Abstract

This thesis examined the representation of social actors responsible for sexual assault prevention published in media and police reports and grassroots poster campaigns that followed a series of sexual assaults perpetrated in Edmonton between May 2008 and March 2010. Reporting by *Edmonton Journal*, *CBC News*, and the published responses of the Garneau Sisterhood, a grassroots organization, was examined through a lens informed by feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA). Using FCDA, I analyzed the ways in which the representations of social actors in these texts changed across time both linguistically and interdiscursively.

Three main neoliberal discourses found to be operating in media representations of social actors in the *Edmonton Journal* and *CBC News* were discourses of individualization, authority, and feminization. An analysis of social actors in the media showed these assaults to be isolated and individualized crimes. In addition, media representation included an unquestioned deference to police authority in seeking solutions and justice, and the construction of rape-avoidance as a hegemonic norm of femininity. The main discourse found in the Garneau Sisterhood poster campaigns was a discourse of collective responsibility. Sexualized violence will not likely end without a shift in the culture of violence toward women. At a time when the federal government is defunding feminist advocacy and direct service organizations—forcing them to close or function precariously—the presence of collective-oriented, grassroots interruptions of normalized rape culture is both urgent and hopeful.
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To queendoms, counting smarties, and giants.
Chapter 1 Introduction

In 2008, four women in the Edmonton, Alberta neighbourhoods of Garneau and Aspen Gardens reported experiencing sexual assaults perpetrated by a similar sounding man who broke into their homes when they were sleeping. During this time, several area newspapers published Edmonton Police Service (EPS) warnings ostensibly to inform local area citizens and provide advice to women. For example, on May 27, 2008, CBC News published EPS warnings issued after the reports of sexual assault (Gerow, 2008). The Edmonton Journal also published EPS warnings on May 28, August 12, and August 14, 2008 (Collum, 2008; Gelinas, 2008; Senger, 2008). In addition, Magic 99 (Stafford, 2008) and the Edmonton Sun (Thomas, 2008) each published an article on the assaults and police warnings on May 28 and June 26, 2008, respectively.

In June 2008, an anonymous group of community members called the Garneau Sisterhood (GS) launched a visual public education campaign that was intended to challenge the way the police had represented these particular assaults and the “usual suspects” responsible for preventing sexual assaults in general. The police reports warned the residents to be vigilant and to lock their doors and windows. The GS campaign challenged the role of the Edmonton police and the mainstream media as the exclusive authorities to represent these events. They put up a series of posters in and around Garneau, published an op-ed in VUE Weekly, and issued a press release in response to both the incidents of sexual assault and to the corresponding police representations of these events in the media. They documented all of this on their website.

The GS campaign critiqued the onus placed on women to protect themselves, the limited information released by the police, and the emphasis on incidents of stranger-
perpetrated assaults. The anonymous members of the GS created posters and pasted them to lampposts, fire hydrants, poles, postal boxes, road signs, park benches, and bus stops. Their grassroots, guerilla-style response questioned who could and should have the power to represent these events.

In March 2010, the *Edmonton Journal* published another article pertaining to sexual assault in Edmonton (Gelinas, 2010). In this article, the police described an increase in reports in 2009 of alcohol-related sexual assaults. Interestingly, however, in this article, the police explicitly distanced themselves from the warnings they had previously issued. Part of this thesis addresses how the police warnings changed.

This thesis examines some of the mainstream and alternative media representations of these events and some of the GS campaign posters that were produced in response through a lens informed by feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA). It is a study of the way that the police and the media, two powerful social institutions, and the Garneau Sisterhood represented the social actors responsible for preventing sexual assaults. The positioning of the social actors constituted, in part, selective constructions of these events as sexual assaults. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I briefly describe mass media as a social institution to frame the context of this study. In the second section, I provide my research questions. In the third, I discuss the significance of this research to the larger body of work on media, sexual assault, power, and gender.

**Context: Mass Media as a Social Institution**

According to Fairclough (1989), mass media is able to “exercise a pervasive and powerful influence in social reproduction because of the very scale of modern mass
media and the extremely high level of exposure of whole populations to a relatively homogeneous output” (p. 45). Exercising this power depends on the cumulative effect of the repetition of particular ways of representing causality, agency, and positioning the reader. Mass media discourse is one-sided, contains a sharp divide between producers and interpreters/consumers of text, is designed for mass audiences, and addresses an “ideal subject” to which the actual audience must negotiate a relationship (Fairclough, 1989, p. 41).

Media, as an extension of our senses, transforms our relations to one another and to ourselves regardless of content (McLuhan, 1994). The medium itself is the message because it “shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action” (McLuhan, 1994, p. 9) and the “message” of any medium or technology is the “change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs” (p. 8). Time and space factors in human association are eliminated as technological advances in media production create patterns of experience that are uniform, continuous and sequential. News media representations contribute to the framing of individual social actors and the events they construct, and mediate people’s relationships to public life and social responsibility (Kelly, 2010). Producers determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented, and the positioning of the audience (Fairclough, 1989).

McLuhan’s (1994) approach to media study considered the content, as well as the medium itself and its cultural context. Ideologies are woven into the mass produced nature of the mainstream news media as a vehicle to immediately and uniformly cover issues for and inform a wide public of multiple audiences. As a form of “public policy pedagogy,” news media representations of social actors have a powerful influence on the
transformation of societal conditions into “problems” framed for policy proposals and their possible solutions (Kelly, 2010, p. 2). This ability to position social actors and interpret social events is an effect of power of those who dominate institutions (Fairclough, 1989).

