REPORTING OR REINFORCING RAPE CULTURE?

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE SAINT MARY'S

RAPE CHANT

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the first-generation students who navigate the world of

academia, never knowing if they really get it, full of questioning and self-doubt. You

belong here too.

Abstract

In September 2013, students at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia chanted about the rape of underage girls, an incident that garnered national and international media coverage. Utilizing feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, this study examines a selection of media articles published in the weeks after the rape chant to identify the discursive context and the implications for students on campus. This study identifies a complex process where the media coverage that attempted to critique rape culture instead reiterated harmful discourses of youth, gender and sexuality. An alternative approach that offers a more nuanced analysis of these types of incidents is encouraged – one that considers the standpoints of the participants in addition to the context of university life, rape culture and postfeminism.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On September 2, 2013 news broke about an offensive chant that was led by student leaders during a university-sanctioned orientation week activity at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The chanting students spelled out the word "young" and included the lines "Y is for your sister, O is for oh so tight, U is for underage, N is for no consent, G is for grab that ass" (Drimonis, 2013, para. 1). Taking place on the campus football field, it was a chant led by eighty orientation leaders to hundreds of incoming first-year students as part of an event designed to get students excited about their arrival to campus. After a student posted a video of the chant to a social media site, news reporters flooded to campus to cover the story and share reactions to it. Some argued that this chant drew attention to the existence of rape culture, where rape and sexual assault are seen as so normal, so inevitable, that it is okay to laugh, joke and chant about it (Ridgeway, 2014). Others responded that it was not a big deal and the students did not mean what they said (Drimonis, 2013). It was a shocking incident for most people, alerting the public to the existence of sexism and misogyny on campus. This should not be surprising given that university campuses are often reflective of what is happening in society, yet it appears there are higher expectations for behaviour placed on students attending postsecondary institutions. While I was overwhelmed with the amount and the content of the media coverage and responses to the incident, I just was not surprised or shocked that it happened. Incidents such as this occur quite regularly on campus, albeit most times on a smaller scale, which is perhaps why they have often gone unnoticed or at least unaddressed in the past. However, in recent years, it seems as though far more attention has been paid to student behaviour and university responses to such behaviour.

As an employee who has worked at two universities in Nova Scotia[1] for the past decade, I have often found myself wondering what is behind these types of incidents, questioning why they are occurring and what do they mean. This is certainly part of what motivates my interest in this research topic. In this thesis, I examine the Saint Mary's rape chant and explore the social and discursive context within the media coverage of the incident. I examine the ways in which students participate in a sexualised campus culture and how these incidents have acquired meaning on university campuses, within media, and in the broader society. I also explore the materialization of campus rape culture, tracing its emergence in campus discourse and examining the power dynamics that a culture of rape operates within. These areas of focus are what I am referring to as the "sexualisation of campus culture."

In the days after the incident at Saint Mary's University, the news media reported that another, very similar chant was heard at an orientation week event at the University of British Columbia business school. Both incidents made international headlines, with people weighing in across social media sites and online news media comments pages. One headline, posted in the *Vancouver Sun*, asked "What's Behind UBC Student Hijinks" (Bramham, 2013), and while I believe that "hijinks" is the wrong word to describe such behaviour, I found myself again seeking answers to the same questions I have asked in previous years. What is behind this student behaviour? And based on the media attention these incidents garnered, it appeared others are wondering the same. The answer to this question is undoubtedly complex, contextual and requires an in-depth exploration to understand how it may be impacting the student experience. This is

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[1] St. Francis Xavier University located in Antigonish, Nova Scotia and Dalhousie University located in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

research that is critical for the staff working on campuses in order to provide appropriate and effective supports to students. The research and discussions also contribute to the sexualisation of culture debates that continue in the academic realm (Attwood 2006, 2009; Duschinsky, 2013; Egan & Hawkes, 2013; Gill 2009a, 2009b, 2012a, 2012b; Ringrose, 2011; Ringrose & Renolds, 2012).

In this project, I examine how sexualisation of campus culture was discussed and represented within the online media coverage and responses to the rape chant incident at Saint Mary's University. My inquiry is guided by the following questions:

1. **How is rape culture understood in the media stories about the chant?**

2. **What are the available discourses of sexualisation, postfeminism, and agency and how do they inform understandings of this particular campus event?**

3. **What are the social and discursive implications of these incidents?**

Working with poststructuralist theories of language, gender and power, I undertake a feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis of the online media coverage of the incident at Saint Mary's that were published in the weeks after the incident. I use the concept of sexualisation of culture as a framework for my project as it provides insight into the current discourses of sex and sexuality, and most importantly it can be used to examine and hypothesize how and why young women participate in these types of events. By interrogating the available discourses surrounding these incidents, I wish to understand the ways in which students participate in sexualised campus culture and how this participation is understood and taken up by the media.

It is important that I start with a little background information on my roles on campus and my reasons for wanting to explore the sexualisation of campus culture. I

have spent the last seventeen years on university campuses, and for thirteen of those

years I lived in residence with the students. While some of those years were as a student,

in the remaining years I was employed to manage the residence buildings and oversee the

daily activities of the students residing within them. Working full-time in residence

provided me with many opportunities for insight into and exploration of the daily lives of

undergraduate university students.   I experienced the pleasure of living and working in

primarily first-year student residences, which allows me to interact with students on a

daily basis outside the classroom setting. While fulfilling on-call responsibilities, I was

required to respond to incidents outside of typical business hours, providing me with

access to student life that would not normally be accessible to employees working a

typical daytime job on campus. As a result, I was able to see the students at their best

and, unfortunately, sometimes at their worst. In the mid-2000s, some distinctive trends

and behaviours emerged that some of my colleagues and I witnessed on campus. For

example, nearly every weekend the students in residence would host and attend sexist

theme parties, such as "G.I. Joes and army hoes," "CEOs and office hoes," "backstreet

bros and popstar hoes," "golf pros and tennis hoes," and "hot profs and naughty school

girls."

Another example was an annual residence charity hockey game, where the

spectators were groups of students from rival residence houses who attended to cheer on

the players from their own houses and to insult those from rival houses. These spectators

arrived wearing homemade t-shirts and carrying posters that stated, for example "I can't

live in Burke [the opposing residence house] because my dick is too big," "Burke: if I

wanted your input, I'd take my dick out of your mouth," "bend over Burke, Mac is

comin' in dry" and "not enough roofies in the world would get me home with a Burke guy." My colleagues and I decided to begin to explore these events with more purpose utilizing informal discussion groups and research. When these discussions began several years ago, sexualisation of culture research was just beginning to gain more attention, so we were still fumbling with the language and framework in which to explore what we were witnessing.

I can pinpoint the exact moment during this time that solidified my interest in and commitment to this topic. I was asked by the organisers of an annual December 6th École Polytechnique Memorial and Call-to-Action event[2] to speak about my experiences in residence and some of the concerns I had identified, with the hopes that I could link these behaviours to the broader issues of violence against women, sexism and misogyny. I had concerns about addressing student behaviour at an event where the very students engaged in the behaviours might be present. I was uncertain as to how they would respond at a time when these issues were not yet being discussed very openly, or at all. I also found it difficult to speak about sexualisation of culture without taking a stance that bordered on blame or disgust of the women participating in this culture. In fact, much of the discussion and literature at this time was problematic in its protectionist approach, where "below the calls for protection one will also find (possibly unconscious) disgust, anger and resentment toward a particular type of sexualised feminine embodiment" (Egan, 2013, p. 269). In my case, it was a conscious realization that I wanted to talk about

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[2] This was an annual event held at Saint Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia to commemorate the victims of the "Montreal Massacre," a shooting at the École Polytechnique in 1989. Twenty-eight people were shot and fourteen died – all women. The shooter claimed he was fighting feminism and separated women from men in a classroom before shooting the women (CBC Digital Archives). The day is now commemorated in Canada as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

sexualisation but had yet to find a way to do so in a way that avoided reducing it to a

"problem of sexual behaviours and sexuality instead of sexism" (Egan, 2013, p. 267).

In preparation for my speech, I remember watching a video of a university student

that was filmed one day after the tragic shooting at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

The student tearfully proclaimed, "we have to change the way we treat each other. We

have to change how society treats women" (CBC Digital Archives). Her statement

resonated with me and I reflected that nearly twenty years after the shooting, there

certainly had been change in the treatment of women, but all was not perfect and that this

change may not have occurred in ways that would have been expected. I addressed this

in my speech, and was overwhelmed with the feedback from attendees who expressed

gratitude for the fact that this discussion was happening. Students were quite

forthcoming in sharing that they had not thought about their behaviours in the ways I had

discussed and were certainly interested in reflecting on them. My colleagues and I went

on to organize a follow-up event involving over two-hundred students to continue a

facilitated discussion of sexism on campus. Although I have been pleased that many

students are eager and willing to engage in discussion on this topic, I am also surprised at

the pervasiveness of a few common responses to student behaviours. For example, "I just

wasn't thinking about it" is often said when students are questioned on their participation

in activities such as the rape chant. Or others suggest that "it's simply harmless fun."

We heard these types of responses when twelve male dentistry students at Dalhousie

University were found posting sexist and hateful comments about their female classmates

in a Facebook page called "The Class of DDS 2015 Gentlemen" (Taskforce on

Misogyny, Sexism and Homophobia in Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry, 2015).

We heard it when the students in the Memorial University engineering program received bright yellow beer mugs featuring a "cartoon image of a barely dressed woman and the words: 'If She's Thirsty ... Give her the ... D (DAY)'" (Bailey, 2013, para. 4). In this case, D-Day refers to the engineering orientation day, but the accompanying sentence, "if she's thirsty, give her the D," makes reference to a popular phrase, possibly originating from a porn site (Bailey, 2013), which implies that women are simply thirsty for a man's penis. We heard it when university officials at McMaster University discovered a songbook in 2014, filled with degrading, homophobic, sexist and misogynist songs and chants created by students in an engineering society several years prior. The engineering society was suspended pending an investigation, and, as a result, students petitioned and claimed it was a fringe document, not known by many to exist, and besides, "everyone does something stupid in first year" (Almeida, as cited in Carter, 2014, para. 5). And we definitely heard it when the rape chants were discovered at both Saint Mary's University and University of British Columbia.

It can be very tempting to accept these responses. We can relate to the social pressures that might cause someone to engage in behaviours without fully considering the impact of their actions, particularly when we are young, perhaps in an unfamiliar environment, away from parental guidance, and so on. When alcohol consumption is brought into the equation, as it often is on university campuses, this notion of "not thinking about it" gets even more complicated. However, I think it is simply too easy to accept this along with the rhetoric of college kids just being college kids or similarly, boys being boys, which does not leave much room for understanding the ways that women are participating. I am interested in exploring the orientation week chant in order

to demonstrate that deliberate thought and sometimes deliberate *avoidance* of thought

goes into the planning of and participation in these events. A feminist analysis of the

rape chant event is both useful and necessary to inform the current discussions taking

place about the sexualisation of campus culture.

An examination of a sexualised campus culture, including a chant that extols the

rape of underage girls, also needs to recognize the current climate of sexualized violence

on campus. While sexual assaults on campus are not a new concern, what appears new is

the intensified focus by members of campus as well as the general public on the rates of

sexual assault and how campus administrators are handling those assaults. Although

there are conflicting articles, studies, and reports that challenge the validity of accurately

assessing the rates of sexual assault on campus, the most commonly cited figure is that

one in five women will experience sexual assault during their time in college/university

(ACPA College Student Educators International, n.d.; Baskin, 2015; "Justice

Department: 1 in 5", 2016; Anderson & Clement, 2015; Canadian Federation of Students,

2016). Subsequently, "mounting pressure from students and closer public scrutiny has

forced universities in both Canada and the United States to rethink how they handle

sexual assault" (Tamburri & Samson, 2014, para. 4). In Canada, colleges and universities

are reviewing policies and implementing prevention programs to address sexualized

violence on campus due to increasing concerns that "Canadian Post-Secondary Schools

[are] Failing Sex Assault Victims" (Mathieu & Poisson, 2014, headline). Others, "stung

by embarrassing headlines and unwanted media attention…took pains to tone down frosh

week activities" (Tamburri & Samson, 2014, para. 3). Universities are critiqued for

reporting low rates of sexual assaults (Ward, 2015) and accused of not wanting to talk

about sexual violence on campus for fear of harming their reputation and enrolment

numbers (Browne, 2014).

The reason why media and public attention matters is best explained by Jessica

Ringrose in her work exploring how "postfeminist panics over girlhood have influenced

educational policies and practices" (2013, p. i). Ringrose demonstrates how "policies are

increasingly 'mediatised' or shaped and informed by the media" and "the media has a

massive impact on how gender and educational issues will be discursively understood

and addressed as a contemporary social phenomenon, and which issues will be prioritised

and given resources (2013, p. 13). This could help to explain the recently proposed

provincial legislation requiring colleges and universities to develop and review stand-

alone sexual assault policies in Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia.[3] In the U.S.,

media and politics combined to tackle this issue with the creation of the public awareness

education campaign by the White House Administration in 2014. The "It's on Us"

campaign aimed to "fundamentally shift the way we think about sexual assault, by

inspiring everyone to see it as their responsibility to do something, big or small, to

prevent it" (The White House, 2014, para. 6). By involving celebrity endorsements and

a strong social media presence, the campaign has arguably factored into the discourse of

sexual assault on campus. Even CollegeHumour.com, a humour website aimed at young

adults, joined with the campaign to produce a satire video called *What if bears killed 1 in*

5 people? (College Humour, 2015), where five men face a hungry bear in the next room

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[3] In Ontario, called the Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention Plan Act, passed on March 8, 2016
(Government of Ontario News Release, 2016). In British Columbia, Bill 23-2016: Sexual Violence and
Misconduct Policy Act, passed on May 19, 2016 (Lowes, 2016). In Nova Scotia, Sexual Violence Action
Plan Act was introduced by the opposition party on April 25, 2016 (Baillie, 2016). This was after the Safer
Universities and Colleges Act was blocked by the provincial government's Liberal Party after it was
introduced by the New Democratic Party in May 2015 (Nova Scotia New Democratic Party, 2015)

while one friend justifies its existence by saying "hey what do you want me to do about it? You know the old saying 'bears will be bears'" and "the majority is fine – I don't wanna deal with this problem!" (2015). They parody the common responses to the issue of sexual assault on campus and why the one in five figure for sexual assaults against women should not matter or cause concern. Whether an educational video such as this is effective in preventing sexual assaults or not, its existence demonstrates a general public concern of the issue, and with almost 1.8 million views, the video is certainly contributing to an increased awareness of sexual assault on campus (College Humour, 2015).

Utilization of media in awareness campaigns and policy reviews is an important approach. This is demonstrated by Jennifer L. Cohen in her critical discourse analysis of teachers in the news. She suggests:

Influencing public perceptions of educational aims and practices worth supporting, therefore, is essential to ensuring the success of particular education policies, whether at the national or local level. One of the most powerful sites for influencing public debate over education policy is mainstream news media.

(2010, p. 106)

My research demonstrates why knowing what the media is saying about our campuses matters and how it is shaping our campus discourses.

My research is organized into the following chapters. Chapter Two is a literature review exploring academic research on sexualisation of culture, exposing the discourses of postfeminism, agency and neoliberalism. Chapter Two also demonstrates the difficulties of accurately defining the sexualisation of culture and how it is often used to

frame debates that position women as empowered sexual agents or cultural dupes fooled

into their own objectification. Chapter Three explores the challenges and benefits of the

theoretical framework of postructuralism, demonstrating how a feminist poststructuralist

approach to language, subjectivity, discourse and power allows for a deeper and

necessary understanding of the rape chant. I also describe an approach called

technologies of sexiness that will further understandings of power and agency on campus

as demonstrated through incidents such as the rape chant and the subsequent media

coverage. Chapter Four outlines my methodological approach of discourse analysis,

examining various approaches that range from linguistic to Foucauldian and explaining

my choice for the use of Baxter's feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA). I

also describe the online news articles that make up the data for this study, discussing the

article type and news media source. Chapter Five is an analysis of the two primary

discourses found in the articles about the rape chant and a discussion of how the media

takes up these kinds of incidents. I offer suggestions on how we should view these

incidents differently using approaches that consider agency and subjectivity without

falling into simplified dichotomies that view women's behaviour as something to be

celebrated or scorned. Chapter Six is the conclusion, offering a suggestion of next steps

in the research of campus rape culture and making recommendations on how the campus

community can best utilize this research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Within the feminist literature on the sexualisation of culture, three lines of inquiry are both central and persistent in discussions of the sexualised girl/woman. These are the challenges of determining a consistent definition of sexualisation, the empowerment/sexual agency debates, and the potential for disruption within sexualisation discourses.

Defining "Sexualisation"

While some claim sexualisation is a new phenomenon, others insist that the concern over the sexualized girl has a long and contested history (Renold & Ringrose, 2011). What is relatively recent is the emergence of mass public interest and concern for the "sexualisation of culture" as evidenced by its discussion in news reports, taskforces, academic research, blogs, books, journals, and social media sites. It is becoming widely documented that "Western culture is being generally 'sexualized', or that more explicit sexual content is continually being 'mainstreamed' through processes like the normalization of pornographic imagery and discourses into everyday life" (Ringrose, 2011, p. 102). Before tracing the growing interest in the sexualisation of culture, it would make logical sense to provide a definition of it, yet this has proven to be a difficult task. Much of the research has noted that there is no consistent definition of sexualisation and that it can refer to a range of different behaviours, discourses and representations. Within the last two decades there has been an abundance of work intended to demonstrate how our culture has become increasingly sexualised and how sex is becoming more visible, and much of this work has focused on examples within the media and popular culture. In fact, "the media, then, are paradoxically perhaps the biggest source of 'sexualised'

representations, as well as the primary space where debates about 'sexualisation' are aired" (Gill, 2009a, p. 140).

