REPORTING ON RAPE: MYTHS, CONTEXT AND SOURCES

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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.