Reporting norms, conventions, and widely accepted textual practices reveal the dominant frame of a news story (Kelly, 2010). The mainstream news often espouses neutrality “understood as airing two ‘extremes’ in the debate” (Kelly, 2010, p. 14) and objectivity in the sense of non-ideological (p. 16). Kelly (2010) called this the “view from nowhere” (p. 16), but the “favoured interpretations and wordings of events are those of the power-holders in our society, though they appear to be just those of the newspaper” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 43). Public policy pedagogy informed by corporate mass media is largely consistent with the status quo (Kelly, 2010) and is a means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power (Fairclough, 1989).

Kelly (2010) defined alternative media as that which is not owned and controlled by corporations or government and does not conform to the perceived status quo. Media serving counterpublics are interested in greater depth of reporting on relevant issues, encouraging the participation of citizens in the public policy process, providing tools and criteria by which readers can judge policies themselves, and highlighting the need to hold officials accountable. Kelly (2010) argued that news journalism, as a site of public pedagogy, should mobilize citizen interest and engagement with public discussion and decision-making by framing “societal problems as open to human intervention and possible solution” (p. 4). Reporting from within counterpublics may be represented by the mainstream as biased, however Kelly (2010) argued that this “alternative publicity is
crucial to nourishing journalism’s democratic mission” (p. 25).

Those exercising power are likely to impose a discourse type upon others, putting pressure on them to behave in certain constrained ways and ensuring that they are restricted to a set of “legitimate” positions (Fairclough, 1989). Conventions associated with discourse types are policed and enforced with sanctions against infringement. The positioning of social actors in relation to each other—for example, doctors and patients—embodies the dominant ideologies of the social institution, or those who control it. According to Fairclough (1989), these ideologies are entrenched in language and take the form of “common sense” assumptions that are considered right or natural, such as authority and hierarchy that position some social actors in positions of control to which others must conform.

News media are a certain kind of institution with a certain kind of authoritative discourse, as are the police whose warnings to the public were embedded in mainstream newspaper articles. The police response and mainstream media coverage of these social actors represented an instance of dominant and largely unquestioned discourses working through powerful institutions that reproduce certain ideologies and exclude alternative perspectives. For example, Gotell (2009, 2010) examined the case of the Garneau attacks and argued that there are de-gendered, individualized, privatized, neoliberal risk management discourses operating in the police and mainstream media representations that are countered in the GS media campaigns. Gotell (2009, 2010) addressed the way the Edmonton mainstream media and police discourses reflected dominant understandings of sexual assault events and the role of social actors in prevention. She also addressed the representations of responsibility for sexual assault prevention in the counter discourses of
the Garneau Sisterhood.

This study addresses a gap in the current literature on media discourses, sexual assault, and representations of responsibility for prevention because it examines the relationship between dominant discourses on sexual assault found in mainstream media and police warnings, as well as alternative representations of responsibility. My research examines how interacting discourses change over time across selected news articles and GS campaign texts produced between May 2008 and March 2010. I map representations of responsibility for sexual assault prevention across media, as discourses are omitted, co-opted, recontextualized, institutionalized, and utilized.

**Research Questions**

Over the course of this research, I have been working at Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) Rape Crisis Centre in Vancouver, BC. WAVAW is a feminist, anti-oppression organization providing direct services to self-identified women survivors of sexual assault as well as advocacy and education to government, police, hospitals, schools, and the community. My involvement with training and public education for an organization that has been working to end violence for thirty years has had a significant impact on my role as a researcher, with a presence both in the community and the university. This has influenced my perspective on the topic of this thesis, as I have been involved with anti-violence education related to challenging rape culture and working alongside both survivors and institutions charged with responsibility for dealing with violence.

Three research questions frame this study exploring the ideological discourses shaping the media context for the social actors involved in the Edmonton sexual assaults.
The questions focus the research on changes in language and discourses used by mainstream and alternative media sources to represent social actors throughout the nearly two-year period.

1) What ideological discourses about responsibility for sexual assault prevention are reflected in *Edmonton Journal*, *CBC News*, and Garneau Sisterhood coverage of the attacks between May 2008 and March 2010?

2) In what ways do these texts reflect linguistic changes in the representation of responsible actors across time?

3) In what ways do these texts reflect interdiscursive changes in the representation of responsible actors and across time?

In this research, an examination of linguistic change enables me to document the shifts in internal processes of representation of responsibility and the positioning of social actors at a linguistic level, for example, by investigating lexical choices that are internal to a text (Fairclough, 1989). An examination of interdiscursive change enables me to document intertextual or external processes of discourses, for example, by investigating discursive and generic choices that exist between the texts and other texts, as they are implicated in relations of power through recontextualization and chronological interaction across time (Fairclough, 1989). I discuss these forms of analyses further in Chapter 3.

**Significance**

This study looks critically at the authority of two social institutions, the police and the media, to represent “truth.” It asks who had the power to name and represent social actors, interpret events, construct solutions to identified problems, and name agents of
change in the cases of sexualized violence taking place in Edmonton between 2008 and 2010. I take into account the ways that sexualized violence contributes to construction and maintenance of hegemonic gender norms. For example, frequently responsibility designated to various social actors is gendered in stranger assault cases. Drawing on Gramsci, Fairclough (2003) defined hegemony as the ideological work of seeking universal and inevitable status for discourses, representations, and relations of power. This can include the dominance and naturalization of discursive representations of processes without human agents (nominalization), such as globalization or crime.