Brian McNair's "striptease culture" (2002), Ariel Levy's "raunch culture" (2005), Gail Dines' "porn culture" (2010) are just a few of the monikers used to describe various aspects of sexualisation within popular culture. Yet each of these authors offers a different perspective, adding to the difficulty around finding a common meaning of sexualisation. McNair takes a celebratory stance, exploring "a culture in which public nakedness, voyeurism, and sexualized looking are permitted, indeed encouraged as never before" (2002, p. ix). Levy and Dines are more critical. McNair explores striptease culture, his "label of convenience for the media of sexual revelation and exhibitionism which proliferated in the capitalist societies of the late twentieth century" (2002, p. ix). He is critical of the frequent argument that "sexualization is bad for us – bad for individuals, male and female; bad for the family, nuclear or otherwise; bad for society in general" (p. 8), arguing that there is no hard evidence for this conclusion. Ariel Levy's definition of raunch culture focuses on the "female chauvinist pig:"

> The Female Chauvinist Pig (FCP) has risen to a kind of exalted status. She is
> post-feminist. She is funny. She *gets it*. She doesn't mind cartoonish stereotypes
> of female sexuality, and she doesn't mind a cartoonishly macho response to them.
> The FCP asks: Why throw your boyfriend's *Playboy* in a freedom trash when you
> could be partying at the mansion? Why worry about disgusting or degrading
> when you could be giving – or getting – a lap dance yourself? Why try to beat
> them when you can join them? (2005, p. 93)

Levy expresses concern over women partaking in the objectification of other women – of behaving "more like men." She explains that "as long as womanhood is thought of as something to escape from, something less than manhood, (women) will be thought of less, too" (2005, p. 112). Gail Dines takes a critical approach to the saturation of porn in our everyday lives. She offers many examples of how "porn has seeped into our everyday world and is fast becoming such a normal part of our lives that it barely warrants a mention" (2010, p. ix) and suggests that this has serious implications for gender identity, sexuality, and relationships. For example, she discusses the popularity of the *Girls Gone Wild* franchise, where girls, often drunk, are filmed flashing their breasts or making out with other women at bars and other events. She argues that what makes *Girls Gone Wild* so popular is that it features "real" girls, not actors, so the viewer "gets to witness a real woman doing porn for the first time in her life" (2010, p. 29) and "by using 'real' women, GGW socializes users, suggesting that everyday women are sexually available" (2010, p. 29). Dines argues that this "brings the porn story of 'all women are sluts' right into the center of pop culture and subsequently into the lives of men" (2010, p. 29).

Clearly there is plenty of academic research exploring the sexualisation of culture, yet there exists difficulty in defining exactly what it entails. To add to the discussion of what it is, researchers have questioned what we should think about it. In their research on children, sexualisation, and consumer culture, Bragg, Buckingham, Russell and Willett (2011) suggest that there are significant flaws in current approaches to sexualisation,

> The most striking of these is the lack of any consistent definition of
> 'sexualisation' itself. To state the obvious, there are bound to be significant

difficulties in defining what *counts* as 'sexualized:' different people are likely to

have very different views about this, and to interpret and respond to sexual

imagery in quite different ways. Yet much of the research ignores this. (p. 280)

Nonetheless, attempts at definitions exist. The highly critiqued 2007 American

Psychological Association *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*

defines sexualisation as a condition that occurs when a person is subjected to at least one

of the following four conditions:

1.   A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to

     the exclusion of other characteristics

2.   A person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly

     defined) with being sexy

3.   A person is sexually objectified – that is, made into a thing for others'

     sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent

     action and decision making

4.   Sexuality is inappropriately imposed on a person. (p. 2)

While this report has been critiqued for focussing on only the negative consequences of

sexualisation (Lerum & Dworkin, 2009), it certainly offers another possible, and popular,

definition to add to the rest of them.

Feona Attwood (2006) offers another definition of sexualisation:

…a rather clumsy phrase used to indicate a number of things: a contemporary

preoccupation with sexual values, practices and identities; the public shift to more

permissive sexual attitudes; the proliferation of sexual texts; the emergence of

new forms of sexual experience; the apparent breakdown of rules, categories and

regulations designed to keep the obscene at bay; our fondness for scandals,

controversies and panics around sex. (p.78)

Attwood states this despite her acknowledgment that "as sex appears to become more and

more important to contemporary cultures, permeating every aspect of our existence and

providing a language for talking about all kinds of things, its meaning becomes more

elusive and more ambiguous" (2009, p. xv).   So perhaps the more sexualisation is

studied, the more dimensions are revealed, making it difficult to define and contain it.

   This confusion around the meaning of sexualisation can also be attributed to the

vast range of behaviours and phenomena that each researcher seeks to explore. As

Attwood (2006) indicated, sexualisation encompasses a wide range of "things,"

suggesting it might be more of an umbrella term, making it more difficult to be defined

and clearly understood. More recently, the discussions of sexualisation are much more

critical, suggesting the "under-theorized, over-generalized buzzword" (Ringrose, 2011, p.

99) would be more productive if talked about as "sexism rather than sexualisation" (Gill,

2012a, p. 741). Many question whether it is a term that should be used at all.

   Conversely, Rosalind Gill suggests that there is "a surprising degree of consensus

about the 'sexualization of culture' as an empirical phenomenon both in media/popular

writing and in more scholarly texts" (2009a, p. 140), which points to a change, namely an

increase in sexualized content and representations, in late 20th-century and early 21st-

century media in the west. She suggests that where the disagreement often lies is with

how this change should be understood and interpreted. In his recent work, Robbie

Duschinsky explores the contradictory processes that the term sexualisation tends to

evoke, explaining that "'sexualisation' necessarily lacks a single meaning, but instead

speaks to the contradiction between established age and gender norms of feminine

innocence and a shift in which learning to display signs of heteronormative sexual

desirability has become a normative part of feminine enculturation" (2013, p. 261). He

expresses concern "regarding the disjunctive synthesis achieved by 'sexualisation', in

ramifying 'the sexual' (gender; erotic desire, experience and practice) with 'socialisation'

(passive enculturation)" (p. 261). At the same time, he recognizes that the troubles with

the term might just have to be the price we are willing to pay in order to address other

pressing matters that the term identifies. He suggests that it is possible to accept the

reservations about the term, "and still see the potential where gender inequity can be

explicitly spoken in the same breath as 'sexualisation'" (p. 262).

Despite increasing analysis published by both mainstream and academic sources,

"'sexualisation' has, to date, had no agreed definition" (Duschinsky, 2013, p. 256).

Duschinsky urges us not to use this lack of definition as a reason to dismiss sexualisation

as mere moral panic, demonstrating how a clear advantage of the term for feminist

discourses is that it helps forge a connection with it and the public agenda focussed on the

sexuality of girls (2013). This is a big step in a postfeminist era where feminism has been

typecast as "fuelled by anger and hostility to men" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 26). The

sexualisation discussions are doing just that – creating discussions among various groups

of people, and we can only hope they will inspire a "new generation of feminists" (Gill,

2012a, p. 741). This can be seen in the SlutWalk events that arose in response to a

Toronto Police Officer's comments that "women should avoid dressing like sluts in order

not to be victimised" (Ringrose & Renold, 2012, p. 333). In their work with teen girls,

Ringrose and Renold question whether the remarkable international response to the

officer's comments were a demonstration of the "postfeminist revulsion of feminism as

dour, obsolete and repugnant being 'rolled over'" (p. 334). They explore the possibilities

of the SlutWalks as a place of solidarity between differently raced and classed women

and girls, boys and men. Concerns over sexualisation have clearly led to renewed interest

in feminist issues and this should not be discredited by researchers who dislike the use of

the term itself. Attwood warns that critiques of sexualisation can have the consequence

of closing down "an important debate about how an active female sexuality can be

materialized in culture, as well as working to position feminism in terms of an unhelpful

and unimaginative 'anti-sex' stance" (2006, p. 84). Duschinsky sums up the current work

on sexualisation quite aptly in his attempt to "make sense of the way that media and

policy discourses addressing 'sexualisation' have tended to lose focus on gender

inequality, and frame a debate between those who treat young female media use and

sexual choices as either *risky or empowering* [emphasis added]" (2013, p. 256).

Empowered Women or Cultural Dupes?

        The contradictions and competing claims within sexualisation debates are often

centred on issues of agency. Described as the agency pendulum (Gill, 2007b), "women

who engage with the sexualisation of culture are positioned as either cultural dupes (as a

form of false consciousness) or as agentically engaged in their own liberation" (Evans et

al., 2010, p. 116). Many have explored this polarization within sexualisation discussions,

focussing specifically on the notion of empowerment (Gill 2007a, 2008, 2012; Evans,

Riley & Shankar 2010; Jackson & Vares 2011; Ringrose 2011). Gill identifies the

"prominence accorded to empowerment" (2012a, p. 736) as the main difference between

the contemporary focus on sexualisation/pornification compared to the "sex wars" of the

early 1980s. She demonstrates the way in which women's empowerment, choice and

agency are used to support aspects of sexualised culture such as pornography, burlesque,

or pole-dancing as activities to be defended and even celebrated, while on the other hand,

"empowerment is regarded merely as a cynical rhetoric, wrapping sexual objectification

in a shiny, feisty, postfeminist packaging that obscures the continued underlying sexism"

(2012a, p. 737). Gill identifies many concerns with the use of empowerment within

explorations of sexualisation. She suggests that the term empowerment has become

commodified, "used to sell everything from washing powder to cosmetic surgery" (p.

743) and that these fake notions of empowerment make it difficult to identify what true

empowerment might look and feel like. In affluent, developed societies, "women are

invited to purchase everything from bras to coffee as signs of their power and

independence (from men)" (Gill, 2008, p. 36). She suggests that "there is often a

problematic elision of pleasure, agency and empowerment such that merely getting

enjoyment from something is held up as intrinsically transgressive and empowering for

women and therefore to be championed...yet there is no necessary connection between

pleasure and transgression, and many cultural activities 'while certainly enjoyable, are

not radical'" (2012b, p. 491). In addition, she suggests that "sexual empowerment" has

become one of the tropes of the sexualized culture, and we are confronted everyday with

images of empowered female sexuality, which is often "precisely how sexual

objectification is done" (2012a, p. 743).

     Sexual empowerment is also a term fraught with uncertainty and vagueness.

Most compelling, Gill challenges the use of sexual empowerment as putting too much

focus on individual, "rather than on creating the conditions of possibility for all young

women to enjoy safe, consensual and pleasurable sex" (2012a, p. 743). This sentiment is

echoed by Evans et al. who suggest that "contemporary 'up for it' female sexual

subjectivities appear to impose new individualized neo-liberal discourses which regulate

the subject through an internalization of regimes of disciplinary power" (2010, p. 116).

The authors demonstrate this imposition with the example of Brazilian waxes "which

have been rebranded through a 'pleasing yourself' discourse, implying that the practice of

genital hair removal is a personal choice rather than a culturally defined notion of beauty

and sexiness" (2010, p. 116). Gill specifically looks at the shifts in advertising in the last

decade to a presentation of what she calls "midriff advertising," where "women are much

less likely to be shown as passive sexual objects than as empowered, heterosexually

desiring sexual subjects, operating playfully in a sexual marketplace that is presented as

egalitarian or actually favourable to women" (2009b, p. 99). She views the use of

empowerment in this way as problematic as it is "tied to the possession of a slim and

alluring young body, whose power is the ability to attract male attention and (sometimes)

female envy" (2009a, p. 149). She is also concerned with the exclusions of sexualisation

as demonstrated in this midriff advertising, as "only some women can be sexual subjects:

women who are young, white, heterosexual and conventionally attractive" (2009a, p.

150), suggesting that this advertising is heterosexist, racist, ageist and classist. She

recognizes that non-white or lesbian women are still sexualized, but not in the same ways

involving sexual agency, playfulness, and subjectivity, whereas "older women, fat

women, and any women who do not live up to the increasingly normative judgements of

female attractiveness are excluded from the pleasurable, empowering world of midriff

advertising" (2009a, p. 150). Gill's extensive work exploring empowerment cannot be

discussed without an equal exploration into postfeminism – "a key term in the lexicon of

feminist cultural critique in recent years" (Gill & Scharff, 2011, p. 3).

Postfeminism

The concept of postfeminism is often referred to alongside discussions of sexual

empowerment and has been explored at length by Angela McRobbie (2009). Described

as a "process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are actively and relentlessly

undermined" (2009, p. 11), McRobbie suggests:

> Elements of feminism have been taken into account, and have been absolutely
>
> incorporated into political and institutional life. Drawing on a vocabulary that
>
> includes words like 'empowerment' and 'choice', these elements are then
>
> converted into a much more individualistic discourse, and they are deployed in
>
> this new guise, particularly in media and popular culture, but also by agencies of
>
> the state, as a kind of substitute for feminism. These new and seemingly
>
> 'modern' ideas about women and especially young women are then disseminated
>
> more aggressively, so as to ensure that a new women's movement will not re-
>
> emerge. (p. 1)

Postfeminism is yet another term that warrants explanation as "its taken-for-granted

status belies very real disputes and contestations over its meanings" (Gill & Scharff,

2011, p. 3). Gill states that "arguments about postfeminism are debates about nothing

less than the transformations in feminisms and transformations in media culture – and

their mutual relationship" (2007b, p. 147). She states that even after two decades there is

little agreement to its meaning and suggests that "in order to use the term 'postfeminism'

for analytical purposes, at minimum we need to be able to specify the criteria to identify

something as postfeminist" (2007b, p. 148). She encourages the viewpoint of

postfeminism as a "sensibility" rather than a backlash, epistemological perspective or

historical shift, and argues that "postfeminist media culture should be our critical object –

a phenomenon into which scholars of culture should inquire – rather than an analytical

perspective" (Gill, 2007b, p. 148).

Jessica Ringrose (2013) explores postfeminism in the educational context and sets

out to challenge the "contemporary postfeminist sensibility grounded not only in

assumptions that gender and sexual equality has been achieved in many Western

contexts, but that feminism has gone 'too far' with women and girls now overtaking men

and boys" (p. i). She examines postfeminist panics over girls and girlhood that circulate

in media and popular culture and outlines how these panics have "influenced educational

policies and practices in areas such as academic achievement, anti-bullying strategies and

sex-education curriculum, making visible the new postfeminist, sexual politics of

schooling" (p. i).

In a collection of essays called *Interrogating Postfeminsm*, editors Tasker and

Negra suggest a more complex relationship between culture, politics and feminism and

state that the "backlash" framing of postfeminism is not sufficient. They suggest that:

> feminist activism has long met with strategies of resistance, negotiation, and
>
> containment, processes that a model of backlash – with its implication of
>
> achievements won and then subsequently lost – cannot effectively incorporate
>
> within the linear chronology of social change on which it seems to be premised.
>
> (2007, p.1)

They also raise issues with the exclusions found within postfeminist canons (much like

sexualisation), suggesting that a strong argument to resist a "postfeminist canon" is the

"potential complicity of that canon with postfeminism's limited race and class vision: in

this context, it is crucially important to test how postfeminism's emerging narrative

protocols and tropes are and are not ascribed to women of color and working-class

women" (p. 15). Tasker and Negra suggest that "the questions facing feminist scholars

have less to do with the usefulness of postfeminism as a concept (its incoherence might

be seen as a limiting factor in this context) than with the strategies we might adopt in

relation to its pervasive insistence on the bleakness and redundancy of feminism" (p. 19).

Despite the fact that "definitive conceptualizations of postfeminism are as elusive as

references to postfeminism are pervasive" (Tasker & Negra, 2007, p. 19) it remains a

critical concept for feminist explorations into discourses of empowerment and sexual

agency.

Disrupting the Binaries of Sexualisation

It would seem that this empowerment/agency debate colours much of the

discussion of sexualisation. Ringrose suggests that it is difficult to even engage in

debates or "use the notions of 'sexualized' or 'sexualization,' without being caught up in

a media furore that has already overdetermined these notions, forcing the speaker into

binary positions" (2011, p. 100). Researchers have begun to see the harms in this

approach and want to steer away from or attempt to disrupt this polarization. Renold and

Ringrose have attempted to complicate the binaries of sexual victim/sexual empowerment

and sexual innocence/sexual excess in their work with teens in the UK (2011). Their

work encourages feminist researchers to "move beyond the static, binary positions that

locate girls as either savvy sexual agents or objectified sexualized victims, to see instead

the complexity and difficulty in navigating and performing schizoid sexual subjectivities

and female desire" (2011, p. 404). Ringrose identifies an example of this complexity of

use of "pornified" discourses in social media sites, particularly with the use of the word

"slut." While it appears quite normal within the social media sites she studied,

"increasingly called upon as a 'fun' cum 'naughty' way of representing the self as

sexually confident, experienced and knowing" (Ringrose, 2011, p. 110), it is

"problematic to interpret this form of digital sexual exploration as simply empowering.

For girls in particular, 'slut' and 'whore' remain complex, slippery, and 'risky' signifiers

to navigate" (Ringrose, 2011, p. 110).

Jackson and Vares (2011) identified similar concerns in their work with teen girls

in New Zealand, where disgust was employed as a strategy for the teens' careful

negotiation of the slut. The girls in their study rejected the postfeminist notion of the fun-

loving empowered female sexuality by invoking the slut, and "in doing so they harness a

regulatory arm of policing conventional 'good girl' femininity (i.e. the 'slut') to disrupt

some of the sexuality meanings produced in postfeminist discourse" (p. 144). They too

recognize the difficulties this "knotty intertwining of resistance and regulation" (p. 145)

presents for feminist researchers and theorists. Egan and Hawkes explore the ways

children interact with messages in sexualised culture, suggesting that since "adults

actively navigate popular culture in complex and contradictory ways – children are no

different" (2008, p. 298). However, they clearly identify the struggles with affording

children agency in this framework, "because sexualization taps into such historically

persistent and ambivalent constructions of the child and its relationship to sexuality and

gender" (p. 298). Since children are seen as passive and in need of protection from

adults, this "absents the possibility of children as active agents in their own lives thus

intensifying the level of danger inherent in sexualization" (p. 299). They suggest a

framework where children are recognized for making meaning of their social location, as

this would change the focus of the sexualisation discussions from "damage and protection

to meaning making, complexity and contradiction as well as to collective partnership

between children and adults" (p. 300). Allowing room in the discourse for this

complexity, specifically when discussing children, is considered a critical step for

reframing the sexualisation debates.

What is so important about Egan and Hawkes' work is how they articulate the

urgent need to disrupt the binaries found within sexualisation arguments:

> By assuming the binary of innocent/sexualized the authors reinforce frameworks
>
> which place women's and girls' sexuality, into narrow and often repressive
>
> classist categories such as virgin and whore or innocent and sexualized. In so
>
> doing, sexualisation reproduces a moralizing framework that renders girls passive
>
> and highly corruptible and in need of regulation. To this end, this model of
>
> sexualisation moves feminist thinking away from a deconstruction of dominant
>
> patriarchal culture and *vilifies sexuality as opposed to sexism*. (2008, p. 307)

In her recent work, R. Danielle Egan (2013) reiterates this notion of complexity in the

research, demonstrating how the ways in which "young women make sense of media is

rarely straightforward; more often than not, it involves a complex brew of pleasure,

resistance, complicity, pressure, banality, confusion, disgust, curiosity and refusal" (p.

268). She expresses deep concerns about the negative effects of the binary existing in

narratives where the girl is "split into one who deserves protection and an(other) who is deserving of derision" (p. 272). She argues that "if sexualised girls are deemed promiscuous, dangerous and pathological then feminist discourse skirts perilously close to slut bashing and rape culture" (p. 272), a point demonstrated by Ringrose and Renold's work on the SlutWalks. They remind us that "women are still subject to deeply sexist social and cultural values, or what some activist groups are defining as 'rape culture'" (2012, p. 334), which leads to incidents such as the comments made by the police officer in Toronto. Yet here we see slut resignified, demonstrating how "an injurious term is re-worked in the cultural domain from one of maligning to one of celebration" (Ringrose & Renold, 2012, p. 334).

