and then there's no time to heal. Our town has been in the spotlight too much lately.”

Some Cleveland residents, like Kisha Williams, are critical of the 11-year-old’s parents.

“Where were they when this girl was seen wandering at all hours with no supervision and pretending to be much older?” she asked.

Several churches have organized special prayer events for the town.

Carter Williams, 64, seated at a small card table playing dominoes inside a local grocery, does not think laying blame is the right response to the sex assault.

“This is a praying time for the young men and the young girl,” Williams said. “Seems like everyone in this whole town needs some God in their life.”
Inside a trailer

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, retiree Joe Harrison noticed an 11-year-old girl as he walked past an abandoned trailer to play dominoes with friends in what locals call "the Hood."

He thought the girl looked older than her years with her long hair and dark makeup. She was standing near the aging brown trailer, which was partially covered by a blue tarp and had remained unoccupied since Hurricane Ike except for an occasional drug user who would sneak inside to smoke crack.

Later, Harrison heard loud music blaring from that same trailer on Ross Street. But he thought the girl had already been picked up by her mother. He never realized anything horrible might have happened until weeks later when the arrests started.

"I have a granddaughter that age and can't imagine anything like that happening to her," he said. "Whoever did this should pay for it."

Cleveland police say the 11-year-old was sexually assaulted inside that trailer and a small blue house with white trim around the corner.

The assaults happened Nov. 28 after a 19-year-old with prior drug convictions persuaded the young girl to leave her house and go "riding around" with him and two other young men, according to a Cleveland police officer's sworn statement.

They first went to the blue house, where she was ordered to disrobe. If she refused, the statement said, she was warned other girls would beat her up and she would never get a ride back home.
Soon she was having sex with multiple young men there, the statement said. Someone used a phone to invite four more men, who soon arrived.

Not long afterward, the group fled through a back window when they heard a relative of one of the teens arriving at the blue house. The 11-year-old left behind her bra and panties as the group moved to the nearby abandoned trailer, where the assaults continued. As the men had sex with the girl, others used their cell phones to take photographs and video, police said.

Familiar faces in video

Over the next two days, the recordings went viral around school. One student who recognized the girl and several of the young men, including star athletes, in the videos, alerted school authorities and triggered the investigation.

So far, 17 suspects have been charged, ranging in age from a middle-schooler to a 27-year-old. Seven are high school students, including two members of Cleveland's state-ranked basketball team. Another is the 21-year-old son of a school board member.

Several have prior criminal records for drug sales, aggravated robbery and manslaughter.

James D. Evans III, an attorney who represents three of the defendants, insists: "This is not a case of a child who was enslaved or taken advantage of."

Investigators note an 11-year-old can never legally give consent.

On her Facebook page, the 11-year-old tells whomever she befriends that she's aware people have probably heard about her, but she does not care what they think.
"If you dislike me, deal with it," she wrote.

Sometimes she comes across like a little girl, such as when she talks of her special talent for making "weird sound effects" and "running in circles" to overcome nervousness. But she also makes flamboyant statements about drinking, smoking and sex. Yet her vulnerability pokes through the tough veneer as she tells of "being hurt many times," where she "settled for less" and "let people take advantage" and "walk all over" her. She vows to learn from her mistakes.

While Maria said she never saw any of her daughter's Internet postings, she believes her 11-year-old might have been seeking misguided attention.

Earlier signs of trouble

Shortly before the video recordings surfaced at school, there was a sign of trouble. Her daughter had borrowed her father's cell phone, and afterward Maria discovered a lurid photo of a young man that had been e-mailed to it.

"I asked about it, and she said she knew nothing. So I told her I was taking it to the police, and I did," Maria said. "They still have the phone. And I've not heard anything back."

Meanwhile, not only has the girl been forced from the town where she was born, but authorities also want the entire family to relocate.

"The police think we may be in danger. Because if they can't get my 11-year-old, they might take out their revenge on us," said Maria, as extra patrols are making rounds down her street.
Neither Cleveland police nor Child Protective Services would discuss the safety issue or a closed-door hearing with the family held Friday in Coldspring. State District Judge Elizabeth Coker said a gag order has been issued.

Struggle for children

Maria's two older daughters, who are in advanced placement classes and the band, and her 9-year-old son have all cried about being uprooted. However, the 11-year-old, who was withdrawn from Cleveland schools when the videos surfaced, is enrolled in gifted and talented classes at her new school and is "doing fine," Maria said.

Yet life for the children has been a struggle, as their father cannot find carpentry work and their mother earns very little by cleaning houses. The mortgage holder recently notified the family that they were being evicted but gave them extra time because of the family crisis.

The stress has grown so intense, the 16-year-old daughter said, that her parents considered separating, while the 11-year-old is having regrets about following through with the case.

But Maria wants those who stole her daughter's childhood prosecuted. She said her daughter was threatened with beatings or death if she refused to cooperate.

"These guys knew she was in middle school," Maria said. "You could tell that whenever you talked to her. She still loves stuffed bears."

cindy.horswell@chron.com
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