This work addresses the linguistic and interdiscursive ways representations of social actors involved with sexualized violence are constructed. Ultimately, the way responsibility for assault prevention is defined has material effects on the way many women live, including surveillance, restriction, and silencing effects. This work exposes how language constructs reality for people. When media and judicial systems entrench certain roles and positionalities, there are limited spaces for people’s experiences and identifications to inhabit. Understandings of events influence how solutions and justice are imagined and prescribed. Constructing sexual assault as individual and isolated crimes against the state does not engage with the root causes of sexualized violence, connections to other acts of violence, and their wider impacts. Naming social actors and their contribution to the construction of events from a feminist perspective offers additional possibilities for subjectivity and action.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I presented an overview of the chronological events—sexual assaults and media coverage—in Edmonton, and briefly introduced FCDA as the
methodology I used for this study with a focus on analyzing the role of social actors. I introduced mass media as the context for this study and its powerful pedagogical influence on shaping subjectivities, positioning readers, framing actors and events, and mediating people’s relationships with social responsibility. I also introduced alternative media as a possible site for cultivating citizen action and intervention. I discussed how ideology is embedded within language, influencing interpretations of what is considered right, natural, and common sense.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the context of my study, the research questions on changes in language and discourses in media over time, and the significance of this research. In Chapter 2, I ground the concepts emerging in my research questions in a literature review that draws from the work of Gotell, Kelly, Coates and Wade, Fairclough, and Lazar. In Chapter 3, I describe my methodology and the procedure for conducting this feminist critical discourse analysis. In addition, I make explicit my researcher positionality as a feminist critical discourse analyst. In Chapter 4, I present my analysis of social actors grouped into the three categories of authority, suspects/perpetrators, and victims/survivors. In Chapter 5, I answer my research questions exploring how social actors are positioned linguistically and interdiscursively, and what ideological discourses of responsibility for sexual assault prevention are represented in the texts. In Chapter 6, I present my conclusions and draw connections between the theory discussed in the first three chapters and my research findings.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this research, I examine the ideological discourses of responsibility for assault prevention that are reflected in *Edmonton Journal*, *CBC News*, and Garneau Sisterhood coverage of the attacks between May 2008 and March 2010. I explore the ways in which these texts reflect changes in representation of responsible social actors across time linguistically and the ways in which they reflect changes in representation of responsible actors across time interdiscursively, and therefore how interpretations of the events are constructed. This research focuses on the discursive construction, maintenance, and contestation of gendered social norms in relation to sexualized violence. It looks at institutionalized and marginalized discursive practices that shape understandings of social actors and social interactions.

This chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, I discuss literature pertaining to sexual assault law and language, contextualizing sexual violence as well as feminist anti-violence activism within rape culture and neoliberalism. In the second, I address the concept of discourse, and how truth and subjectivity are constructed and maintained through powerful discourses. In the third, I extend my discussion on theories of media, and particularly mass media, to address how authority is upheld or challenged through notions of neutrality and credibility. In the fourth and fifth, I address literature on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) respectively, focusing on power relations and ideologies of gender implicated in discursive representations of social actors.
History of Sexual Assault Law in Relation to Language and Feminism

The literature from sexual assault centres (UofA SAC, 2008; SACE, 2009) and several key feminist theorists (Beres et al., 2009; Brodie, 2008; Fraser, 1989; Gotell, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006) has influenced this discussion of gender politics, social policy, and activism. These sources brought to light the normalization and naturalization of gender roles and gendered violence in this culture where neo-liberalism, colonialism, racialization, sexualization, class categorization, and politics of needs—contested among publics and counterpublics—play powerful roles. Gotell specifically provides a framework for examining the Garneau Sisterhood in the context of neoliberal discourses, victim blaming, and Canadian sexual assault laws.

The first open confrontations to rape culture in the 1970s in America were around street harassment, which was considered a “relatively minor but pervasive piece of the sexual abuse continuum” (Brownmiller, 1999, p. 195). According to Brownmiller (1999), in her memoir of a revolution, the social sanctions against speaking openly about rape and battery were supported by pervasive male violence and ideas of feminine propriety. These social sanctions were gradually resisted through a “climate of giving voice to former unmentionables of physical autonomy like sexual satisfaction, birth control, abortion, and sexual preference” (Brownmiller, 1999, p. 194). Collective actions against street harassment, like ogle-ins for women to gather and stare back at men, led to a strategy of conceptualizing sexual violence as a “key link in the pattern of male domination” and a “weapon of the patriarchy” (p. 195). Rape stories were circulated in women’s liberation publications (i.e., It Ain't Me Babe, 1970-1971), groups were formed (i.e., Contra Costa Anti-Rape Squad #14), and articles were read at consciousness raising
groups. This work required “uprooting the prevailing opinion that rape was a crime any woman could avoid” (Brownmiller, 1999, p. 198).

Since Brownmiller’s 1970s activism, there has been an “emphatic turn towards neoliberalism in political-economic practices and thinking,” with advocates of neoliberalism occupying positions of influence in institutions like the state and media (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). Neoliberalism values market exchange as “an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs” and seeking to “bring all human interaction into the domain of the market” (p. 3). This hegemonic mode of discourse has been incorporated into the “common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (p. 3).