Evans, Riley and Shankar acknowledge that issues of agency appear in much of the literature on sexualisation, but that "none satisfactorily theorize women's engagement in the sexualization of culture in a way that engages with the complexity of choice and agency within the context of postfeminism, consumer culture and disciplinary discourses of neo-liberalism" (2010, p. 118). They call for a "more nuanced concept of agency so that we may better theorize the complexities of the cultural and the subjective, using the concept of a 'technology of sexiness'" (p. 118), which I explore in the theory chapter of this project in order to provide a "more sophisticated understanding of women's agency within the sexualization of culture" (p. 118). It is quite apparent that any research of sexualisation contains a number of risks and, as indicated by Duschinsky, it becomes a matter of deciding which risks are worth taking in order to explore this complex phenomenon (2013).

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

In this section, I discuss the theoretical perspective of feminist poststructuralism that informs and frames this research project, including an overview of its strengths, challenges, and key assertions. I also outline a concept that is critical in my analysis of the rape chant called technologies of sexiness.

Feminist Poststructuralism

My research on the rape chant is framed by a feminist poststructuralist theoretical perspective in order to gain an understanding of how knowledge and power are understood and produced on campus through such incidents. With a particular focus on language, feminist poststructuralism "offers a useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities of change" (Weedon, 1997, p.10). Using this framework, I explore mechanisms of power in mediated representation of the rape chant, as well as the places and times where this power is resisted – or has the potential to be resisted.

There is one major challenge with poststructuralist theory that I would like to mention right at the outset. Poststructuralism is known for being difficult to define, as "an important part of poststructuralism is its resistance to definition or even identification" (Gavey, 1989, p. 460), having "something of a reputation for its use of alienating, obfuscating terminology" (Baxter, 2003, p. 3) and simply being "not easy" (Weedon, 1997, p. 20). Baxter points out the irony in this, given the poststructuralist objective "to demystify the ways in which both discourse and language 'do power'" (2003, p. 3). I find this a really important point to note in my research as I always intended on making it accessible to the reader, both so that it might be used by my

colleagues working in Student Affairs programs across the country, but also because I

think accessible academic material is very important for challenging spaces of power on

campus. Poststructuralist theory is "conceptually complicated, and often discussed in

unfamiliar and therefore difficult language…[which] renders it to some extent

inaccessible to people without certain sorts of backgrounds and the time to devote to

indepth study of unfamiliar material" (Gavey, 1989, p. 471). Despite this, I chose this

approach because it offered the most helpful framework for analysing the rape chant and

the media responses to it that maintains a feminist focus on challenging the patriarchal

structures in society. Feminist poststructuralism provides a "theoretical basis for

analyzing the subjectivities of women and men in relation to language, other cultural

practices, and the material conditions of our lives" (Gavey, 1989, p. 472), offering a

framework to deepen our understanding of students' participation in the chant and to

examine the many responses to it. My goal is to use poststructuralism in a way that

attempts to make it as clear as possible while maintaining its embrace of "complexity and

contradiction" (Gavey, 1989, p. 472) and to offer definitions and explanations of key

concepts along the way. Since it has been noted that "not all forms [of poststructuralism]

are necessarily productive for feminism" (Weedon, 1997, p.20), I highlight the feminist

poststructuralist approach put forward by Chris Weedon (1997) to make sense of how the

rape chant incident was viewed and understood in the media.

 Weedon starts her work on feminist poststructuralist theory by pointing out how

many of the founding poststructuralist perspectives come from men, including:

  the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Emile Benveniste, Marxist

  theory, particularly Louis Althusser's theory of ideology, and the psychoanalysis

of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. They also include Jacques Derrida's

theory of différance, with its critique of the metaphysics of presence in which the

speaking subject's intention guarantees meaning and language is a tool for

expressing something beyond it, the deconstruction based on Derrida's theory and

Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power. (p. 12)

She explains that this is no surprise, but a "consequence of the gender relations which

have structured women's absence from the active production of most theory within a

whole range of discourses over the last 300 years" (p. 13). They are still useful theories

that in "feminist hands" can challenge patriarchal structures, even if the original author

did not intend to or achieve this goal (Weedon, 1997). Weedon thus sets out to determine

a form of poststructuralism that can meet feminist needs by exploring poststructuralism's

key features of language, subjectivity, discourse and power.

Language and Subjectivity

According to feminist poststructuralism, language is constitutive: "it is language

which enables us to think, speak and give meaning to the world around us. Meaning and

consciousness do not exist outside language" (Weedon, 1997, p. 31). This viewpoint is in

direct contradiction to the "liberal humanist view of language as transparent and

expressive, merely reflecting and describing (pre-existing) subjectivity and human

experiences of the world (Gavey, 1989, p. 463). Poststructuralist thinking provided a

marked departure from the core assumptions found within the feminisms of the first and

second waves regarding essentialist group categories, for example (Ward & Mann, 2012).

Within humanist and other feminist analyses:

> There is considerable emphasis on, and privileging of, women's experience,
>
> which is often at least implicitly regarded as universal and transhistorical – an
>
> entity that is pure and essential. Women's language is regarded as transparently
>
> reflecting women's unique *experience*. As such, to speak 'from experience' has
>
> almost unquestionable authority in much feminist discourse. The importance of
>
> language as a constitutive process remains largely unrecognized.
>
> > A poststructuralist approach to experience is radically different. (Gavey,
>
> 1989, p. 461)

It is this difference in approach to essentialism and language that makes the

poststructuralist framework so appealing and appropriate for my research on the rape

chant.

The rape chant involved the use of language that positions women in highly

problematic ways which should cause great concern when considering a feminist

poststructuralist standpoint of the constitutive nature of language. This is best explained

when looking at poststructuralist approaches to subjectivity. Weedon explains how

"'subjectivity' is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of

the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding the world" (1997, p.

32). As seen above, humanist approaches "presuppose an essence at the heart of the

individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and which makes her what she is" (p. 32).

Poststructuralists challenge this notion of essentialism, rejecting the belief that groups

have core identities, suggesting that "rather, group concepts and identities are simply

social constructs – social fictions – that serve to regulate behaviour and exclude others"

(Ward & Mann, 2012, p. 215). Subjectivity then, according to poststructuralists, "is

precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each

time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). This approach provides more room to

explore the participation in the rape chant and the competing and contradictory discourses

that constitute the particular identities of student, frosh, woman, leader, bystander, and so

on. Poststructuralism recognizes that the "individual is always the site of conflicting

forms of subjectivity" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32) and "at any particular moment of thought or

speech, a subject, subjected to the regime of meaning of a particular discourse and

enabled to act accordingly [emphasis added]" (Weedon, 1997, p. 34). Through a

poststructuralist lens I explore the discursive regimes and conflicting forms of

subjectivity found in the media representations of the rape chant, thus highlighting how

power operates on campus through these types of incidents.

Discourse and Power

The rape chant incident offers an opportunity to explore the concept of power and

a feminist poststructuralist inquiry of power must include the work of theorist Michel

Foucault. According to Weedon, Foucault explored discursive fields "as an attempt to

understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power"

(1997, p. 34). Within these discursive fields, where individuals have access to a range of

subjectivities, "not all discourses carry equal weight or power" (p. 34).   Jane Ward and

Susan Mann (2012) explore the tensions between feminism and Foucault to explain how

"Foucault alerted feminists to the power of discourse" (p. 221) and challenged the notion

that power is a top-down, binary and hierarchical concept, a viewpoint held by liberal,

Marxist, and radical forms of feminism. They explain this alternate approach, in which

the postperspectives, including poststructuralism, "call for the demise of binary and

dualistic thinking. They do not accept that power operates only in binary, top-down and repressive ways. Rather power is viewed as dispersed and multidirectional" (p. 221).

For Foucault, "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (1978, p. 93). Ward and Mann suggest that Foucault "envisions a more complex and decentralized scenario in which discourses produce and reinforce power but also undermine and expose it, rendering it fragile and capable of being thwarted" (2012, p. 221), which is a useful framework for attempting to understand the news media explanations of why students participated in the rape chant incident and the effects of the incident. Power is not considered something that can be acquired or shared, "rather power is 'exercised' and for Foucault, the question theorists should be asking is: *How*, that is, *by what means*, is power exercised?" (Ward & Mann, 2012, p. 221).

The rape chant and its coverage in the media articles I selected for this study provide many examples that demonstrate the multidirectional ways power is exercised. For example, on that day on campus in early September 2013, it was reported that there were approximately eighty orientation week student leaders who led the chant for the four-hundred first-year students (President's Council, 2013). Although there were far more first-year students in attendance at this event, during orientation week it is well established that the leaders are in charge. They are responsible for the safety and well-being of the new students, ensuring they are welcomed and oriented to the campus before they begin their classes. In a literal sense, the leaders take the new students from event to event, getting them excited about the events by facilitating cheers and maintaining a level of energy and excitement. The leaders are upper-year students who have presumably

been on campus for at least a year already, so they have an expected knowledge of the

campus and city that many of the first-year students from out of town would be lacking.

It is for all of these reasons that the student orientation leaders would have a moderate

level of a traditional form of authority or power over the new students. This authority is

often acknowledged during the training program that leaders undergo, and the leaders are

often required to sign contracts or abide by codes of conduct while they are in the

position. This example of power was noted by several of authors of the news articles I

reviewed for this study, who recognized the responsibility of the leaders for encouraging

participation in the rape chant, stressing that "student leaders [are] responsible for

shaping frosh culture" (Bradshaw, 2013, para. 4). Jane Kirby pointed out this power

dynamic when she suggested that "rape culture is those same students [who led the chant]

being entrusted with welcoming new students to campus, teaching them university

customs, and helping them adapt to 'normal' university life. It is new university students

thinking they have to participate in such activities in order to fit in" (2013, para. 7). The

orientation leaders certainly exercised this power over the new students when leading

them through orientation week, which also included chanting the words of the rape chant

and expecting the first-year students to join in and participate with them. This power is

visible in a physical sense when looking at the video footage of the rape chant (Tutton,

2013) where some of the upper year students are seen standing on a bench above the first-

year students, presumably to allow the large group to see what they are doing, but it also

has the effect of asserting dominance and control. This relates to Foucault's examination

of modern techniques of normative discursive power, specifically the panopticon.

According to Ward and Mann, Foucault describes a development found in nineteenth-

century prisons where "a few guards, located within a circular structure at the centre of the prison, high above the view of the prisoners, could gaze down upon the inmates and their activities" (2012, p. 225). The primary effect of the panopticon was to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201), so that even if a guard was not present, the inmates would believe that they were always watching and ever-present. The panopticon had many applications:

> it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, or hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used.
>
> (Foucault, 1977, p. 205)

The effects of the panopticon were evidenced in modern schools where we see professors or teachers separated from students by a podium or simply standing at the front of the room (Ward & Mann, 2012). In my study, the orientation leaders' authority was well established utilizing methods of power that are understood and familiar to the students, the majority of whom would have spent years in this typical classroom setting before arriving on campus.

Yet it is also interesting to think about the age and experience levels of those exercising this power. They are often the same age or just slightly older than the new students. They might look the same or dress the same – they are peers in that they are not that different from the people they are responsible for but they are attempting to establish some authority over a group. Examining the power dynamics that exist between the orientation leaders and the first-year students by utilizing Foucault's work on discourse and power provides an example of one of the many ways power is exercised on campus. More examples will be explored in the analysis found in Chapter Five.

Weedon explains how, for some feminists, Foucault's analytics of power is both useful and challenging:

It is an approach which enables feminists to theorize both the repressive and productive dimensions of power relations, including relations of power that are patriarchal but none the less offer women forms of subjectivity and pleasure that are experienced as pleasurable. It does not assume a uniformity in the ways in which patriarchal power relations work and it allows for resistance, even as it suggests broader strategies of power which manifest themselves in institutions. However, it denies feminists the security and guarantees of centred models of power which see it as something that can be escaped. (1999, p. 119)

This space for resistance is why Foucault's approach to power is so appealing to me, as "discourses produce subjects within relations of power that potentially or actually involve resistance" (Weedon, 1999, p. 119). Foucault argues that to insist there is no escape from power:

…would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power

relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance:

these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations.

These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence

there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions,

or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistance, each of

them a special case. (1978, p. 96)

In the example of the rape chant, where the discursive power of orientation week led to a

sexist chant being sung by hundreds of students, it also led to opportunities of resistance

and counter opinions on the chant's appropriateness and meaning. Weedon describes

how Foucault's work demonstrates "while there is no place beyond discourses and the

power relations that govern them, resistance and change are possible from within"

(Weedon, 1997, p. 120). Some critics of Foucault's approach have been concerned about

"the question of agency – of the actor's autonomy or freedom to resist, to refuse, or to

change the way he/she is constructed through dominant discourses" (Ward & Mann,

2012, p. 229) and feared his work would lead to the "death of the subject" (Ward &

Mann, 2012, p. 229). However, Foucault's supporters suggested that he "always insisted

that whenever power was exercised, resistance was also present" (Ward & Mann, 2012,

p. 229) and that the retrieval of subjugated knowledges, the voices of subordinate groups,

was in itself a form of resistance (Ward & Mann, 2012). Weedon acknowledges that

"although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices,

she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of

resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject

positions and practices" (1997, p. 121). Despite the concern that "the postperspectives

lead to the death of the subject, there appears to be ample room in these approaches for

social agency and resistance" (Ward & Mann, 2012, p. 229). Foucault's work and a

discussion of agency is essential to another approach that frames my research: the

technologies of sexiness.

Technologies of Sexiness

        In this project I draw upon a concept suggested by Radner (1999) and Gill

(2007b), further developed by Evans, Riley and Shankar (2010), and most recently Evans

and Riley (2015), called the "technologies of sexiness." In an approach that examines

postmodernist thinking on issues of sexual agency, Evans, Riley and Shankar utilize

Foucault's technology of the self, combined with Judith Butler's notion of performativity,

both explained in more detail below, in order to develop a more "sophisticated

understanding of women's agency within the context of the sexualization of culture"

(2010, p. 118). Gill explains how, for young women in postfeminist cultures, "the

display of a certain kind of sexual knowledge, sexual practice and sexual agency has

become normative – indeed a 'technology of sexiness' has replaced the 'innocence or

'virtue' as the commodity that young women are required to offer in the heterosexual

marketplace" (2007a, p. 72). Harvey and Gill elaborate further, suggesting that "in the

postfeminist, post-*Cosmopolitan* West, heroines must no longer embody virginity but are

required to be skilled in a variety of sexual behaviours and practices, and the performance

of confident sexual agency is central to this technology of the self" (2013, p. 56).

Whether participating in pole-dancing classes, purchasing sex toys, wearing G-string

underwear or getting Brazilian waxes, this is the "postfeminist consumer citizen: active,

empowered, above influence and beholden to no one, able to choose to 'use beauty'' to

make herself feel good, feel confident" (Gill, 2007a, p. 74). Exploring their concept of

sexual entrepreneurship, Harvey and Gill explain some of the contradictions faced by this

modern postfeminist subject:

> …incited to be compulsorily sexy and always 'up for it', and is interpellated
>
> through discourses in which sex is work that requires constant labour and
>
> reskilling (as well as a budget capable of stretching to a wardrobe full of sexy
>
> outfits and drawers stuffed with sex toys). Beauty, desirability and sexual
>
> performance(s) constitute her ongoing projects and she is exhorted to lead a
>
> 'spiced up' sex life, whose limits – not least heterosexuality and monogamy – are
>
> tightly policed, even as they are effaced or disavowed through discourses of
>
> playfulness and experimentation. (2013, p. 56)

Harvey and Gill are quick to remind us that this is not about false consciousness

and that agency and pleasure are important facets of sexual entrepreneurship. They argue

that "to note the extent to which this subject has become a normative ideal, then, is

resolutely not to deny agency, but is instead to open up a language in which subject-

object, power-pleasure, discipline-agency are no longer counterposed as antithetical,

binary opposites" (2013, p. 56). Similarly, Evans and Riley's technologies of sexiness

"is able to explicate both the powerful and pleasurable aspects of contemporary

femininities that work to make their expression so contradictory" (2015, p. 56). Evans

and Riley suggest an approach to agency "that would allow complex analyses of enacting

agency within the limitations and possibilities of gender identities and mediated

subjectivities" (p. 56). This concept has been critical in my examination of media

representations of women's participation in the rape chant as it provided opportunity for a nuanced understanding of engagement with a sexualised culture and rape culture on campus. What is appealing and appropriate about this approach is that it offers a chance to move beyond the agency debates outlined in Chapter Two, as it helps to "think through the complexities of women's engagement in sexualized culture in ways that allow us to value women's choices of participation, while also maintaining a critical standpoint toward the cultural context within which sexualized culture has emerged" (p. 39). From this perspective, we can still view this event and the participation in it from a critical vantage point, exploring how rape culture has become "natural" to the participating students, while also remaining respectful to them. This is not an approach seemingly employed by the authors of the news articles I selected for this study who tended to view the participation as stupid, idiotic, and lacking in thought. In their initial work on the technologies of sexiness, Evans et al. explore agency and female (hetero)sexuality by theorizing:

> a technologies of the self in which one works upon oneself and one's body (as an expression of agency) to reproduce oneself through discourses of sexual liberation (as the available discourse provided through neo-liberalism and consumerism). To further advance the concept of technologies of the self in relation to agency, and address gender as more central, our concept of technologies of sexiness needs to better articulate the relationship between subjectivity and agency, which we argue may be done by drawing on the work of Judith Butler. (2010, p. 121)

Each of these concepts, Foucault's "technology of the self" and Butler's "performativity"

deserve further but brief exploration in order to work through the technologies of

sexiness concept.