Brodie (2008) mapped the landscape of Canadian gender politics and identities. She argued that 20th century discourses have been “displaced and marginalized, but not fully consumed by neoliberal idioms, representations and policy interventions” (p. 160). According to Brodie (2008), neoliberal reforms have redefined the objects of social policy from the “structurally disadvantaged citizen and bearer of social entitlements” to the “self-sufficient and genderless individual, the consumer and the market actor” (p. 154). As such, policy interventions on people’s needs are framed in the language of individualization, rather than gender constructions and other systemic inequalities. Policy oriented to the needs of individuals as consumers is far easier to interpret by a neoliberal state than discourses of oppression and systemic justice.

Nearly 20 years before Brodie, Fraser (1989) wrote about the politics of needs interpretation and the discourses about needs competing in the public sphere for legitimacy and funding through discursive resources, for example, recognized idioms,
paradigms of argumentation, narrative conventions, and various modes of subjectification like “normal” and “deviant.” She stressed the importance of political contestation of the interpretation of needs, the means of public discourse themselves, challenging the assumption that it does not matter who interprets the needs and from what perspective. It is often taken for granted that the “socially authorized forms of public discourse available for interpreting people’s needs are adequate and fair,” neglecting the question of “whether these forms of public discourse are skewed in favor of the self-interpretations and interests of dominant social groups” (Fraser, 1989, p. 164).

Issues like sexual assault, and the needs of those affected, come to be understood by the public through a process of competing and unequal discourses. The politicization of issues is contested by various publics of relative power, from authoritative hegemonic blocs that construct the “common sense” of the day (Fraser, 1989, p. 168) to expert publics “connected with institutions of knowledge production and utilization” (p. 173) to smaller counterhegemonic publics offering alternative interpretations and new discourse publics. Authoritative interpretations of needs can become entrenched by embedding in largely unquestioned, naturalized relations. Expert discourses can be tied to social movements, creating critical oppositional publics that translate or bridge movements with the social state. According to Fraser (1989), this often means translating politicized needs into “administrable needs” which reifies the notion of the private individual requiring services that can be counted and measured (p. 174).

People whose needs are in question become repositioned as “individual ‘cases’ rather than members of social groups or participants in political movements” (Fraser, 1989, p. 174). They are rendered passive, “positioned as potential recipients of predefined
services rather than as agents involved in interpreting their needs and shaping their life conditions” (Fraser, 1989, p. 174). Members of subordinated groups can internalize need interpretations that work to their own disadvantage, such as the myths and tips of victim-in-waiting sexual assault prevention. They can also actively resist dominant and harmful needs interpretations while experiencing marginalization, co-optation, depoliticization, and reprivatization of their concerns.

Feminist discourses and activism have been adopted, recontextualized, and institutionalized (Beres et al., 2009). Beres et al. (2009) raised red flags around institutionalization in the context of neoliberalism and the resulting emphasis on individualized victims’ services frameworks over social change activism. Canadian sexual assault and rape crisis centres are “negotiating and resisting technologies of neoliberal governance that, through funding restrictions and the elaboration of degendered and de-politicized policy frameworks, undermine the activist role of centres and privatize and individualize the problem of sexual violence” (Beres et al., 2009, p. 137). The state funding that is still available in Canada is predominantly available for front-line service delivery for individual survivors or victims of violence, such as counseling and victim services. It is much more difficult for women’s organizations or sexual assault centres to access state funding to support advocacy programs that address the root causes of violence and work toward prevention.

The negotiation and struggle for meaning and resources around sexual violence, and its individual and systemic impacts, takes place within the context of the current legal definition: Sexual assault is any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent (Criminal Code of Canada in SACE, 2009). Within this context, the University of Alberta
Sexual Assault Centre can be interpreted as one of Fraser’s expert publics. The Sexual Assault Centre (2008) advocates for social change regarding sexual assault and the treatment of survivors by encouraging people to: “listen,” “believe,” and “provide options” to survivors; “acknowledge that sexual assault happens and learn about the nature and extent of sexual assault”; ensure there is a community “open to hearing about the topic of sexual assault, and about people’s experiences of sexual assault” (they also provide third party reporting options beyond the police); “examine how your own behaviour may contribute to the problem of sexual assault”; “respect your fellow human beings”; and “question what you hear in the media about sexual assault, and what the media is not telling you” (p. 8 & 12). These suggestions for responses and prevention are not widely accepted as they compete for recognition in the contestation and interpretation of needs. The negative impact of the absence of these attitudes and actions can be particularly pronounced at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression, including racialization, poverty, and gender.

In relation to violence, the intersections of gender and race should be highlighted. Sexualized, racialized violence receives little attention in mainstream media despite its pervasiveness (Jiwani & Young, 2006), yet the stranger assaults committed against white women in middle-class and university-area neighbourhoods in Edmonton garnered a considerable amount of interest. Jiwani and Young (2006) studied five years of print media coverage of missing and murdered women in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. They identified patterns that characterize the mainstream media’s framework of hegemonic discourses about Aboriginality, prostitution and violence against women, arguing that certain discursive practices—“interlocking legacies of colonialism and a
racialized and sexualized economy of representations that privileges some women over others” (p. 912)—are mobilized in news media to marginalize Aboriginal women specifically and violence against women in general. Cases are “reduced to the actions of single men who are constructed as monsters” and to particular women’s “naturalized susceptibility” to violence (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 897). Aboriginal women’s representations tend to be marked by strategic silences where they fail to appear as active agents or are silenced as victims (Jiwani & Young, 2006). Their study, however, did not examine the relationship between these dominant discourses and alternative representations of responsibility over time.

When it comes to misrepresentations of sexual violence, the question of how victims and perpetrators are represented by third parties is of crucial importance. This shapes public opinion and prevailing “common sense” about who is to blame. There are no impartial accounts as the power of language influences how victims and offenders are seen and handled, constructing the character of the victim and influencing key decisions like legal sentencing of perpetrators (Coates & Wade, 2007). Sexual assault victims are almost always constructed as passive, leaving them open to “that particularly ugly form of social contempt that is reserved for individuals who, when faced with adversity, appear to knuckle under and do nothing on their own behalf” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 520). Concealing a victim’s resistance conceals the full extent of the violence, and “the crucial question of how the perpetrator tried to suppress that resistance cannot be exposed and examined” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 520).

Coates and Wade (2007) found that judges describe violent acts using grammatical constructions that are passive and lack responsible agents, thereby obscuring
perpetrators’ agency and responsibility. They point to the role of gender, class, race, and other power relations in creating this pattern of representation. The perpetuation of violence is tied to the patterns in its representation. Coates and Wade (2007) identified four discursive operations at work in the conditions that enable personalized violence: “concealing of violence, obfuscating of perpetrators’ responsibility, concealing of victims’ resistance, and blaming and pathologizing of victims” (p. 511). The four discursive operations “impede effective interventions through education, victim advocacy, reportage, law enforcement, criminal justice, child protection, and counselling with perpetrators and victims” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 521).

Women, continuing to survive and resist within rape culture, are discursively misrepresented as needing the aid of expert authorities due to their own incompetence. Changes in language alone cannot prevent or reduce violence, however. Structural inequalities that account for the privileged access of some groups to social power and discursive space must be taken into account. It would be inaccurate to single out one group of professionals, like judges or police, or to treat problematic discourses as representative of only isolated individuals.

Coates and Wade (2007) argue that while “language is a tool of domination, it is no less a tool of resistance” (p. 521). Language can be applied to “expose violence, clarify offenders’ responsibility, elucidate and honor victims’ resistance, and contest the blaming and pathologizing of victims” (2007, p. 513). Coates and Wade use the term “sexualized assault” instead of sexual assault, arguing that even the legal term sexual assault implies sexuality where there is only violence.
Gotell (2010) analyzed the implications of Canadian sexual assault law against the backdrop of neoliberalism where risk management discourses hail women as hyper-cautious victims of sexual violence and reconstruct vulnerability as a failure of responsibilization. She identified how an affirmative model of consent “consolidates the individualizing frame of criminal law and produces normative sexual subjects who actively manage the risk of sexual assault” (Gotell, 2010, p. 2), decontextualizing sexual violence from the social power relations that define it. In this process, new forms of victim blaming are created, constructing categories of women—like those in the sex industry—that are excluded from the protections of law. With sexual violence as a gender issue no longer on political agendas, the opportunities for law reform have diminished, producing a “productive strategic emphasis on ensuring enforcement and altering police practices” (Gotell, 2010, p. 23).

Gotell argues that, over the past decade, sexual violence has been increasingly depoliticized as a systemic problem affecting Canadian women and erased as an object of policy and public discourse. With drastic setbacks to Status of Women Canada—the federal agency responsible for promoting women’s equality—and feminist anti-violence activists re-framed as special interest groups and excluded from policy networks, this climate of “entrenched neoliberalism” renders a “conception of sexual assault law reform tied to the advancement of gender equality... increasingly unintelligible” (Gotell, 2010, p. 20).

The increasing emphasis on individualized and degendered policy frameworks, victims’ services bureaucracies, and discrete consent-related sexual transactions has replaced and limited understandings of sexual assault as a mechanism for sustaining
gendered power relations and decontextualized it as a systemic social issue. This places responsibility for assault prevention in the hands of individual victims-in-waiting, the good sexual citizen engaging in risk management and deserving of protection. Normalized risk-avoiding behaviours affect a victim’s credibility in reporting. While reports of sexual assault to the police have declined, rates of assault have not, thus suggesting that confidence in the legal system has an effect on willingness to report to the police. Some studies show that “police officers are trained to approach sexual assault investigations with the suspicion complainants are lying” (Dubois as cited in Gotell, 2010, p. 21).

There is an apparent gap between law as legislation and law as practice in that while discourses of sexual autonomy and gender equality have been inserted into the criminal legal framework—albeit one defined by individual responsibility—as a result of feminist policy intervention, actual lived realities have not changed enough to reflect this. A strategy for justice that relies on courtroom verdicts takes the occurrence of sexual assault for granted. Since the assaults have already occurred when justice is sought, it has limited effectiveness for a politics of rape prevention. In contrast, Gotell (2010) found that a renewed focus on prevention, cultivating women’s resistance to the assigned role of safety-conscious victim-in-waiting, was a promising extra-legal strategy.