Technologies of the Self

Evans, Riley, and Shankar (2010) explore Foucault's move to the use of the

autonomous subject that "led him to theorize a technology of the self 'through which

individuals actively fashion their own identities'" (p. 120) and argue that this concept

"offers potential to move within and against the agency debates when attempting to

rethink contemporary femininities" (p. 120). Evans and Riley (2015) explain how

Foucault's earlier work focussed on how power acted on subjects, like in the panopticon

example above, but in his later work he began to explore how power works *through* the

subject. This allowed for a more "agentic subject who could employ technologies of the

self to actively construct his or her own identity" (p. 41). Foucault's technology of the

self refers to times when "we work on ourselves to make ourselves" (p. 40) and by

technologies he refers to "all those material and immaterial tools that can be used to

construct the self" (p. 41). Foucault describes practices "which permit individuals to

effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on

their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform

themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or

immortality" (1988, p. 18). What is important about this concept is that the technologies

of the self:

> …are not produced in a vacuum, but are instead tied to the wider technologies of
>
> subjectivity (or ways of understanding the self in a particular sociohistorical

moment). So while people may be conceptualized as agentic in terms of having

the potential to "choose" among a variety of discourses and material practices,

they are limited by what is discursively and materially available to them in their

social milieu. (Evans & Riley, 2015, p. 41)

Evans and Riley suggest that technologies of the self are "thus located within the wider

discourses of subjectivity, so that new sexual subjectivities are produced not just through

technologies of the self (e.g., buying vibrators and so embodying contemporary

femininity) but the wider technologies of subjectivity that inform it (e.g., those contexts

informed by neoliberalism, consumerism, postfeminism)" (p. 42). From a campus

perspective this means that a student's technologies of subjectivity are also informed by a

context of neoliberalism, consumerism and postfeminism, and I would add, are also

informed by a student culture that has not had much exploration as of yet. We see this

reflected in consumer practices of shopping for "back-to-school" for example, which

used to focus on younger students but now we see dorm room displays in stores

throughout the month of August and ads for the latest gadgets and technology that will

ensure success as a university student. Technologies of the self provides the space to

explore "how this cultural context is taken up and subjectively engaged with in emotional

and meaningful ways" (Evans and Riley, 2015, p. 43). My research initiates this

conversation to explore how we might understand the rape chant as university students

taking up the technologies of sexiness. To continue to develop and add more depth to the

concept of technologies of sexiness, Evans and Riley utilize Butler's concept of

performativity to better articulate the relationship between subjectivity and agency.

Performativity

Evans, Riley, and Shankar propose that "Foucault's concept of technologies of the self combined with Butler's notion of performativity provides useful ways of exploring the double nature of women's entanglement with the sexualization of culture" (2010, p. 126). This approach provides a way of exploring the contradictions and complexities found in the research that explores sexualisation of culture, specifically women's engagement with sexualisation, and this will be essential in understanding why and how women participate in and are shaped by rape culture. According to Evans et al.:

> If Foucault's account of subjectivity suggests agency is enacted through the ability to self-reflexively adopt a discourse from the available discourses, Butler's work allows us to deepen this agency. In Butler's notion of performativity, we see an extended notion of agency with the ability for alterations of the available discourses, whilst these alterations always remain within power structures. (p. 121)

Butler argues that "the iterability of performativity is a theory of agency, one that cannot disavow power as the condition of its own possibility" (1999, p. xxiv). Butler explores gender as parody and uses drag as an example "that is meant to establish that 'reality' is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be" (1999, p. xxiv). Evans et al. demonstrate how Butler's theory suggests that the law of gender is "unstable and socially constructed, giving the impression of being 'real' through imitation and parody, which is continuously repeated. The instability of this repetition of gender poses the potential to repeat that gender differently. Yet, equally, repeating differently depends on reference to and recognition within gender norms" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 122). Put quite simply, in order

to subvert the law of gender, there needs to be a law; to be understood as "different"

requires an understanding that there is a "norm." Butler's work on performativity

provides a way of conceptualizing agency "as produced through more complex

interactions than choosing one available discourse over another; rather, it is produced by

both choosing and subverting these discourses, even if that subversion is limited by the

necessity to cite the norm" (Evans & Riley, 2015, p. 45).

A critical point in Evans and Riley's work is how the subversion of traditional

discourses of femininity is possible, but "tempered in two ways: by the limitations

imposed on who may participate in these practices, and by how they are read by

others/the media" (2015, p. 46). They use the example of "porn star" t-shirts – the

wearing of shirts with sexually assertive statements written across the front. They

suggest that wearing such a shirt "may challenge traditional definitions of passive

femininity, but they do so by drawing on already available discourse that construct the

subject in potentially contradictory ways" (p. 46). Those who choose to wear this

clothing typically need to abide by conventional notions of beauty and sexiness, meaning

that "only some women, namely those who are young, slim, heterosexual, are permitted

within this fashion discourse" (p. 46). In terms of readability, they suggest that someone

considered to be a "larger woman" wearing a porn star t-shirt could be read as more

subversive than someone fitting more normative beauty (and size) standards. But either

way, "even if one wears a porn star T-shirt as a knowing, ironic, pastiche signifier, one

still had to purchase the T-shirt, and thus this act is embedded in consumerist discourse"

(p. 46). These issues of recuperation and readability within sexualisation discourse are

certainly relevant when exploring the rape chant and considering how the technologies of

sexiness concept may have been in effect for the participants of the chant. It is important

to note that Evans, Riley, and Shankar suggest that any future work that employs the

technologies of sexiness framework, "would benefit from combining cultural analysis

and first person accounts, given the inextricable relationship between the cultural and the

subjective" (2010, p. 127). The scope of my research project will not include any first

person accounts that I collect, but it will, however, include accounts that have been

provided in the various news articles. The technologies of sexiness framework will help

us to think about the ways young women are negotiating new sexual cultures on campus

in a way that allows "feminists to avoid positioning other women as problematic (either

in terms of their choices or their agency to make choices), while also drawing attention to

the regimes of power operating within neoliberal and postfeminist rhetoric" (Evans &

Riley, 2015, p. 62). The absence of the use of this type of critical approach will become

evident in the exploration of the news articles that I have selected for this study, which I

describe in more detail in the next chapter on methodology.

Chapter Four: Methodology

A feminist poststructuralist perspective, with its focus on language, discourse, and power is highly compatible with discourse analysis, a tool for critical analysis of written or spoken material (Gavey, 1989). In this chapter I outline a discourse analysis methodology, with a specific focus on feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA), including the strengths and challenges that come with these types of approaches. I also discuss the specific texts selected for my study, describe the specific news media outlets from where they originated, and explain how I chose these articles for this project.

The rape chant incident at Saint Mary's University captured the attention of local, national, and international news media and was a frequent topic of discussion on social media in the weeks and months that followed. This event was critical for bringing the issues of sexualisation and rape culture on campus into the nation's public consciousness, and a specific focus on language made up a large part of the discussion. This intense focus on university student behaviour was significant as the typical subject of concern within sexualisation discourses is children, specifically young girls (Egan & Hawkes, 2008); this incident demonstrated a need to explore the impact on other age groups and within other contexts as well. The impacts of this incident were widespread for members of the university community, with both students and university administrators particularly feeling the wrath of media attention and public opinion. It is with these two groups in mind that I chose to carry out a feminist discourse analysis of a selection of news media responses to the rape chant. I examined the language and discourse that surrounded this incident, and discourse analysis "offers a sophisticated theorization of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures, and a wide range of tools and strategies

for close analysis of actual, contextualized uses of language" (Lazar, 2005, p. 4). As with

my theoretical framework, this approach allowed me to explore not only the discursive

workings of power and gender relations found in representations of university campuses,

but also the time and spaces where these are resisted, as "the task of the feminist CDA

[Critical Discourse Analysis] is to examine how power and dominance are discursively

produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered

social practices and through interactional strategies of talk" (Lazar, 2005, p. 10).

As I have demonstrated with other specific terminology in this study, there is

concern about the term "discourse" itself when left undefined, as it can refer to a variety

of meanings depending on the user and context (Baxter, 2003, p. 7). Linguist and

researcher James Paul Gee argued that "to appreciate language in its social context, we

need to focus not on language alone, but rather on what I will call 'Discourses', with a

capital 'D'" (2008, p. 2). These big "D" Discourses "are ways of behaving, interacting,

valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as

instantiations of particular identities (or 'types of people') by specific groups" (p. 3) and

each of us may be part of many different Discourses that often might not be consistent or

compatible. Discourses are not "merely linguistic phenomena, but are always shot

through with power and are institutionalized as practices" (Ransom, 1993, p. 123).

In her work on feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, Baxter explains that

discourses are "forms of knowledge or powerful sets of assumptions, expectations and

explanations, governing mainstream social and cultural practices. They are systematic

ways of making sense of the world by inscribing and shaping power relations within all

texts, including spoken interactions" (2003, p. 7). She explains that there can be "plural

and competing discourses constituting power relations within any field of knowledge or given context" (p. 8) which, as discussed in the previous chapter, is useful when exploring the power relations found amongst those who participated in the rape chant. The upper-year students who led the chant were designated orientation week leaders, filling volunteer positions afforded much responsibility for guiding and preparing the incoming first-year students for the year ahead. This power relation operates at the same time as the power afforded (or not) to gender, so it will be important and useful to explore how these and other competing discourses are interrelated and may be "infused by traces of the others" (p. 8).

Baxter discusses how this framework "draws on a blend of feminist and post-structuralist principles for the purpose of analysing the complexities and ambiguities within much spoken interaction" (p. 28). The rape chant incident and news media responses to it are surrounded with complexities that need to be explored with a more meaningful analysis than that found within the news articles, which we will see in more detail in the next chapter. Another key feature of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis that makes it useful for my research is the challenge to binary thinking. The focus is on complexity rather than polarization of its subjects. For example, Baxter points out that "FPDA argues that most females are not helpless victims of patriarchal oppression, but that gender identities are complex, shifting and multiply located, continuously fluctuating between subject positions of powerfulness and powerlessness" (2010, p. 131). This approach provides a more complex explanation for understanding the women who participated in the chant that moves beyond the dualistic thinking of

them as stupid, helpless victims or determined and even criminal masterminds as is

demonstrated in various news articles published after the incident.

For this project, I examined the discourses represented in a selection of news

articles[4] published online in the days and weeks after the incident from the following

sources: *The Chronicle Herald, The Globe and Mail, National Post, Huffington Post,*

Briarpatch Magazine and *Maclean's Magazine.* I chose to focus on online news media

articles for several reasons. The first is that online media content is shared easily and is

easily accessible even beyond the immediate location of the incident, with social media

sites playing a large part in ensuring widespread knowledge of the incident. This has

changed the landscape of media discourse analysis and has resulted in new ways of

understanding media participation frameworks, defined as "the communicative

environment within which media discourse happens" (O'Keeffe, 2014, p. 448), which

includes the producers of media as well as the audience. There are new patterns of

interaction between audience and producer, especially in print media as "the reader is no

longer reading an article in protracted isolation; s/he can comment on it via a website,

email it to a friend, post it on a social network for others to discuss it" (O'Keeffe, 2014,

p. 450). Additionally, news media is still considered a source of trustworthy information,

demonstrated by researchers exploring the "postfeminist myth" in media (Mann, 2012).

These researchers were concerned with their findings that demonstrated when "ideas

were repeated often enough from a variety of media outlets that they would gain the

'appearance of truth' whether or not they have any validity" (Mann, 2012, p. 263).

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[4] I use the word "article" as a catchall phrase to describe the selection of news pieces in this study, acknowledging that doing so does not distinguish between the types of news each piece represents nor does it recognize the difference between the authors. This is explained in more detail later in this chapter.

Media articles are another producer of knowledge and power, as "the media reflects

public opinion, to be sure, but it also shapes it, for it is through the media that the public

receives all its news and most of its information" (Benedict, 2005, p. 127), so it is

important to explore this production within the context of the rape chant.   I explored

these articles with a focus on language and gender, specifically, what words were used to

describe the incident and how male and female student participation in the chant was

represented and understood, with the goal of determining how news media made sense of

this incident. My project uses feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis to explore the

media discourses surrounding young women and men on university campuses with

regards to sexualisation and rape culture, acknowledging that these discourses impact the

knowledge, attitude and ideologies shared amongst these groups. The news media play a

big role in shaping these discourses but they are certainly not a homogenous entity, so it

is important to know a little more about the sources of news that make up the data for this

study.

News Media Sources

        I chose eight articles for this project that were all published within ten days of the

rape chant incident except for one, which was printed nearly three months later. I chose

to examine mostly opinion pieces, as the facts of the incident were fairly well established

within the first few days of the chant. I was looking for articles that spoke less of what

happened and more about what the authors thought about what happened and how they

made sense of the incident. The articles came from six news sources: *The Chronicle*

Herald (Halifax, Nova Scotia), *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Ontario), *National Post*

(Toronto, Ontario), *Huffington Post* (New York, New York), *Briarpatch Magazine*

(Regina, Saskatchewan), and *Maclean's Magazine* (Toronto, Ontario). These sources were selected to represent a range of perspectives, from conservative to liberal, from local to international, and from independent to mainstream (see Appendix for article web addresses).

   The Chronicle Herald describes itself as "the most comprehensive information source in Atlantic Canada" (The Chronicle Herald, 2016, para 1) and "is proud of its legacy of independence" (The Chronicle Herald, 2016, para 2). The articles selected from *The Chronical Herald* include two submissions on the Opinions page published on September 6, 2013, just four days after the rape chant incident. One is written by *Chronicle* columnist Gail Lethbridge and the other by Mary Bowen, a resident of Nova Scotia. Two articles were also selected from *The Globe and Mail,* self-described as "Canada's #1 national newspaper" (The Globe and Mail, 2016). The articles were published on September 12 and 13, 2013 by *Globe and Mail* writers Zosia Bielski and James Bradshaw, respectively. From the *National Post*, whose readers are described as "professional, educated and affluent, occupying top positions in business" (National Post, 2016, para 3), the article selected was published on September 11, 2013 by *National Post* columnist Robyn Urback. *The Huffington Post* is a free, web-based American news and commentary site (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016). The article selected was published on September 6, 2013 by Toula Drimonis, a writer, editor and opinion columnist (Drimonis, 2013). *Briarpatch* "is an award-winning magazine of politics and culture. Fiercely independent and proudly polemical, *Briarpatch* offers original reporting, insight, and analysis from a grassroots perspective" (Briarpatch, 2016, para 1). It is based out of Regina, Saskatchewan and published bimonthly. The article selected was published on

September 11, 2013 and submitted by Jane Kirby, "an organizer, writer, circus enthusiast,

reproductive justice advocate and unapologetic feminist living in Halifax" (2013, para.

11). Lastly, *Maclean's*, which during that time was "Canada's only national weekly

current affairs magazine" (Maclean's, 2016) published an article on November 27, 2013

called *The Real Danger for Women on Campus*, where senior writer Anne Kingston

addresses several issues, including the campus rape chants (Kingston, 2013). This article

was selected to offer some comparison of the rape chant coverage after some time had

lapsed since it had taken place at Saint Mary's University.

> I use the term "article" to capture the eight pieces of published news that I chose,

but there is a marked difference between the some of the articles that deserves an

explanation. In *The Survival Guide to Journalism*, author Dan Synge describes the

typical types of news articles published:

> **News article:** focuses purely on the latest facts with minimal description or
>
> colour.
>
> **Feature article:** more developed, in-depth and analytical than a straight news
>
> story, often with a strong human interest.
>
> **Profile:** the focus is on a newsworthy individual revealing their professional and
>
> personal background.
>
> **Review:** shows the release or availability of an artistic or commercial endeavour
>
> and helps readers decide on its quality.
>
> **Opinion piece:** a writer airs his or her views on a current topic.
>
> **Editorial:** the official viewpoint of the publication on a current topic. (2010, p.
>
> 47)

Based on these descriptions, the *Maclean's* article is a feature article and the rest are

opinion pieces, though there is considerable difference between the selected opinion

pieces that is worth mentioning. It is also important to understand the purpose of opinion

pieces or "op-eds" within newspapers. The term "op-ed" refers to a time when

newspapers were only available in print; "an op-ed piece derives its name from originally

having appeared opposite the editorial page in a newspaper. Today, the term is used more

widely to represent a column that represents the strong, informed and focused opinion of

the writer on an issue of relevance to a targeted audience" (Seglin, 2013, para. 1). In an

explanation of *The New York Times* op-ed offerings, Remy Tumin describes how "the

Opinion section operates editorially independently from the rest of the newspaper. It is

the section's unique mission both to be the voice of The Times, and to challenge it"

(2017, para. 5). The opinions section of *The Times* has an objective to "to afford greater

opportunity for exploration of issues and presentation of new insights and new ideas by

writers and thinkers who have no institutional connection with The Times and whose

views will very frequently be completely divergent from our own" (Tumin, 2017, para.

6). This objective articulated within *The Times* can be observed within the articles I

chose for this study. Both articles in *The Chronicle Herald* are situated online on the

opinions page, indicated by a page heading called *Herald Opinions*, though one is by a

Herald staff writer and one is a submission from a resident in Nova Scotia. Gail

Lethbridge's article ends by indicating she's a "columnist" and "freelance journalist in

Halifax" (2013) and shares her *Chronicle Herald* email address. Mary Bowen's article

begins with an Editor's note (see Chapter 5 for more discussion on this) and ends by

stating that "Mary Bowen lives in Granville Ferry" (2013). There was no other

distinction made between these two articles which is significant given that one is by a

staff writer and the other by someone who may or may not having any journalistic

experience or knowledge on the specific topic. The *National Post* article by Robyn

Urback is also stated as an opinion, but only if the reader notices the web address which

includes the word "opinion" within it. The article also includes Urback's *National Post*

email address at the bottom.

The remaining articles are not explicitly stated as opinions by being placed on

specific opinions pages, but they all involve writers sharing their views on the topic with

some using first-person writing to situate themselves in the article. Despite the

differences in the news sources, types of articles, and authors in my sample, I chose to

give these articles similar weight in terms of my analysis because of the ways that readers

are consuming online news. Researchers in mass media studies have examined how

"today, rather than subscribing to a traditional paper, many readers begin their day by

logging on to the internet and scanning a wide variety of news sources, including the sites

of print papers, cable news channels, newsmagazines, bloggers, and online-only news

sources" (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2011, p. 261) and that these new forms of news are

"taking over the roles of traditional journalism, setting the nation's cultural, social, and

political agendas" (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2011, p. 261). Readers taking in the news

may or may not take the time to distinguish between the various types, sources and

writers and this is why it is important to consider such a variety in my research on the

rape chant. Despite this variety in my news article sample, I struggled to include all types

of voices, which is described further in the next section outlining my methodological

challenges.

Challenges

The authors of these articles represent a range of experiences, locations, and timeframes (from when the incident occurred), as "a feminist post-structuralist approach to discourse analysis should give space to multiple voices and perspectives of an event in order to create multi-faceted, multi-layered insights into the case" (Baxter, 2003, p. 102). It should be noted that this study is missing a very important voice – the student voice, and more specifically, the voices of the students directly involved in the incident. Their words of the chant are analysed, and a few comments appear in the articles, but there are no articles written by students included in this study. The lack of student voices is simply due to the scope of the project and lack of availability of opinion articles written by students. This absence of written material by students is significant and could certainly be attributed to the media backlash that came quickly and loudly after the incident, as will be examined in the next chapter. This study therefore focuses on the reactions of those outside of the incident looking in, to understand how they make sense of the rape chant and why their sense-making is significant.

A review of how to approach FPDA to accomplish this task is necessary, despite the reoccurring challenge that "within the post-structuralist spirit of encouraging interplay between difference voices and perspectives, there should never just be one version of FPDA, but a whole variety of versions or approaches" (Baxter, 2003, p. 58). Additionally, clearly articulating a methodological approach to FPDA is quite difficult, as "poststructuralist modes of discourse analysis, or postlinguistics, have by their very nature denied the possibility of a 'how to do'" (Threadgold, 2000, p. 40) and "there are no recipes or formulae. It is a form of analysis that is attentive both to detail in language

and to the wider social picture" (Gavey, 1989, p. 467). The same challenges exist with other forms of discourse analysis. Quite simply, "critical discourse analysis is far from easy" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). In her "revisited" exploration of feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis, Nicola Gavey (2011) explains this challenge within a teaching context, suggesting that "teaching students how to do research is difficult without providing fairly formulaic models of methods for how to go about it" (p. 186). Yet she suggests that the difficulty found with a lack of clear method is perhaps a payoff to encouraging "the possibility of creative, careful, and innovative scholarship, including possibilities for transgressing the borders of distinct approaches" (Gavey, 2011, p. 187). Gavey articulates an additional challenge I am facing with the use of this methodology which is being clear on "the distinction between more linguistic forms of discourse analysis and forms of Foucauldian-inspired inquiry" (2011, p. 186). While my approach is Foucauldian, the more clearly articulated methods used by many of the founding theorists have a linguistic focus. The next section will briefly review approaches by Van Dijk (1993), Fairclough (2014), Gee (2008) and Baxter (2003) in order to better understand various approaches to discourse analysis, focussing on critical discourse analysis and feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis.

Doing Discourse Analysis

In his paper discussing how one "goes about doing a 'critical' analysis of text and talk" (1993, p. 249), Van Dijk argues that critical discourse analysis (CDA) is only effective and contributive if "it is able to provide an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality" (1993, p. 279). To do the analysis, he suggests:

The analysis begins with various properties of the context, such as access

patterns, setting and participants, and then examines the properties of the 'text' of

the speech itself, such as its topics, local meanings, style and rhetoric. Of the

many possible properties of the text and context of this speech we focus on those

that most clearly exhibit the discursive properties of *the exercise of dominance*

[emphasis added]. (p. 270)

Norman Fairclough also examines critical discourse analysis, explaining that CDA

"brings the tradition of social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical

social analysis a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and

other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities and so

forth)" (2014, p. 9). He suggests a methodology with four stages:

Stage 1: Focus on a social wrong, in its semiotic aspects.

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong.

Stage 3: Consider whether the social order 'needs' the social wrong.

Stage 4: Identify ways past the obstacles. (2014, p. 13)

Within Stage 2, he identifies three steps, one of which involves carrying out an "analysis

of texts – both interdiscursive analysis and linguistic/semiotic analysis…textual analysis

is only part of a semiotic analysis (discourse analysis), and the former must be adequately

framed within the latter" (2014, p. 14). Fairclough stresses the need to frame the textual

examination within a larger discursive landscape which seems a necessary step for

understanding why such texts are important enough to study. James Paul Gee captures

this sentiment with an effective analogy using playing cards:

A text, or even a single sentence, is something like a playing card. A specific

card has no value (meaning) apart from the patterns (hands) into which it can

enter. And a specific hand of cards itself has no value (meaning) apart from the

game it is a part of. So, too, for language. A text is meaningful only within the

pattern (or social configuration) it forms at a specific time and place with other

pieces of language, as well as with specific thoughts, words, deeds, bodies, tools,

and objects. And this pattern or configuration – this specific social action – is

itself meaningful only within a specific Discourse or at the intersection of several

Discourses. Pieces of language, as well as other symbols, bodies, deeds, and so

forth, are cards; social practices are hands; and Discourses are games. None of

these – cards, hands and games – exists without the other. (Gee, 2008, p. 182.)

Understanding the relationship between the various aspects (language, social

practices and discourse) of the rape chant incident will be an important step when

exploring the reasons it took place and how the media and opinion writers interpreted it.

Gee explains one approach to discourse analysis where discourse is constituted by five

interrelated systems – and these systems "constitute the sensefulness of a text" (2008, p.

119). The five systems that make up discourse are: *prosody*, the way the words are said;

cohesion, the linguistic ways sentences are linked together; *the overall discourse*

organization of a text, which is the ways in which sentences are organized into higher-

order units; *contextualization signals*, the ways in which speakers alert listeners/readers

to what they understand the context to be; and finally the *thematic organization of the*

text, which is the way in which themes are signalled and developed (p. 120). Gee

suggests that these five systems are interrelated and build upon each other. He also

reminds us how speakers don't simply say what they mean, that instead they "lay out the

information in a way that fits with their viewpoint on the information and the interaction.

They are always communicating much more than the literal message. And to do this they

use prosody, cohesion, discourse organization, contextualization signals, and thematic

organization" (p. 122).   Gee's approach is very linguistic, pulling apart each sentence

and stanza of text to explore these five systems. While not an approach that I will be

using, his work is still important for exploring how power dynamics and dominance

exists in social interactions. He states how discourse analysis can lead to multiple

interpretations of a text, but that "we can offer more or less satisfying arguments for

interpretations (but only "more or less", never definitive)" (p. 128). But he also points

out how "through attempts to deny this inevitable multiplicity and indeterminacy of

interpretation that social institutions (like schools) and elite groups in a society privilege

their own version of meaning as if it were natural, inevitable, and incontestable" (p. 129).

He suggests that continuing our investigations of meaning will allow us to resist such

domination, a critical point when exploring media interpretations of an incident such as

the rape chant.

        Judith Baxter (2003) provides a useful perspective to the question of how one

does discourse analysis in her exploration of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis.

She compares the similarities and variances between three approaches: conversation

analysis, critical discourse analysis and feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis

(FPDA) (p. 45). Baxter explains how FPDA offers principles for systematic

methodology which will be outlined in greater detail in the next section.

Guidelines for FPDA

Baxter (2003) explores three guidelines for FPDA: principles of FPDA, sources of data and textual analysis. I have considered each of these guidelines while completing this study so each will be explained below.

Principles of FPDA. The principles of FPDA: self-reflexivity, a deconstructionist approach and selecting a specific feminist focus, have been addressed at various points in this project. Baxter reminds us that self-reflexivity is about the need to be critical of our assumptions, making our theoretical positions clear, explaining technical language and key terms, and being "overtly self-aware of the fictionality and textuality of the research process and the phenomenon that any act of research comprises a series of authorial choices and strategies" (Baxter, 2003, p. 60). This same point is identified within feminist CDA, a similar approach that requires "on-going critical self-reflexivity among feminists keen on achieving radical transformation of gendered social structures" (Lazar, 2007, p. 152). In a deconstructionist approach, Baxter explains:

> the need to juggle with sets of oppositions and supplementarities, always keeping one's options open in order to keep a richer, more nuanced range of ideas in play. It is this subtle process of *textual interplay* with apparently opposing or, perhaps, competing terms and sets of ideas which has distinguished the desconstructionist approach from modernist versions of discourse analysis. (2003, p. 63)

The challenge with a deconstructionist approach is attempting to keep an organized method that acknowledges the "textual interplay of the data arising from their research, without being swallowed up by deconstructionist relativism" (p. 64). Baxter suggests that FPDA researchers should "resist the temptation for narrative closure…allowing

space for an open-ended verdict, or for alternate voices to comment on the data" (p. 64).

Baxter uses the analogy of a juggler for the FPDA researcher, attempting to keep all the

items being juggled up in the air at one time, while recognizing the multiple accounts (the

items being juggled) and also the author (the juggler). She stresses the need to "provide

opportunities for multiple, open-ended readings of a piece of analysis, but self-reflexively

juxtapose our own supplementary accounts alongside those of other participants" (p. 65).

The multiple accounts in this study include the students themselves who participated in

the chant, though as indicated above, not directly, as this study engages with their words

expressed only through the chant and through news media stories. Then there are the

accounts that come from the news media and opinion authors. And finally, my account

as the author and "juggler" of this study. With the third principle of FPDA, a feminist

focus, Baxter explains how a poststructuralist framework is concerned with issues that

arise in specific communities of speakers "and is therefore ideally suited to small-scale,

localised, short-term, strategically planned projects which intend to transform some

aspects of cultural practice for girls/women" (p. 66). While my ultimate goal might be to

have university campuses free from sexualized and gender-based violence, I am precisely

aware that this cannot be accomplished with this type of study. Instead I focus on the

cultural practice of orienting new students on university campuses in an attempt to

address gender inequities that face women at the start of their academic study and

throughout. FPDA involves an examination of "discourses on gender as they are

negotiated and performed within specific, localised contexts. It also involves making

sense of the ways in which these discourses position female speakers (in particular) as

relatively powerful, powerless or a combination of both" (Baxter, 2003, p. 66). My

examination of the media articles will demonstrate discourses that position the female

participants of the chant as both powerful and powerless and the implications of both

positions.

     Sources of Data. Baxter stresses the importance of multiple voices in the work

of the FPDA, arguing that "a powerful source of data for the FPDA practitioner, apart

from transcripts of talk or written texts, is that which is gained from a range of different

voices: whether those of the research subjects themselves, other members of the research

team, theorists in the field or, indeed, the author's own voice" (p. 67). Baxter explores

"two interrelated constructs: *polyphony* or multiple-voices, and *heteroglossia* or

competing voices and accounts" (p. 67). In an attempt to encourage the researcher to

conduct richer and more complex understandings of the data, polyphonia "involves

providing space in an analysis for the co-existence and juxtaposition of a plurality of

voices and accounts that do not necessarily fuse into a single authorial account" (p. 67).

Baxter suggests that this can be done a few ways, but the one most relevant to this study

is to produce multiple perspectives on a single event. In this case, I am examining

multiple media articles reviewing the same event, the rape chant, but I have already

acknowledged the limitations of my study in gathering even more perspectives (i.e.

students) which would certainly be useful in a future iteration of this study.

Heteroglossia is described as the "act of making visible the non-official viewpoint, the

marginalised, the silenced and the oppressed from other, more dominant viewpoints"

(Baxter, 2008, p. 69). A poststructuralist viewpoint of heteroglossia commits to

focussing on female voices or those that are being silenced (by male or even other

females). Though I did not directly interview any students or participants of the rape

chant for my study, part of my analysis involves understanding why these voices are

missing in the media coverage of the chant. Additionally, within the articles selected for

this study there are a variety of perspectives, the majority from female-identified authors

that vary widely in their perspectives, even to the extent of having directly conflicting

opinions.

       Textual Analysis. Baxter suggests three methods for a textual analysis to be

conducted within FPDA: the synchronic-diachronic dimension, denotation-connotation,

and intertextuality. The synchronic-diachronic dimension explores times of shifting

power, either specific moments or throughout a period of time (2003, p. 74). A

denotative level of analysis "aims to give a concrete description of what is going on

within a text, such as an extract of spoken discourse, by making close and detailed

reference to the verbal and non-verbal interactions of the participants" (p. 75). The

connotative analysis "is concerned to demonstrate how speakers are continuously

positioned or repositioned by a range of competing discourses pertaining to a given

social/institutional context" (p. 75). In my study, this discursive context is explored both

in the literature review and the analysis. Lastly, intertextuality "involves foregrounding

and highlighting the ways in which dominant discourses within any speech context are

always inflected and inscribed with traces of other discourses" (p. 78). My analysis will

demonstrate how the various discourses surrounding the rape chant cannot be viewed in

isolation and are certainly operating intertextually. Baxter's approach which utilizes

these principles of FPDA will allow me to "produce a complex and penetrating analysis

of the ways in which intertextualised and often competing discourses constitute all

spoken interactions" (p. 79).

This chapter outlined various approaches to discourse analysis with a focus on the feminist poststructuralist method. I have explained many reasons both in this chapter and the previous as to why this is my preferred approach for my study. Baxter highlights how the "crucial point about the FPDA approach is that it gives space to multiple and competing voices by aiming to identify and represent *sites of struggle* in stretches of spoken or textual interaction" (p. 187). I view the postsecondary campus as a site of struggle where dominant discourses are competing in an attempt to explain and fix meaning about gender, power and sexualisation. My hope is to shed some light on this site of struggle to provide multiple interpretations and viewpoints through the analysis of the rape chant, which can be found in the next chapter of this study.

Chapter Five: Analysis

For this research project, I conducted a discourse analysis of a selection of news media responses to the Saint Mary's University rape chant in order to explore how this incident was understood, how it was talked about, and why this matters. Feminist poststructuralism provided a framework for working through the complexities surrounding this incident but also allowed me to explore the ways in which the dominant discourses on campus and beyond are both enacted and resisted in these texts. In order to begin the analysis and examine the discursive implications of the rape chant incident, it is important to thoroughly explore the existing context and discourses that surround this incident, as I did in my literature review in Chapter Two. Weedon explains that "feminist poststructuralism must pay full attention to the social and institutional context of textuality in order to address the power relations of everyday life" (1997, p. 25); I have demonstrated how the context of sexualisation and postfeminism inform and surround understandings of the rape chant incident. In the literature review I established how existing research on the sexualisation of culture has a tendency to reproduce "binary positions that locate girls as either savvy sexual agents or objectified sexualized victims" (Renold & Ringrose, 2011, p. 404) and how there is a need to examine sexual agency in a way that disrupts binaries and recognizes the influence of neoliberalist and postfeminist discourses.

This chapter includes an analysis of the eight articles I selected for this study and demonstrates the emergence of two primary and conflicting discourses surrounding participation in the rape chant: the irresponsible/stupid discourse and the responsible/deviant discourse. The technologies of sexiness framework developed by

Evans and Riley (2015) was used to demonstrate an approach that is more effective in

understanding participation in the chant, creating space for a discussion of agency

without falling into patterns of shaming youth, and specifically young women's

behaviour. Without this framework, the media coverage that attempts to highlight and

challenge the existence of rape culture on campus, in fact, serves to perpetuate and

promote it. While the criticism of the rape chant was important, the news articles that

critiqued the chant ultimately reinforced harmful discourses about the participants,

especially the women.

This chapter begins with extensive exploration into the news articles that I

selected for this study, examining the primary themes found within the media discussion

that framed the rape chant incident. These themes, "university life" and rape culture,

permeated the news articles and are important to explore in detail to help illuminate more

of the context and understandings of the rape chant.

Understanding "University Life"

Opinions about what university life entails were central to the news articles,

regardless of whether or not the author was a member of the university community. I use

the descriptor "university life" to refer to any descriptions and assumptions of what a

university student should experience while attending postsecondary schooling. Many of

the articles specifically referenced orientation week, likely because the rape chant

incident occurred during this week at Saint Mary's University, but also because there is

much importance placed upon that first week on campus. Many students' introduction to

university life is typically during orientation week (also known as welcome week, new

student orientation, or frosh week).[5] Although this week only represents a fraction of

what the student will experience over the course of a typical four-year degree, there is a

build-up of anticipation for the first week, or first few weeks, on campus. University

staff such as myself typically spend the summer months preparing for the incoming

students, specifically focussing on those few days before classes begin and students get

immersed into their academic programs. This stems from a recognition of the "social and

economic benefits of keeping the students in whom [universities] had already made the

recruitment investment, [so] efforts turned to front-loading services to better support

students in the transition to university study and living" (Mason, 2010, p. 66). While

each post-secondary institution may vary in their exact offerings during new student

orientation, most schools:

> attend [to] issues related to students' instrumental autonomy, such as finding
>
> classes, using the laundry machines, and reading university-level texts;
>
> negotiation of old and new relationships, including important ties with parents
>
> and families, roommates, romances, academic partners, and shifting friendship
>
> groups; achievement of balance through managing stress, taking care of one's
>
> health and fitness, and managing substance use; and contributing to their
>
> communities. (Mason, 2010, p. 67)

In the news media articles responding to the rape chant, several of the authors

expressed expectations that this week would naturally involve spectacle and inappropriate

behaviour. For example, Bradshaw writes in the *Globe and Mail* about how to identify

and address "the root problem of outlandish frosh-week behaviour" (2013, para. 1).

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[5] Many schools have chosen not to use the name "frosh week" anymore due to concerns about negative connotations about the word "frosh," yet it is still used extensively in the media.

Many of the authors of the articles in my data set propose factors that combine to make

that first week on campus particularly impactful, but highlight that the students' need to

be socially accepted is one of the strongest motivators for engaging in questionable

behaviours. Just days after the rape chant occurred at Saint Mary's, *Huffington Post*

published an editorial by Toula Drimonis, suggesting:

> Rare is a frosh week that goes by without some sort of controversy and displays
>
> of bad taste. Mix young, excitable students with peer pressure, the desperate need
>
> to fit in, and loads and loads of alcohol, and you've got the perfect recipe for all
>
> sorts of unacceptable behaviour, and inevitably some sort of PR fiasco. But there
>
> are limits to what one considers acceptable, even during a week specifically
>
> designed to cross the line. (2013, para. 5)

Drimonis highlights the excitement factor that exists when the new class of students

arrive on campus and suggests that the first week is perfectly positioned to incite some

sort of controversy. She also identifies excessive alcohol consumption as a factor.

Similar factors were identified by *National Post* writer Robyn Urback, who argues:

> Dumb is a rite of passage for frosh week. That first week of university is, for
>
> many students, their first time away from home, their first time free from the
>
> confines of their parents and their first opportunity to make new friends in a
>
> totally foreign environment. Naturally "fitting in" becomes of utmost
>
> importance. (2013, para. 1)

Both of these passages are filled with assumptions about students and how they should be

experiencing university life. Drimonis suggests the week is "designed to cross the line,"

and while that may have had some truth twenty years ago, many universities put

significant effort and resources into creating a program that meets a series of outcomes

designed to ensure student success and retention. In fact, over the past twenty years "the

amount and extent of campuswide, national, and international conversation and then

action to change the structure and content of the first-year experience have been

extensive" (Upcraft et al., 2005, p. 1). Universities in both Canada and the United States

of America have created positions for first-year experience and retention specialists to

better support this transition period and increase the likelihood of academic and personal

success for students. There is a clear disconnect between the media representations of

orientation week and the universities' initiatives and intended outcomes.

The news articles also reinforce a series of myths about students that further

particular assumptions of university life. For example, Urback suggests that incoming

students have never experienced time away from their parents, an assumption that tends

to ignore the fact that some students have experienced boarding schools, summer camps

or international exchanges. In a handbook exploring how to improve the first-year

experience, Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot suggest that "too often first-year students are

thought of as eighteen and nineteen year olds studying full time, away from home for the

first time, and living on campus, when this profile only fits about one in five first-year

students" (2005, p. 6). Urback refers to university as a "totally foreign environment," but

current cohorts of students actually have multiple opportunities to get to know campus

before they even arrive. There are campus tours, open houses, virtual tours, photos,

pictures and videos all to help a student learn more about the school before they arrive,

and sometimes before they even select which school they are attending. To suggest that

school is "totally foreign" for all students is simply untrue, and can have the effect of

excusing or minimizing any behaviours as being a result of the student not knowing any

better – which is connected to the irresponsible/stupid discourse explored later in this

chapter.