Toronto’s Jane Doe is an example of such resistance in response to police approaches to sexual assault. In 1986, a woman who became known as Jane Doe was raped by a serial predator known as the Balcony Rapist who was captured as a result of a tip received after she and a group of women distributed 2,000 posters to alert the community (Doe, 2003). According to Doe (2003), during the court hearings that led to
his conviction, she heard details of the police investigation normally withheld from women in her position as witness/victim, which revealed a high degree of police negligence and gender discrimination, including the decision not to warn women in the neighbourhood, using them as bait instead. In 1987, Jane Doe successfully sued the Toronto Metropolitan Police Force for negligence and charter violation.

In this study, I draw on Gotell’s work to examine the work of the GS as an example of discursive resistance to dominant understandings and institutional practices concerning crimes of sexual violence. I address the way mainstream media reflects these dominant understandings of responsibility for assault prevention and how they change across time in conversation with alternative discourses. Her own work on framing the GS activity within a neoliberal Canadian context has built a foundation for my analysis of this grassroots effort and its interaction with powerful individualizing and privatizing discourses shaped by institutional attitudes and normalized gendered constructions of responsibility.

Notions of Truth and Subjectivity in Relation to Discourse

According to Fairclough (1998), a discourse is a particular way of representing some part of the world, associated with different groups of people in different social positions, operating “across networks of practices and structures” (p. 16). Discourses represent the exclusions and inclusions, the processes and relations, the social actors, and the time and place of social events. As a place where “relations of power are actually exercised and enacted” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 36), discourse has effects upon social structures, is determined by them, and contributes to social continuity and social change.
Gotell examines liberal legalistic discourse on rape that obscures and displaces social and political analysis and re-asserts its own legitimacy as authority. For Gotell, discourses are institutional conceptions and articulations that hold power over the way social actors are understood, including legal and governmental. Discourses can also be conceptions of social actors articulated by those with less power, including survivors and feminist organizations. For this thesis, I draw on Fairclough and Gotell’s conceptions of discourse as a particular part of language. I understand language as social practice through which social actors come to understand themselves and their actions.

Silencing, disciplinary practices, and power relations all work alongside dominant notions of race, social class, gender, and sexuality in constructing normalized embodied subjects. The repeated performance of masculinities and femininities within a rigid regulatory frame, with (sometimes subtly) supportive discourses, produces gender roles that appear natural (Butler, 1990) and cultures of fear where (potential) assault victims compulsively and repeatedly follow tips and lifestyles to prevent their own victimization, including those recommended by news and police authorities. Norms of behaviour operate ideologically to structure the fictive solidity of gender. Butler argues that this fiction is produced by compulsive, but alterable repetition. The notion of a stable subject is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status (how girls and boys act), it conceals the conventions of which it is a repetition. These social actors are compelled to “cite” a regulatory norm in order to qualify and remain viable subjects (Butler, 1993). Femininity and masculinity are, therefore, “not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment” (Butler, 1993, p. 232).
In her discussion of rape—a sexualized, gendered attack imposing sexual
difference corresponding to violence—Marcus (1992) argued that cultural scripts impose
restrictions on men and women differently, positioning them in terms of conventional
gendered inequalities. She uses the terms rape and sexual aggression to address
sexualized violence, which fall under the broader crime of sexual assault under current
Canadian law. She identified rape as a question of language, interpretation, and
subjectivity. In the language of rape, the words of some social actors count, have value,
and become objective “norms of truth,” while others are misinterpreted and silenced
(Marcus, 1992, p. 387). Recognizing rape as a language illuminates how it becomes
understood as an inevitable, fixed reality where women are ideologically assumed to be
already raped and inherently rapable. The political work of recounting, narrating, and
naming rape by women can serve to demystify the “terrifying facticity” of the
unnameable which can only be feared or legally repaired, never fought (Marcus, 1992, p.
387).

Legally addressing rape cannot prevent its occurrence since the event has already
happened. Legal post-rape procedures like courtroom trials reassert their own legitimacy
and power to judge cases and do not envision strategies for prevention. Marcus (1992)
challenged that rape should be treated not as fact to be “accepted or opposed, tried or
avenged,” but as a process to be “analyzed and undermined” as it occurs (p. 389). This
process of rape is a linguistic fact since the “violence of rape is enabled by narratives,
complexes and institutions which derive their strength not from outright, immutable,
unbeatable force but rather from their power to structure our lives as imposing cultural
scripts” (p. 389). This way it can be understood as subject to change, revision, and
According to Marcus (1992), language is a “social structure of meanings enabling people to experience themselves as speaking, acting, and embodied subjects” (p. 390). The language of rape “solicits women to position [themselves] as endangered, violable, and fearful and invites men to position themselves as legitimately violent and entitled to women’s sexual services” (Marcus, 1992, p. 390). People emerge into a preexistent language or a social set of meanings that scripts, but does not exhaustively determine, the self. Social structures inscribe misogynist inequalities that enable rape to occur. Rape is scripted, but it also scripts. The “rape script” is formed through a “grammar of violence” in which gender is structured into legible social positions (Marcus, 1992, p. 394).

The grammatically correct role for women places them as the subject of fear, a placement made insidious by its apparent agency in constantly anticipating rape, despite the supposed inefficacy of action. Rape culture creates the spatial contradiction that warns women not to go outside even though most rapes occur inside women’s homes. The “grammar of violence” and the myth of female sexuality as unchanging over time and “as an object, as property, and as an inner space” can be denaturalized and revised through “new cultural productions and reinscriptions of our bodies and our geographies” (Marcus, 1992, p. 400).