Within all the articles I reviewed, the authors suggest a combination of factors

setting the tone for what university life should entail, and it is a potent cocktail. *Globe*

and Mail writer James Bradshaw argues that "the power of frosh week's ritual can blind

both leaders and new students to the consequences of their actions" (2013, para. 6). In

his article he includes quotes from an interview with an eighteen-year-old student who

"loved his frosh week at the U of T's Trinity College, and feels it gave him a crucial

'sense of belonging'…but he fears that in the very concept of frosh week, 'a framework

exists for there to be misjudgments or misconduct'" (2013, para. 14).

The authors in my data set varied in their opinions about university life and

orientation week and what should be done to address the issues they identified. Toula

Drimonis writes in the *Huffington Post* that "no one is saying that we do away with frosh

activities. They are an integral part of initiation into university life and significantly

contribute to forming bonds among students" (2013, para. 11). Others, such as

Maclean's writer Anne Kingston, were substantially more critical of a place where "uber-

frat-house mentality – *Animal House* meets *The Accused* – has been elevated to titillating

spectacle itself, reflected in a litany of outrageous events that dull the capacity to shock"

(2013, para. 9). Despite all of these strongly influential factors that are acknowledged as

contributing to university life, there is still an impression that "university age should still

be old enough to know the difference between a harmless frosh initiation event and a

cheer that sings about violating a non-consenting minor" (Drimonis, 2013, para. 30). In

this statement is the assumption that students should really know better and be able to stand up to the pressures that exist in university life, demonstrating the responsible/deviant discourse explored below. In fact, all of the articles are ripe with assumptions about university students and how they experience university life, and the concern with these types of assumptions is how they go unchallenged and become part of the normalized expectations for all students attending universities. They become part of the dominant discourse, offering subject positions for individuals to take up and "appear 'natural', denying their own partiality and gaining their authority by appealing to common sense" (Gavey, 1989, p. 464). Establishing such norms for university life is a way to establish what is considered abnormal and raises the questions of who is and is not fitting into such norms. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, we see the creation of social categories that mark students and signify power as established by various institutions (family, school, media) throughout the creation and reinforcement of university life. This theme is often connected to the next theme to be explored, campus rape culture.

Reading Rape Culture

When attempting to answer the question of why a large group of students, including women, participated in a chant promoting rape, many of the authors turned to the concept of rape culture for an explanation. In *Briarpatch Magazine,* Jane Kirby argues that "these chants are part of a much broader culture promoting rape and sexual violence" (2013, para. 6) and "though far from unusual, the chants – viewed as harmless, in good fun, or as a group-building activity by those participating – provide an excellent example of how rape culture manifests in practice" (2013, para. 7). She provides several

examples of how this incident is part of rape culture, specifically "by confusing rape with sex, by making rape seem ordinary, or by downplaying rape with jokes and chants" (para. 8). She describes rape culture as "anything that normalizes unwanted, nonconsensual sex" (para. 1). Kirby provides a thorough description and addresses some of the rape myths that add to the confusion about what rape is, suggesting that "young people are confused about rape and the fact that non-consensual sex – no matter with whom or what the circumstances – is always rape, always violent, and always serious" (para. 17). She highlights how the media contributes to this lack of understanding of rape by pointing out how the chant was "widely described in the media as merely 'inappropriate' and simply promoting underage sex rather than glorifying rape" (para.11). Out of the eight articles selected for this study, the *Briarpatch* article was the only one to attempt an in-depth definition of rape culture with several examples provided to help readers understand. This explanation of rape culture is not surprising given the magazine's self-description as "fiercely independent" and having a "grassroots" approach (Briarpatch, 2016, para. 1) which would suggest that there is more allowance for discussion on topics considered controversial or viewpoints that are "different" (i.e. coming from a contributor who describes herself as an "unapologetic feminist"). The title of the article, *This is what rape culture looks like,* also suggests that understanding rape culture was to be the focus.

Contrast this with approaches taken by the other media sources that are arguably more mainstream. In the article in *Maclean's* magazine, the lengthiest of the articles, rape culture is described as "sexual violence being ignored, condoned and normalized, witnessed in the 'rape chant' on the UBC campus in September" (Kingston, 2013, para. 1). Later in the article, the author suggests that "joking about, even endorsing, rape is a

badge of conformity on campuses" (para. 9) and again refers to the rape chants at UBC

and Saint Mary's. Kingston interviews a counsellor at a sexual assault crisis centre who

states that "'universities are petri dishes for both 'rape culture' and sexual

assault…they're a microcosm of the way society teaches people how to party and treat

women'" (as cited in Kingston, 2013, para. 8). In Kingston's article, rape culture is

certainly discussed, but with more of an alarmist approach. This was especially evident

in the fact that she interviewed David Lisak, a Boston-based psychologist known for his

research suggesting that campus rapists are often serial offenders, "'Rape chants' mirror

serious problems in attitudes about rape and sexuality, says Lisak: 'They provide

camouflage for offenders who will not only join such chants, but will actually act on the

implicit messages contained in them'" (para. 16).

In Kingston's article, Lisak suggests that rape culture on campus can have serious

consequences as "people who ordinarily would not engage in predatory behaviours get

sucked in and commit criminal acts" (para. 16). Suggesting that those who engage in the

rape chant will get "sucked in" to criminal behaviour is misleading and requires more

analysis, which I will do later in this chapter. This is a common issue in the media

articles addressing the rape chant, where loaded statements or arguments are made about

rape culture and university campuses, but with no additional analysis or discussion to

help inform the readers' understanding of the issues. *Globe and Mail* writer Zosia

Bielski argues the "chants reveal that glorification of sexual violence remains alive and

well – both at frosh week and in the culture that informs it" (2013, para. 5) and quotes an

"expert" who agrees that "'This is a culture that we see repeated on campuses all

over'"(para. 6). *Huffington Post* writer Toula Drimonis questions "how many isolated

incidents have to take place before we – as a society – admit that we have a problem with inequality and sexism, and yes, even rape culture" (2013, para. 27) suggesting that there is still question as to whether a rape culture even exists. This is echoed in the *National Post* article written by Robyn Urback who states that "headlines about the vulgar chants at UBC and SMU have ignited the question of whether a type of 'rape culture' exists on Canadian university campuses" (2013, para. 5).

Rape culture is a theme that the authors directly connected to the rape chant in the news media coverage of the incident, though its meaning varies and appears to be used by some authors as a way to elicit interest, fear and concern. There are similarities between the media concerns raised about rape culture and those raised about sexualisation of culture. Gill notes that "the relationship between the media and 'sexualization' is not uncomplicated" (Gill, 2012a, p. 738) and the same can be argued when examining media and rape culture. Much like rape culture, "in relation to 'sexualized culture' media are at once arguably the pre-eminent site of 'sexualization', but also the major site of its discussion and critique. *Often these can co-exist in the same space* [emphasis added]" (p. 738).

This complication was evident after the rape chant when the news media became a site where concerns about rape culture were (virtually) situated next to articles where rape myths and antiquated stereotypes were reiterated, as was demonstrated in *The Chronicle Herald* on September 6, 2013. Two articles I examined for this project provide an example of this. Both were published on *The Chronicle Herald Opinions* site; one by *Chronicle Herald* columnist, Gail Lethbridge, and the other submitted by Mary Bowen, a resident in a community called Granville Ferry in Nova Scotia. Mary Bowen makes

several comments throughout the article that reinforce rape myths, resulting in an editor's

note at the start of the article reminding readers that the *Chronicle Herald's* "Opinions

page is for opinions, including controversial ones. Mary Bowen's piece doesn't represent

the view of The Chronicle Herald" (Editor's Note, 2013). This statement was not found

on any other opinion article shared that same day. Bowen starts by expressing concern

for young men:

> It seems to me our young men may be getting a bad rap. There, I've said it: Let
>
> the arrows fly. I do not condone rape or sexual assault, but I think the male teens
>
> so often accused are not wholly to blame. Miley's performance at the MTV
>
> Video Music Awards and SMU's chanting ladies convince me of this, though I
>
> had my suspicions earlier…
>
> At a time when hormones are raging, near naked young women are
>
> constantly on parade. One has only to walk down any city street. Cheeks peek
>
> out from under far-too-short shorts. Low-rise pants draw the eye downward.
>
> Midriffs are bare and cleavage abounds to say nothing of what is available online!
>
> (Bowen, 2013, para. 3, 5)

Bowen suggests that because women wear revealing clothing, men are not fully to blame

for sexually assaulting them, a common and harmful myth about sexual assault that

removes responsibility from the perpetrators and places it fully on the survivors. Bowen

goes a step further:

> Back in the day when dinosaurs roamed the prairies and I was a teen, there were
>
> names (which can't be repeated here) for girls who paraded their wares and talked
>
> the talk, then wanted to bail when the car windows at the drive-in were

thoroughly steamed and boys couldn't have walked to the concession stand for

popcorn if they'd wanted to.

'No means no' is a catchy slogan, but is it really fair to spread out the

goodies and then snatch them off the table at the last second when the bait is

taken and the hook already halfway down the fish's throat?

Is it fair to expect hands-off status when young ladies themselves are

chanting, 'Use us; abuse us; do what you will'? Is this fair play? I don't think so.

(Bowen, 2013, para. 8)

Bowen strongly emphasizes myths about rape that are incredibly harmful to victims and

perpetuate a culture where rape is normalized and victims remain silenced (Reling,

Barton, Becker, & Valasik, 2018). Bowen's article contrasts with Gail Lethbridge's

article that same day which argues "the now infamous chant is one of those rare moments

when the velvet glove of sexual equality is removed and the iron fist of rape culture is

revealed" (Lethbridge, 2013, para. 11). Lethbridge suggests how this incident "sends a

message to the sheep-like, slightly nervous, possibly overwhelmed frosh in their first

week at university? On our campus, 'no' means 'you can have whatever you want, boys'.

And if you're underage, watch out, girls" (para. 18). She is incensed at the incident and

makes this very clear in her article through the use of sarcasm and anger. This coupling

of articles – one that promotes rape culture and one that denounces it – strongly supports

the notion that media are at once a site of rape culture and also concerns about rape

culture. Even though one article is written by a *Herald* columnist and perhaps should be

afforded more credibility than a submission by a private citizen, there is very little to

distinguish these two articles that would highlight the difference between the two authors.

Jane Kirby's article in *Briarpatch* Magazine criticizes the *Herald's* decision to include Bowen's submission when she wrote that "rape culture is a mainstream newspaper publishing an article blaming both the chant and rape in general on young women wearing too little clothing" (2013, para. 7). This statement in Kirby's article was hyperlinked to Bowen's article, and clearly suggested that *The Chronicle Herald* is complicit in encouraging rape culture. Perhaps this is why the *Herald* included their editor's note:

> In recent weeks we have carried many stories, and shared many opinions, including our own, on the issues around sexism and violence against women. We have a problem in our society and discussing the issues around the supper table, in the classrooms, in the legislatures and in the newspapers is the way, in a democratic society, we make change. The Chronicle Herald will continue to provide a forum for debate. (Editor's Note, 2013)

While it is not clear exactly when this statement was posted atop of Bowen's article, I think it is safe to assume that it could have been a result of the critique of the article's content. The discussions of rape culture and university life found in the articles provide a sense of the context in which the rape chant took place, highlighting the discursive landscape that surrounds the incident, as feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis suggests "that the local meanings of talk always work within, represent and reconstitute broader discursive structures, relations and processes" (Baxter, 2003, p. 12). Now I turn to examine the specific talk found within the eight news articles that I selected for the study, paying particular attention to how the news coverage frames the students who participated in the rape chant.

Covering the Rape Chant

The news articles in my data set sought to make sense of the incident, including an attempt to explain how and why the various students participated in the chant and what should happen in the aftermath. The authors of the articles I selected for this study represented the behaviour of the participating students as harmful, but ultimately did so in ways that reinforced troubling discourses about these students. A poststructuralist approach asserts that:

> How we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects, and how we give meaning
> to the material social relations under which we live and which structure our
> everyday lives, *depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our*
> *access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent*
> [emphasis added]. (Weedon, 1987, p. 26)

In examining the harms of the rape chant, the media created and reinforced discourses that have important implications for the students, in particular female students, shaping how they experience university life. In the articles in my data set, I identified two discourses that related with the participants of the chant: the "irresponsible/stupid" discourse and the "responsible/deviant" discourse. These two discourses share similarities to those found in Shauna Pomerantz's poststructuralist examination of a school dress code violation case in British Columbia (2007). Exploring some of the media responses to a female student being removed from her high school for wearing a low-cut tank top and thus violating the school's dress code policy, Pomerantz located three contradictory discourses in the dress code that "positioned girls as irresponsible, deviant, and in need of help" (p. 373), and argued that "these discourses reproduce

dominant and oppressive forms of gender and sexuality" (p. 373). Pomerantz's analysis

demonstrates how these conflicting discourses are "heard and seen as significations that

help to create and define femininity and masculinity in the school" (p. 383). My analysis

demonstrates how the usage of similar discourses had different and problematic effects.

Pomerantz explores these discourses to show support for the student who violated the

dress code in her high school, whereas my approach involves highlighting how the

discourses are harmful to the participants of the chant and students more generally, while

remaining respectfully critical of their behaviour that day.

The Irresponsible/Stupid Discourse

In the days immediately following the release of the video of the rape chant, the

Saint Mary's University student union president faced the media reporters to apologize

for his participation in the incident. According to Toula Drimonis:

> In his capacity as [student union] president he issued a statement expressing his
>
> disappointment at his own behaviour (he admitted that it's a chant he himself has
>
> participated in for a number of years as a student) and tried to rationalize the
>
> behaviour by calling it a 'moment of lack of judgement'…
>
> Perry admitted to a Halifax reporter that 'we didn't think of the message,
>
> we just thought of the rhyme and rhythm' of the chant. Sure, ok. Nothing like
>
> someone pursuing a university education (a place where you're supposed to
>
> develop the powers of reasoning and sound judgement) justifying his actions by
>
> telling us he neither questioned nor analyzed what he has been singing along to
>
> since…2009. (2013, para. 9)

Gail Lethbridge wrote in *The Chronicle Herald* that "according to the student union

president and the university administration, it was a lapse of judgement and the students

probably didn't know what they were saying, and if they did, they didn't believe it"

(2013, para. 6); Jane Kirby stated that, "rape culture is the president of the student union

admitting that he had participated in the chant, but hadn't really thought about it since it

had been used in several previous years" (2013, para. 7). These articles all picked up on

something I hear quite often in my profession when students are caught engaging in

questionable or rule-breaking behaviour. In response to questions about why they

engaged in such behaviour, students often suggest that they just weren't thinking (about

it), possibly referring to the action itself, the consequences, its impact on others or

themselves. Some of the authors cited above noted this "just wasn't thinking" response

without much comment, while others were incredulous. Lethbridge questioned whether

"these student leaders – digital natives attending an institution of higher education – not

think about the optics of this? Are they that ignorant of the social implications of a pro-

rape chant and the damage it could bring to their beloved university?" (2013, para. 22)

and suggested that "this is not some innocent lapse of judgment. Stupid, yes. But not

innocent…those lyrics didn't just pop out of the air from nowhere. There was intent.

And thought" (2013, para. 12). *Globe and Mail* writer Zosia Bielski shared interviews

from "experts" who suggest that "lemming-like groupthink and a drive for social standing

in the first year both play a role" (2013) in the chant. In the article, the Executive Director

of the Barbara Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, a Toronto-based organization for women

facing violence, "agrees that the chants reveal a 'willful ignorance of the many'" (para.

10).   Wayne MacKay, Dalhousie University-based professor and "bullying expert," who

would later lead the task-force exploring this incident, asked: "When they're talking

about 'your sister', many of them have a sister…Where we are as a society that we are

dehumanizing to the extent that we don't think about the real life impact of the things

we're doing and saying?" (as cited in Bielski, 2013, para. 9). Mackay also suggests:

> There's a scary groupthink where people basically don't think. They leave that to
>
> the group leader without exercising their own judgment. That's a scary thing at
>
> any level, but perhaps particularly at university, where we're trying to encourage
>
> people to…be reflective about what they say and do. (As cited in Bielski, 2013,
>
> para. 7)

This theme was reflected in the *Maclean's* article as well, where author Anne Kingston

interviews Patricia Bradshaw, Dean of Saint Mary's Sobey School of Business, who

spoke with "devastated" female students after the incident who claimed "'they were just

going along; they didn't reflect on the internalized sexism'" (as cited in Kingston, 2013,

para. 11).

The response from the student union president and associated commentary that

reinforced that the students "just weren't thinking" is important for several reasons. The

first is that very little of the news coverage that purports to understand why students

engaged in this behaviour actually speaks to the students directly. Of the eight articles

selected, none involved interviews with students who participated in the chant. There are

a few quotes from students who were asked to comment on orientation week or the chant,

but none from students that were present, other than the quotes from the student union

president's statement. This absence could have much to do with students being fearful of

facing the ire of the public and the news media. In addition, the types of articles I selected

and the timeframe in which they were written (with the exception of the *Maclean's*

article) may have prevented the opportunity to hear from the students. In this case, the

news media articles I studied framed the students in particular ways with very little input

from the students themselves. This tendency is noted in a study on teachers represented

in mainstream newspapers in Chicago, where the author examined "how teacher

professional identity is constructed in the media discourse, most often by those talking

about teachers, rather than the teachers themselves" (Cohen, 2010, p. 107). The "just

wasn't thinking" response and framing by some of the authors is also important because

it starts to reinforce the notion that the students are not responsible for their behaviour,

and perhaps are even too stupid/ignorant/unaware to know how their participation would

be harmful.

        This discourse of stupidity was used extensively in the media coverage of the

chant, even by the authors who appeared sceptical of the "just wasn't thinking" response.