This thesis draws on the work of Foucault from a Faircloughian and critical discourse analysis perspective that addresses the “political utility and critical capacity” of Foucault’s notion of discourse (Hook, 2001, p. 522). I examine concepts of truth, power, and discourse as they pertain to media representations of social actors. This includes an
analysis of how discourse is linked to power and is “both constituted by, and ensures the reproduction of, the social system” (Hook, 2001, p. 522).

Foucault (1984) argued, “‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements” (p. 74). Statements or ideas obtain power because of their assumed truth value over time. The circular relation of truth and power creates a “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1984, p. 74) that necessitates the introduction of alternative discourses in alternative ways. Socially constructed normative roles of the police and press, as institutions, uphold accepted notions of authority in handling crimes of sexual violence and objective credibility in reporting. The system of power works to produce and sustain certain truths. This can include, for example, the notion of assault prevention as an individualized and gendered responsibility promoted by powerful authorities and sustained through a regime of truth.

In turn, these accepted truths result in certain effects of power (Foucault, 1984). The widespread acknowledgement of the legitimacy of explanations and justifications for how things are and how they are done in a particular social order is what Fairclough (2003) calls “legitimation” (the opposite being delegitimation). Reference to authority or utility is a strategy of legitimation. Ideological assumptions are written into texts about what happened, who is involved and responsible, and what effects result. Texts then operate with these assumptions and take them as unquestioned and unavoidable reality. According to Fairclough (2003), relations of power are “best served by meanings that are widely taken as given” (p. 58). As Fraser (1989) points out, there are “socially
authorized” forms of interpreting, representing, and administering to people’s needs (p. 164) that are linked with dominant ideologies and constructions of common sense.

The silencing effects of this power serve to circularly extend the “truth” (Foucault, 1984) that the institutions already holding power and authority should have control over the diffusion, construction, and consumption of knowledge around events. These powerful truth-generating forces are “so essential to the structure and functioning of our society” (Foucault, 1984, p. 74) in its status quo. The effects of this power extend societal truths to become a regime of truth about roles and responsibility. This can include the responsibility individual social actors take on through the self-surveilled performance of victim-in-waiting safety tactics for the prevention of sexual assault.

Foucault (1984) argued for the importance of “detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates” (p. 75). This will have to be done discursively since “discourse is the thing for which and by which there is struggle” (Foucault, 1981, p. 53). Through its ideological properties, language is centrally involved in power and struggles for power (Fairclough, 2001). According to Fraser (1992), that which counts as a matter of common concern is not naturally given, but will be decided through discursive contestation. Foucault (1984) argued that it is not a matter of working to change people’s consciousness, “or what’s in their heads,” but rather to change the “institutional regime of the production of truth” (p. 74). The “exercise of theory,” as well as “interventions at social and political levels that involve actions [and] sustained labour,” lead to social transformation (Butler, 2004, p. 204). I draw on this because I address the way dominant notions of responsibility for assault prevention are produced, maintained, and challenged discursively. Gotell’s work
is particularly useful, focusing on prevention as a broad collective resistance challenging a culture where rape is prevalent, instead of the individualized notion of victim-in-waiting prevention promoted by legal and media institutions.

**Media as Self-constituted Authority**

Theorists have studied the media’s involvement in the habitual reinforcement of fear as prevention for women’s sexual assault, constructions of the good and bad victim, and the use of tips with vague threats and scare tactics as prevention (Hall, 2004; Madriz, 1997; Valentine, 1989). Gotell (2010) illustrated how these issues have played out in a neoliberal Canadian context. Kelly’s (2006, 2010) work on mainstream media, alternative media, and democracy addressed the representations of corporate news as neutral and the media serving counterpublics as biased.

Kelly (2010) argued that the “view from nowhere,” commonly attributed to the mainstream media, obscures the dominant ideologies framing discourses and representations of events and social actors. She noted alternative media as a potential space for refreshing the democratic mission of journalism drawing on Fraser in defining democracy as a “process of communication across differences, where citizens participate together in discussion and decision making to determine collectively the conditions of their lives” (Fraser as cited in Kelly, 2006, p. 10). In a stratified society, people and groups have unequal access to means of circulating their ideas. In Becker’s “hierarchy of credibility, the right to be heard and seen as credible are distributed unequally through the ranks of a hierarchical system” (cited in Kelly, 2006, p. 42).

Stack and Kelly (2006) defined media as a system that connects us to the social world and acts as one of society’s key institutions, industries, and cultural practices.
Media refers both to the mediums of communication and the products or texts of these mediums. These are a “primary vehicle through which we come to know ourselves and others” and are “so embedded in our daily lives that their power is naturalized” (Stack & Kelly, 2006, p. 20).

Stack and Kelly (2006) illustrated the connection between media and consumerism. Commercialization and the concentration of media ownership in conglomerates have increased while local and national control over media has been threatened and public funding for noncommercial media has been cut. With advertising-supported media controlled by fewer and fewer people, the presentation of a wide range of informed views on issues is jeopardized along with the work of holding people in power to public account.

In a neoliberal climate with a “political-economic framework that extols the virtues of the marketplace, largely unfettered by government control, and that promotes policies of deregulation and privatization,” there is a de-politicized media landscape and the risk of a reduction of citizenship to consumerism (Stack & Kelly, 2006, p. 11-12). Stack and Kelly (2006) advanced “resistance as communication,” dialogue around power imbalances and inequalities, and citizen involvement in media production as a way to create new self-representations in the face of dominant, harmful misrepresentations by mainstream media (p. 12).