National Post writer Robyn Urback suggests that "dumb is a rite of passage for frosh

week" (2013, para. 1), and acknowledges that "UBC, SMU and other university

campuses may not be brimming with freshmen rapists-in-waiting, but rather a few *idiotic*

[emphasis added] frosh leaders and many more first-year students who are *foolishly*

[emphasis added] going along with the pack" (para. 7). Although on the one hand she

recognizes "the coercive power of the freshmen university mob" (para. 4), she then

repeatedly mentions how stupid the leaders are, using sarcasm to suggest the chant was

"brilliant, guys. Just brilliant" (para. 3). Lethbridge took a similar approach, suggesting

that the chant was "not some innocent lapse of judgement. Stupid, yes. But not

innocent" (2013, para. 12) and argued that "if you can get beyond the message, you have

to marvel at the sheer stupidity of it" (para. 20). After mentioning how the student union

president suggested that the students likely did not know or believe in what they were

saying, she asked readers to "get past the lameness of this" (para. 7). Toula Drimonis

writes that this "isn't about one more stupid incident in which women are disrespected

and a rhyming rape chant equated to silly shenanigans" (2013, para. 26), taking issue

with the fact that it was referred to as "just a silly little chant that, has apparently, been

going on for years" (para. 3). She stresses how the chant should not be considered a joke

and needs to be taken seriously, acknowledging the harm it has caused. Yet the

conclusion of her article also acknowledges that "these students may still be young and

immature, and certainly have a lot of growing up to do" (para. 30) even if they should

have known better than to chant about rape, and she suggests that "dismissing it as just

youth, inexperience, an unfortunate and ill-conceived event is the easy part. Doing

something to change this prevailing culture is the hard part" (para. 33).

      Drimonis slides back and forth between emphasizing the youth and inexperience

of the chanters, such as making reference to their "youthful shenanigans" (para. 7), and

also stressing that we cannot dismiss this as a just another silly incident. By repeatedly

stressing the youth of the students, she falls into the same trap that she claims is the "easy

part" – dismissing the incident as an isolated "ill-conceived event" (2013). *Globe and

Mail* writer Zosia Bielski suggests that "many students interviewed by local media

immediately after the incident came to light were aghast at the idea that 'a stupid little

cheer' could lead directly to physical harm" (2013, para. 10). Here we see students

referring to the chant as stupid as a way of dismissing or minimizing the seriousness of

the incident. Yet I argue that several of the authors are doing the same thing. By

referring to the students or to their behaviours as stupid, the authors reinforce the notion

that this was simply a regrettable and isolated incident. It also speaks to the discourse of

power between adults and youth that is often depicted in the media, where "children and

young people who are too often patronised and treated as incompetent 'dupes'" (Gill,

2012b, p. 490).

In an article exploring assumptions and characterizations of youth, Nancy Lesko

(1996) describes how adolescents are thought to "come of age" into adulthood and how

"being in the state of coming of age erases the ability of those in the state to describe or

know themselves and places the privilege and responsibility on adult experts to explain

adolescents" (p. 149). Lesko suggests that talk about adolescents, and I would argue

university students too (whether adolescent age or not), "is a central arena for talking

about social expectations for productive, rational, independent adults" (p. 142). This

coverage of the rape chant stresses the participants' youth in a process that privileges the

voices of the commentators and minimizes that of the students, which can have

implications on school practices and policies as well. This echoes concerns seen in the

sexualisation of culture discussions where so much focus has been on youth and yet has

had a tendency to ignore their voices. Gill stresses the need to "take young people's

voices seriously as participants in (sexualised or otherwise) media culture" (2012b, p.

490), but also cautions not to assume the neoliberal perspective that they are

"autonomous and freely choosing, and as able to excavate and (apparently

straightforwardly) 'lay bare' all the influences upon him or her" (2012b, p. 490). It is

essential to consider the voices of young people, specifically those involved in this

incident, even if their response is that they "just weren't thinking." Whether the authors

accepted or challenged the "just weren't thinking" response, they still ended up

reinforcing the irresponsible/stupid discourse. The repeated use of words like "stupidity"

and "just weren't thinking" form a pattern that strengthens the irresponsible/stupid

discourse, calling into question the responsibility of the students and casting it elsewhere.

Who becomes responsible for such an incident and who ensures that it does not happen

again? Certainly it is not the students who are too stupid to know any better.

However, a few of the articles suggested that perhaps the female students may

have more to do with the asserted problem and solutions than the male students. Bielski,

for example, highlights the participation of women, stating "that groupthink also involved

women, with female frosh leaders at Saint Mary's smiling and clapping along to the

words 'no consent' during the chant" (2013, para. 8). She suggests the women are

engaging in more passive participation by smiling and clapping along when in fact, they

are actively cheering and participating in the exact same ways as the men. Her "expert,"

Wayne MacKay agrees, suggesting that "there's a failure of empathy here not just in the

men, which is obviously problematic, but even in the women" (as cited in Bielski, 2013,

para. 9). His statement reads as though to suggest that a failure in empathy is expected

from men but that for the women who participated, it is especially concerning. Several of

the articles purposely noted that women were involved in the chant: in *The Chronicle

Herald,* Bowen refers to the "Saint Mary's chanters (many of them young women)"

(2013, para. 2), Kingston states in *Maclean's* how "men and women both chanted" (2013,

para. 9), Bradshaw in *Globe and Mail* refers to "university students, male and female"

(2013, para. 2), and Drimonis states in *Huffington Post* that "student leaders (both men

and women) stand up to chant" (2013, para. 6). It is no coincidence that all these articles

describe the participants in such similar ways. They could have just said students but they chose to specify that this included men and women, likely because of the surprise about female participation in the chant.

I have concerns about this line of thinking. Do we expect this type of behaviour from men? Is their involvement considered normal but women's participation is concerning? This specific concern about women was evident in the article written by Toula Drimonis who asked how it was that "women can actually participate and chant along without even questioning the insulting nature of those words" (2013, para. 27). In response to a quote from a student who commented on the chant, she stated:

> 'It wasn't a big deal to me. I'm not a feminist kind of person. It didn't affect me personally', a second-year female psychology student was quoted in a CBC news article. While her name was published, I chose to omit it, because, even if she's not ashamed, I am ashamed for her, and given her youth I'm hoping she will one day understand why such a statement coming from a woman's mouth is both dangerous and treasonous. (2013, para. 19)

The reaction to this female student's comment and female participation in the chant more generally suggests the women are considered more responsible for what happened on campus that day, that somehow they should have known better than the men and should have been the voices of reason.

Much like Pomerantz's exploration into the discourses of a school dress code violation, the rape chant suggests a moral transgression or failure at the school. Pomerantz demonstrates how the responsibility for the school's moral climate should fall evenly on administration, parents, teachers and students, but that "this burden is placed

on young women more than any other group. And not only is the onus on young women

to maintain morality in the school, but this responsibility is considered a requirement of

girlhood itself: a 'natural' duty" (2007, p. 378). The women who participated in the

chant are more problematic because of this "treasonous" behaviour – actively

participating in a culture of rape when they should be fighting to end it. In an exploration

into girls and the sexual politics of schooling, Jessica Ringrose suggests that "these

sensationalised media headlines play on our emotional investments, cultivating affect – a

sense of moral outrage and fear over changing forms of femininity, particularly

disruptions to the status quo" (2013, p. 30). This discourse suggests that we expect boys

and men to behave a certain way, but when women engage in behaviours outside the

norm of traditional femininity, we put the blame and onus back onto them for their

transgressions. Pomerantz explores this notion in her school dress code study, suggesting

that "making young women responsible for the school's moral climate send a complex

message to boys and men: girls' bodies *are* and *are not* to be looked at, ogled, and lusted

after. But if you do look, you are not to be held accountable. It is the girl's fault for not

upholding her 'natural' obligation to defer your attention" (2007, p. 379). Pomerantz

makes a link between discourses invoked for sex-based harassment and for dressing

"appropriately" in the school, demonstrating how:

> as a matter of 'natural' fact, boys cannot help themselves, so the girls – who are
>
> 'naturally' more responsible – had better take the lead. The *boys will be boys*
>
> discourse thus does grave harm to boys too, who are fixed in devastating notions
>
> of heteronormativity and masculinity that limit who they can *be* in the school. (p.
>
> 380)

I argue that we see a similar discourse at work around the rape chant. The men's participation is explained through the discourse of irresponsible/stupid but the women represented are more blameworthy. Boys will be boys but girls need to know better. This sentiment was certainly evident in the article submitted to *The Chronicle Herald Opinions* site by Mary Bowen, who stated: "I do not condone rape or sexual assault but I think the male teens often so accused are not wholly to blame. Miley's performance at the MTV Video Music Awards and SMU's chanting ladies convince me of this, though I had my suspicions earlier" (2013, para. 3). She suggests that, "near naked young women are constantly on parade…midriffs are bare and cleavage abounds" (2013, para. 5). In a shocking display of obliviousness to the issue at hand, she argues that:

> there were names for girls who paraded their wares and talked the talk, then
> wanted to bail when the car windows at the drive-in were thoroughly steamed and
> boys couldn't have walked to the concession stand for the popcorn if they'd
> wanted to.
>
> 'No means no' is a catchy slogan, but is it really fair to spread out the goodies
> and then snatch them off the table at the last second when the bait is taken and
> hook halfway down the fish's throat?
>
> Is it fair to expect hands-off status when young ladies themselves are chanting,
> 'Use us; abuse us; do what you will?' (Bowen, 2013, para. 8)

Bowen's victim-blaming tirade may be an extreme example, but it furthers the suggestion that the rape chant was enveloped within an irresponsible/stupid discourse that justifies men and blames women, much like we see in incidents of sexual assault and harassment, and this despite all the work that has been done to create awareness of victim-blaming

and rape culture. Here, these discourses permeate the language and commentary of the

news articles in my data set, even the ones attempting to challenge rape culture on

campus. I continue to discuss blameworthiness in the next section, where the

responsible/deviant discourse found in the media articles suggests that the participants of

the chant are not stupid but deviant and certainly responsible for their behaviours that day

on the field.

The Responsible/Deviant Discourse

Closely following the irresponsible/stupid discourse, the responsible/deviant

discourse appeared in the articles, especially in explanations of how the rape chant could

have happened and how to prevent it from happening again. Several of the authors

clearly identified the desire of new students to "fit in" during that first week on campus as

a critical component of the rape chant incident. They felt that the "coercive power of the

freshmen university mob" (Urback, 2013, para. 4) is what compelled students to engage

in questionable behaviours such as the rape chant. Peer pressure, arguably found among

the first year students, is described as a major influence on student behaviour during

orientation week. Acknowledging that the creation of the chant "was probably a group

effort over many beers" (Lethbridge, 2013, para. 13), some authors found themselves

questioning "what kind of mob mentality can possibly justify the unfathomable to me;

that these students have been singing this catchy little tune for four years now and no one

has seen fit to complain about it, be ashamed of it, and possibly see putting an end to it?"

(Drimonis, 2013, para. 18). The authors link mob mentality and groupthink, suggesting

that "conditions on campus are ripe for mob behaviour" (Kingston, 2013, para. 10) and

that "lemming-like groupthink and a drive for social standing in first year both play a

role" (Bielski, 2013, para. 5).

Exploring why this event happened, James Bradshaw consulted "expert" Ryan

Hamilton, an assistant professor at University of New Brunswick who runs hazing-

prevention workshops and studies athlete initiations:

> And in a sea of chanting, partying students, there is a danger of
>
> "dehumanization," Dr. Hamilton said. "They're just frosh. They're wearing a
>
> red shirt, and that's it."
>
> In a group, students can feel that responsibility for their actions is diffused.
>
> "This individual culpability for carrying out something terrible, you don't
>
> experience it," Dr. Hamilton said. "It's not just me cheering this vile cheer – it's
>
> a group of people, so I don't feel morally that it's me anymore." (Bradshaw,
>
> 2013, para. 7)

Robyn Urback suggests:

> it's very much a culture of suggestibility that is propagating these offensive
>
> chants. Universities must ensure that both the upper- and first-year university
>
> students understand why it is unacceptable to make light of non-consensual sex,
>
> and ensure that future frosh leaders don't lead their first-year lambs into vulgar,
>
> objectionable territory. (2013, para. 7)

She explains how fitting in, not thinking, and mob mentality lead to questionable

behaviours on campus, as "groupthink thus takes over, and that once-reserved high

school honour roll student somehow finds himself streaking across campus with his

faculty t-shirt over his manhood" (para. 2). The authors frequently refer to peer pressure,

mob mentality and groupthink without any analysis or distinction between the concepts.

In Urback's comment about the streaking student above, groupthink is perhaps not the

best way to describe a solo student streaking across campus. The concept of groupthink

evolved from psychological studies into group dynamics in the 1970s. The term was first

utilized by psychologist Irving Janis (1973) who describes groupthink as a "quick and

easy way to refer to the mode of thinking that group members engage in when they are

dominated by the concurrence-seeking tendency, when their strivings for unanimity

override their motivation to appraise the consequences of their actions" (p. 20). He

describes the concurrence-seeking tendency as fostering "overoptimism, lack of

vigilance, and sloganistic thinking about the weakness and immorality of out-groups" (p.

20). Several of the articles mention groupthink though none attempt to unpack its

meaning, possibly under the assumption that, given the context, readers will understand

the reference. Similarly, mob mentality is a concept studied in various disciplines

including criminology, sociology, psychology and legal studies and varies in meaning

and findings depending on the context, however, many know it to refer to groups of

individuals engaging in behaviours that they would not engage in if they were alone.

Why? Because it is considered "cognitively easier to act grossly inappropriately if others

(particularly if there are many others) are doing the same" (Replogle, 2011, p. 801).

Lumping the students into one group and allowing for the diffusion of responsibility

might seem more likely to reinforce the irresponsible discourse, suggesting that they were

not responsible for their behavior because of this mob mentality. This mindset has been

demonstrated in legal approaches in the past, where "the criminal law has treated crimes

committed by groups as *more* blameworthy than those committed by persons acting

alone" ("Feasibility," 1995, p. 1111). More recently, however, defendants have begun to

argue:

> that their participation in group criminal behavior, such as rioting or looting,
>
> should render their individual criminal acts *less* blameworthy.   The argument
>
> runs that persons who act as a part of a group get 'caught up' in the excitement of
>
> the mob and so do not make real, meaningful choices about how to behave.
>
> ("Feasibility," 1995, p. 1111)

I argue that the use of mob mentality, groupthink and peer pressure contributes to a

discourse of responsibility/deviance when linked directly to the notion of criminality, as

many of the authors did in their articles. They make connections between participating in

the rape chant to other crimes and criminality or suggest that punishment should be

stricter. For example, Lethbridge argues:

> Sex with underage girls who don't consent is rape.
>
> Chanting about rape in a public place and encouraging others to do so is inciting
>
> rape.
>
> Rape is a criminal activity.
>
> Ergo, the boys of Saint Mary's University were promoting crime when they sang
>
> their pro-rape songs on campus last weekend. (2013, para. 1)

I find it interesting that she suggests only the boys of Saint Mary's are promoting crime

(rape) when later in the article she references students, frosh and student leaders, not

presuming the gender of the group.

Anne Kingston's article in *Maclean's* suggests a more nefarious link between the

chanting and criminality when she introduces the research from David Lisak:

'Rape chants' mirror serious problems in attitudes about rape and sexuality, says

Lisak: 'They provide camouflage for offenders who will not only join such

chants, but will actually act on the implicit messages contained in them'. They

also normalize deviancy. 'To a narcissistic offender, knowing that a swatch of his

community will publicly say such things indicates to him that his distorted views

of women and sexuality are within the norm'. Such acceptance can have another

dire consequence, he says: People who ordinarily would not engage in predatory

behaviours get sucked in and commit criminal acts. (2013, para. 16)

The "deviance discourse" marks participation in the rape chant as criminal behaviour and

suggests that participants will engage in more criminal behaviour if their actions continue

to be camouflaged by the actions of the group. This raises some important questions, such

as why are we so afraid of young people in groups and where does this fear come from?

Nancy Lesko's (1996) exploration of characterizations of youth provides a useful

approach to understanding this fear. Lesko demonstrates how one confident

characterization of youth is "that they are strongly peer oriented" and how "this taken-

for-granted view is a demeaning one, a term that again massifies and positions its objects

as immature, dangerous, and needing to be controlled" (p. 153). Lesko demonstrates

how, in this discourse, adolescents

are characterized as succumbing to peer pressure and being part of peer cultures,

which socialize them to peer norms. Whether it be middle-class youths with

norms of sexuality or drug use or studies of gangs or high school groups, friends

are the most important and influential people in adolescents' lives. The linking of

uniformity and conformity among adolescents in relation to strong peer

orientation persists in current research, with some modifications. This

conceptualization establishes teenagers as dangerous *others*, not as individuated

adults. (p. 154)

This process of "othering" the participants of the rape chant is visible throughout the

news articles. It suggests that the students are deviant, dishonorable and out of step with

"normal" development into adulthood, especially since we are dealing with students who

might still be teenagers, but are considered and (sometimes) treated as adults upon

entering post-secondary education. While being critical of the participants' behaviour is

reasonable, the othering of them can produce more harmful effects. Pomerantz noted this

othering in her school dress code study, where "dress codes function as a form of female

othering, creating a league of 'bad girls' and 'bad bodies' (2007, p. 381). A female

student's violation of the dress code turned her into a "deviant who is out of step with

'normal' models of 'good-girl' adolescence" (p. 381). As demonstrated in the previous

section dealing with the irresponsible/stupid discourse, and much like the dress code

example, the female participants of the rape chant were viewed as more troubling than

the males. They are framed as deviant for succumbing to peer pressure and causing harm

to themselves and others through their participation in the chant.

Another concern I have with this responsible/deviant discourse is that it involves

neoliberal and individualist expectations that many feminist researchers have critiqued in

their work on gender and sexualisation (Gill, 2007, 2008; Egan, 2013; Ringrose, 2012).

Lesko points out how the characterization of adolescents as peer-oriented reinforces an

expectation for adults to act as autonomous individuals which "validates individual

autonomy as the superior mode of being in the world, a position that is problematic for

contemporary economic, environmental, and family situations" (1996, p. 155). This has

class and race implications as well, as to "demean peer pressure has the effect of

privileging an individualism that historically is associated with middle-class White males

and largely alien to the experiences of many people of color and women" (p. 155). Much

like concerns about the sexualisation of culture, the responsible/deviant discourse elicits

responses that highlight a fear of class contamination. Egan and Hawkes (2008) suggest

that the "discourse of sexualisation paints a picture of overly sexual displays of 'low

culture' rupturing the innocence of middle and upper middle class girls" (p. 306). I argue

that the media discourses surrounding women's participation in the rape chant have a

similar effect, reinforcing

> …frameworks which place women's and girls' sexuality, into narrow and often
>
> repressive classist categories such as virgin and whore or innocent and
>
> sexualized. In so doing, sexualization reproduces a moralizing framework that
>
> renders girls passive and highly corruptible and once sexualized in need of
>
> regulation. (Egan &Hawkes, 2008, p. 306)

This moralizing framework is certainly exemplified in Mary Bowen's article where she

suggests that "we need to find out why our kids feel the need to engage in activities that

belittle them and make criminals of them. We need to examine why we are willing to

accept low standards" (2013, para. 13). She suggests that "we can take one small step by

cleaning up our public airways and by calcifying oversight spines on university

campuses, in parents and in all of us who prize common decency" (para. 14). Her article

overtly demonstrates a moralizing tone that is present throughout the responsible/deviant

discourse. She even ends with the suggestion of "censorship? Maybe, if that's what it

takes! And while we're at it, bring on the burka! 'Letting it all hang out' doesn't seem to be working for us" (para. 15). Her statement highlights a major concern with utilizing standards of decency or innocence within discussions of sexuality and femininity, as "movements which sought the protection of innocence have had a dubious history and have been used in the service of racism, sexism and homophobia and have legitimated the management and regulation of women, children, the poor, the disabled and the colonized" (Egan & Hawkes, 2008, p. 308).

Media are no different in contributing to this movement and the coverage of the rape chant incident exemplifies these concerns. In her work on postfeminist education, Jessica Ringrose explores the figure of the mean or aggressive girl, arguing that discourses of mean and violent girls are "highly classed," and how "stories of girls' aggression constitute a complex and contradictory representational terrain that centres on staking out the limits and possibilities of what it means to be feminine" (2013, p. 30). The rape chant discourses are similarly complex and contradictory, and much like Pomerantz's work, a "feminist poststructuralist analysis allows all these conflicting discourses to be heard and seen as significations that help to create and define femininity and masculinity in the school" (Pomerantz, 2007, p. 383). The exploration into these discourses that I have provided demonstrate a similar finding to Ringrose's work, how "media reports present a plethora of confusing figures of mean bullies, violent offender girls gone 'wrong,' and also victim girls (who typically suffer, however, at the hands of other girls), which need to be unpacked" (Ringrose, 2013, p. 30). In this study, the media presented figures of irresponsible, deviant or stupid students which certainly need to be

unpacked, as when left alone as they were in these media articles, they perpetuate the harmful discourses the authors claim to challenge.

An Alternate View of the Rape Chant

Throughout my explanation of the discourses found within media coverage of the rape chant, I have made evident some of the connections to sexualisation of culture research. As demonstrated in my literature review, agency is a central component of many discussions of sexualisation, and yet agency was not considered by any of the news media authors in my data set. I understand this as related to the scope and purpose of the articles but this understanding can also help expose what is missing from the coverage of the rape chant.   I ask: how might discussions of sexual agency help contribute to news media understandings of the rape chant? I do not believe it is as necessarily straightforward as understanding the participants as agentic beings, but I do think discussions of sexual agency, and specifically, technologies of sexiness can be very useful in providing a more comprehensive analysis of the rape chant.

As described in Chapter Three, the technologies of sexiness framework allows for "more nuanced analyses that attend to the complexities of the cultural, material, and subjective" (Evans & Riley, 2015, p. 62) and this is exactly what is missing from much of the news coverage of high-profile incidents such as the rape chant. Within the technologies of sexiness framework, "women are conceptualized as being able to act agentically, but not in the context of their own making, nor with the technologies that are discursively or symbolically neutral" (p. 135). The context of the rape chant involves discourses of university life and rape culture, as I indicated above, but there is another context to be considered, called a postfeminist sentiment, "in which women have been

granted new rights through the feminist movement, but are expected to use these rights in

ways that orient toward heightened forms of self-surveillance, self-monitoring, and self-

discipline" (p. 61). Evans and Riley describe this postfeminist sentiment as:

> stratified through structures of class, race, and gender to reinforce structures of
>
> oppression and to create a new privileged form of female sexual subjectivity that
>
> is presented as choosing, agentic, hedonistic, sassy, and self-confident, so long as
>
> it is done so in appropriately feminine ways that do not challenge masculine
>
> dominance and power. (2015, p. 61)

I argue that we should consider the possibility that the female participants of the rape

chant were taking up positions of this sexual subjectivity described by Evans and Riley.

What we saw was a confident display of participation, especially when considering those

that led the chant. They put on a demonstration that appeared sassy, hedonistic and

choosing. But when that participation was observed as contrary to feminine expectations

(how dare a women chant about rape) and to standards of decency more generally, the

judgement and criticism came swiftly within news media and beyond. Rosalind Gill

studies postfeminist media culture and suggests that consideration of a postfeminist

sensibility will allow us to better unpack these issues (2007b). She describes a shift in

sexualized representations of women in the media from "passive, mute objects of an

assumed male gaze" (p. 151) to a new female figure that is "the sexually autonomous

heterosexual young woman who plays with her sexual power and is forever 'up for it'"

(p. 151). She argues that this shift also represents a shift in the way that power operates,

one that has deeper implications for women given that the objectified male gaze has

become internalized to form a disciplinary regime where "power is not imposed from

above or the outside, but constructs our very subjectivity. Girls and women are invited to

become a particular kind of self, and are endowed with agency on condition that it is used

to construct oneself as a subject closely resembling the heterosexual male fantasy found

in pornography" (p. 152). Power is operating in and through us, affecting our very

subjectivities. And according to Gill, to make matters worse, these neoliberal

subjectivities allow for sexual objectification to be "(re-)presented not as something done

to women by some men, but as the freely chosen wish of active, confident, assertive

female subjects" (p. 153). This understanding of postfeminist sentiment is a useful lens

for understanding how women participated in the rape chant. Suggesting that the women

were dumb or deviant is just not good enough. In fact, Gill provides one of the most

useful explanations of what could make sense of participation in the rape chant in her

discussion of irony and knowingness.

Postfeminist Irony and Knowingness

Gill suggests that "no discussion of the postfeminist sensibility in the media would be

complete without considering irony and knowingness" (2007b, p. 159). Gill describes

how within postfeminist media culture, "irony has become a way of 'having it both

ways', of expressing sexist, homophobic or otherwise unpalatable sentiments in an

ironized form, while claiming this was not actually 'meant'" (p. 159). She describes how

this works in advertising, using retro images and soundtracks over sexist themes, but that

at the same time in contemporary moments can be considered ironic and humorous rather

than offensive. And the more extreme the sexism, the more evidence that the sexism is

not real:

Irony also functions through the very extremeness of the sexism expressed: as though the mere fact that women are compared to 'rusty old bangers' or posed against each other in the 'dumbest girlfriend' competition is (perversely) evidence that there is no sexism (the extremeness of the sexism is evidence that there is no sexism). Magazine editors routinely trot out the line that it is all 'harmless fun' (when did 'harmless' and 'fun' become yoked together so powerfully?). (p. 160)

Sound familiar? We hear these responses to extreme forms of sexism that take place on campus (see Dalhousie Dentistry and Memorial beer mug example in the Introduction Chapter). Gill suggests that "if we suspend our disbelief in the notion that it is 'just a laugh' we are left with a fast-growing area of media content (which profoundly influences other media) that is chillingly misogynist, inviting men to evaluate women only as sex objects" (p. 160), and reminds us that it "is hard to imagine any other group in society being so systematically objectified, attacked, and vilified with so little opposition – which tells us something about *the power of irony* [emphasis added]" (p. 161). The news coverage of the rape chant and the discourses surrounding the event thus becomes a source of this power. Outrage at this specific example of irony and knowingness that came out of the rape chant is to be expected, however, the news articles that demonstrated this outrage solidified harmful discourses about the participants of the chant, especially the women. These responses demonstrate elements of a postfeminist sensibility "against a backdrop in which 'postfeminism' is routinely invoked but rarely explored or specified" (p. 162). One of the largest concerns that comes with understanding postfeminist sensibility is how its "constructions of contemporary gender relations are profoundly contradictory…women are presented as active, desiring social

subjects, but they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile surveillance which has no

historical precedent" (p. 163). This speaks to the poststructuralist position that

individuals are "powerful within one discursive context or powerless within another; or,

far more subtly, that people shift continuously within the *same* discursive context so that

they experience positions of relative powerfulness and powerlessness either concurrently

or in rapid succession" (Baxter, 2003, p. 27). I argue that what Gill describes is an

accurate depiction of the state of being for women on campus. The rape chant responses

make up part of this hostile surveillance. Gill states:

> The patterned nature of the contradictions is what constitutes the sensibility, one
>
> in which notions of autonomy, choice and self-improvement sit side-by-side with
>
> surveillance, discipline and the vilification of those who make the 'wrong'
>
> 'choices' (become too fat, too thin, or have the audacity or bad judgement to
>
> grow older). (2007b, p. 163)

We need to spend more time and energy understanding this contradiction by engaging in

critical discussion of incidents such as the rape chant while avoiding the hate and derision

that is directed most often towards women. We should be approaching these incidents

with a technique described by Evans and Riley as "curious affection" to avoid othering

women, especially those who become our objects of concern (2015). They suggest a

deepening of the analysis "first, by exploring how to value that other's standpoint that we

find so disagreeable, and second, by examining our own investments and the anxieties

being evoked by this 'disagreeable' standpoint" (p. 142). This was something that I

struggled with constantly throughout this study – to create a willingness in myself to

value the standpoint of those who participated in the rape chant and examine my own

anxieties about the incident. I attempted to construct this analysis with an openness to understanding the participants' standpoints but without falling into either a celebratory or a condemnatory stance. It should be stated again that what is missing in this study is any first-person account from those that participated in the chant. We can only analyse what we saw and heard that day, often through mediated channels, but hearing from the student participants themselves would make this discussion more robust, as was found in the studies conducted by Evans and Riley utilizing their technologies of sexiness framework. They employed a cultural analysis with direct accounts from women in order to make sense of the way in which women understand sexiness and their findings demonstrate that the women were not unthinking or uncritical. In fact, they found that in the women's "talk of their negotiations with new sexual subjectivities there was critical thinking, humor, parody, pleasure, and agency" (2015, p. 138). Imagine what could be found in discussions with the women participants of the chant or other campus sexual subjectivities. This exploration into the rape chant will remain only a discourse analysis but has certainly highlighted the need to hear from participants who find themselves in the context of university life and rape culture.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

When the rape chant took place in September 2013, the campus, media and public

came together to demand an explanation as to what was happening with student

behaviour. The chant alerted them to the fact that if students were willing to chant about

raping underage girls in a large public space, what else were they doing behind closed

doors and in private social media spaces? Concern about youth behaviour is not new, and

Nancy Lesko's (1996) research exploring assumptions of adolescents demonstrates this

fact. Many researchers examining the sexualisation of culture have indicated how young

people, and more specifically young white girls, are the objects of concern when

examining how everything in society has become "pornified." But when the rape chant

occurred, something new happened. We started to see mainstream news media outlets

using the term "rape culture" to describe this incident on campus. Though in most cases

rape culture was not defined or explained, its mere appearance on the pages is a

demonstration of a shift in consciousness. This incident initiated discussion on the

existence of rape culture on campus, much to the relief of activists, academics and others

who have been acknowledging this behaviour for years. However, this thesis

demonstrates that talking about rape culture is one thing, understanding it and effectively

challenging it is quite another. The news media stories that may have intended to

challenge the existence of rape culture, ultimately gave power to discourses that

perpetuate and promote rape culture. This final chapter will highlight the findings of this

discourse analysis including the challenges of this type of research and make

recommendations for future areas of exploration and action.

Rape Chant Discourses

The eight news media articles I chose for this study all intended to condemn the behaviour that took place at Saint Mary's that day. They all involved writers or contributors sharing their opinions on what happened and making recommendations for what should happen as a result of the incident. Using a feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, I determined two conflicting yet related discourses in the media coverage of the rape chant: the irresponsible/stupid discourse and the responsible/deviant discourse. I had a similar finding to Shauna Pomerantz's determination in her study of school dress codes: "a feminist poststructuralist analysis allows all these conflicting discourses to be heard and seen as significations that help create and define femininity and masculinity in the school" (2007, p. 383). She was examining a high school context, but clearly this can continue right into post-secondary environments as well. The irresponsible/stupid discourse suggested that the students who participated in the rape chant were too stupid to know any better which has the effect of privileging the experience of adults over youth. However, it was also specifically noted in the news articles how women participated in the chant, suggesting that their participation should be viewed differently. In many cases, this meant they were viewed as having gone against their "natural" duty to uphold a sense of morality in the school. This discourse reinforces the harmful notion that "boys will be boys" and that girls should know better. Alternatively, the responsible/deviant discourse reflects a view of youth behaviour as needing to be controlled before they make criminals of themselves. This discourse reinforces fear of youth, and specifically fear of "bad girl" femininity. Women participating in the rape chant, or not showing outrage at other women who participated

in the chant, was interpreted as dangerous, even "treasonous." These responses result in a female "othering," reinforcing the view that women are in need of regulation and control. Both the irresponsible/stupid and responsible/deviant discourses reinforce harmful notions of femininity and masculinity that we see reiterated in other public and media discourses that make up the context for the rape chant. As Weedon (1989) suggests, "poststructuralist feminism requires attention to historical specificity in the production, for women, of subject positions and modes of femininity and their place in the overall network of social power relations" (p. 135). Laying out the context of university life, rape culture, and a postfeminist sentiment is a necessary step in understanding how the specific rape chant discourses are situated within and reinforce power relations. The findings in this research project did not come without challenges that are important to name, as they certainly affected my work and may have implications for future research as well.

Challenges

There are several challenges that I faced in this study that I have indicated throughout the chapters. I want to reiterate them in one place and link them to my recommendations for future research connected to this topic. The most significant challenge in my research project is how my theoretical perspective and methodological approach, while well-suited to this research topic, are complex and lack clear, definitive explanations for usage. This has worked well for me in the sense that I was able to determine my own way of approaching this study while following the principles of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis. Like Gavey (2011), I understand reservations "about the way in which preset 'methods' (and theories for that matter) can

become boxes that limit and circumscribe research, rather than offering fluid pathways

for creative inquiry" (p. 186). However, I am completely aware of the difficulties this

may cause. The language and concepts used in FPDA are confusing, often have no

agreed-upon meanings, and require extensive explanation as to how they are being

utilized. I attempted to explain my way of using each word and concept to provide as

much clarity as can be achieved with these approaches. But I am also very cognisant that

my research will not be picked up by my colleagues in student affairs and completely

understood upon a first reading (that is, if it is read by any of them at all). That is not to

say they are not brilliant practitioners doing great work. It is simply that feminist

poststructuralist discourse analysis requires a certain willingness and patience that cannot

be expected from the average reader. Given that so much of the work of feminist

poststructuralism is bringing awareness to various forms of power, I find this a difficult

point to get past. I want my research to be accessible, yet despite my best efforts, I fear

the concepts I rely upon prohibit such accessibility.

Another challenge that I faced with this project involved the notion of voice.

Feminist poststructuralism aims to "promote the free play of multiple voices within

diverse contexts" (Baxter, 2003, p. 36). My findings demonstrated how the news media

that covered the rape chant did not include voices of the students who participated in the

chant, with the exception of a statement from the student union president. So while the

media questioned why the chant took place, they never took the time to ask the question

to the students involved. Perhaps the concern was that the response from students would

be distasteful or deviant or stupid, however "a feminist post-structuralist perspective

would argue that this marginalised group should be, at the very least, allowed the space to

make their case alongside and in opposition to other voices" (Baxter, 2003, p. 37). These

voices would demonstrate a nuanced perspective that would allow us to gain a deeper

understanding of the impacts of rape culture, sexualisation and postfeminism on campus,

as "it is only by welcoming a plurality of opinions on emotive issues such as this that

greater recognition, understanding, tolerance, connection and co-existence can be

achieved between apparently conflicting viewpoints, interests and experiences" (p. 38).

Future Implications and Recommendations

Like many of the authors researching sexualisation of culture, sexism, and rape

culture, I acknowledge and encourage the inclusion of those we are studying into our

research. If we are to critically examine specific events, behaviours or discourses, we

need to hear directly from individuals engaged in these issues. Yet how we engage with

these issues and these individuals is also really important. As stated earlier, I struggle

with examining issues of female sexual subjectivity and agency without falling into (or

being forced into) the binary of offering a celebratory or distrusting stance. Egan (2013)

helpfully describes another set of anxieties I experience:

> While I share deep concerns over the increasingly sexist and sexualised images
>
> found in popular culture as well as the increasingly 'narrow heterosexual address'
>
> on offer for young people, I am deeply uncomfortable with and must ultimately
>
> reject a perspective which transforms feminist cultural criticism into the
>
> pathologisation and normalisation of girlhood behaviours. (p. 268)

This work of challenging sexualisation, sexism and rape culture is tricky and involves

such careful negotiation with the women and girls that we are studying. I recommend

that any work that involves exploration of women and girls' behaviours needs to be done

with careful consideration and what Gill refers to as critical respect. She suggests that a feminist account of any practice should "listen to and treat respectfully women's accounts of their experiences of such practices…yet surely this 'respect' does not mean treating those accounts as if they are the *only* stories that can be told" (2007a, p. 77). Critical respect "involved attentive, respectful listening, to be sure, but it does not abdicate the right to question or interrogate" (p. 78). This work is challenging to be certain, but also necessary if we are to begin understanding the changing environments on campus.

My final recommendation for future research involves my previously-mentioned colleagues working in student affairs. If we are committed to providing experiences to students that support and nurture their success, we need to become intimately familiar with the campus climate and the various issues facing students. We need to be aware of the discourses that exist on campus, how they operate and how our actions have the potential to reinforce or disrupt these discourses. One such discourse I discovered through this research project is a "frosh" discourse. Though frosh may be a word that we eliminated from our official campus vocabulary, it is a word that is still used frequently and creates meaning and subject positions for students to take up, particularly when they first arrive to campus. I identified that more work needs to be done to understand the discursive implications of this word and how it is impacting the campus culture and experience.

This research project contributes to an understanding of rape culture and sexualisation on campus. Through an exploration into the news media coverage of the Saint Mary's rape chant, I determined the news media articles that attempted to challenge

notions of rape culture on campus, actually reinforce it by reiterating harmful discourses

of femininity.

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Appendix

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Exhibitionist modern culture breeds excess
Mary Bowen
2013, September 6
The Chronicle Herald
http://thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/1152642-exhibitionist-modern-culture-breeds-excess

Making frosh week empathetic and inclusive
James Bradshaw
2013, September 13
The Globe and Mail
https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/making-frosh-week-empathetic-and-inclusive/article14324102/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&

Hey SMU, There's No Funny in Rape
Toula Drimonis
2013, September 6
Huffington Post
http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/toula-foscolos/smu-rape-chant_b_3879915.html

The real danger for women on campus
Anne Kingston
2013, November 27
MacLean's Magazine
http://www.macleans.ca/education/uniandcollege/the-real-danger-for-women-on-campus-2/

This is what rape culture looks like
Jane Kirby
2013, September 11
Briarpatch Magazine
https://briarpatchmagazine.com/blog/view/this-is-what-rape-culture-looks-like

Pro-rape rap far beyond thoughtless
Gail Lethbridge
2013, September 6
The Chronicle Herald
http://thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/1152643-lethbridge-pro-rape-rap-far-beyond-thoughtless

St Mary's University frosh chants are repugnant, but not surprising
Robyn Urback
2013, September 11
National Post
http://nationalpost.com/opinion/robyn-urback-pro-rape-frosh-chants-are-repugnant-but-not-surprising