Commonly seen as neutrally presenting the facts, the mainstream news representations of events and social actors are accepted largely at face value as fact based. The news, however, is socially constructed by the media system—journalists and other professionals—through selection and shaping to fit particular formats and framing,
designed to appeal to particular audiences with commercial interests in mind. While the news is “infused with possibilities for resistance as well as conformity and accommodation” (Stack & Kelly, 2006, p. 16), the current trend in news has been toward “[g]eneralist opinion,” rather than “investigative journalism” which would involve a more “sustained critique of the powerful in society” (p. 18).

As a result of its neoliberal bias, the mainstream media can be worthwhile to engage, but also risky in terms of unwitting reinforcement of harmful representations. Even if individual reporters are open to marginalized discourses, the alternative messages may get lost because they lack control over the spin editors put on articles. People and their attempts to publicize alternative discourses face misrepresentation by powerful others, distortions of their intended messages, selective editing, and filtering out by the corporate-dominated mainstream media (Kelly, 2006).

Ideas of what sells have a large influence on the content of newspapers (Kelly, 2006). Many journalists believe that crime and sensationalism sell newspapers and they act on this belief. An article becomes sensationalized as a result of its location in the paper, the size and content of the headline, the picture, the lay out, and the story length—none of which the reporters have control over. Beyond reporters and editors who may be willing to modify framing of events and social actors, there is a corporate media structure that largely dictates news values, for example that “market-led capitalism is the best system and that those who fail within it are ‘others’ to be blamed and controlled” (Kelly, 2006, p. 42).

Education is one way to denaturalize everyday media narratives (Stack & Kelly, 2006). In mainstream newspapers, opposite the editorials or op-eds (commonly known as
opinion editorials) can provide more control over the message than being quoted in a reporter’s article. However, this can be seen as speaking from the margin, speaking in an inevitably defensive tone, speaking as individuals without institutional affiliation or backing, and speaking with less power and authority (Kelly, 2006).

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

Building on the foundation of Kelly’s work connecting media with notions of authority, neutrality, and representation, this research is informed by critical discourse analysis (CDA) in order to examine the Edmonton-based interactions between mainstream and alternative media discourses. This thesis examines language as text and as social practice and process. According to Fairclough (1995), both linguistic and interdiscursive approaches are required for a coherent analysis and understanding of how texts selectively draw upon both linguistic systems and orders of discourse. Intertextual analysis connects language with social context and the “intertextual properties of a text are realized in its linguistic features” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 189). CDA enables an examination of linguistic and discursive social interaction.

Fairclough argued that language, while commonly perceived as transparent, actually works socially and ideologically in (re)producing and transforming social structures, relations and identities. The analysis of discourse involves going beyond this misperception of language in order to reveal the evidence of processes that texts provide. Fairclough (1995) identified such processes as the “redefinition of social relationships between professionals and publics, the reconstitution of social identities and forms of self, or the reconstitution of knowledge and ideology” (p. 209).
According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), discourse is socially constituted and socially shaped, linking a chain of texts, reacting to, drawing in, and transforming other texts. The ideological effects of discursive practices may help produce and reproduce unequal power relations through the representation of actors and events and allow assumptions to go unaddressed as mere common sense. Critical discourse analysis provides a lens to make visible the opaque aspects of discourse, the power relations and ideology underlying language use.

According to Fowler (1985), the “performative power” of language is in its role as a “reality-creating social practice” (p. 62). Discourse works to bring into being that which it describes (Fairclough, 2003), particularly in relation to groups that share a system of beliefs about reality (Fowler, 1985). According to Fairclough (2003), texts are elements of social events and are involved in the process of “constituting the social identities of the participants in the events of which they are a part” (p. 17). Texts have “causal effects upon, and contribute to changes in, people (beliefs, attitudes, etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 8). These effects are mediated by meaning-making and play a role in “inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). Here, ideologies are taken to mean “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9).

Texts are good indicators of social processes, so textual analysis can provide insight into social change. Texts, and particularly media texts, are sites of contestation. They may reflect social control and domination and, therefore, work to reproduce inequity. They may reflect negotiation and resistance as well (Fairclough, 1995).
Hybridity in texts highlights the potential for texts to include discourses that are either reproductive and/or productive, discourses and counter discourses, in the same text. In addition, CDA also requires attentiveness to the potential of discourses and practices of resistance to ultimately contribute to reproductive effects. The relations playing out between voices in public political discourse may take the form of a “conversation” or “dialogue,” in which discourses provoke responses and change over time (Fairclough, 1995, p. 202).

In addition to text, the elements of discourse include interactions, the processes of production and interpretation of texts, as well as context, the social conditions of production and interpretation (Fairclough, 2001). CDA seeks to further understand power relations and ideological processes in discourse (Fairclough, 2001). It offers a “critical perspective on unequal social arrangements sustained through language use, with the goals of social transformation and emancipation” (Lazar, 2005, p. 1).

**Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis**

Like CDA, feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) also examines the “complex and subtle ways in which taken-for-granted social assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, perpetuated, negotiated and challenged” (Lazar, 2005, p. 2). FCDA looks carefully at the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse, but focuses particularly on the way these contribute to sustaining a hierarchically gendered social order. Establishing a feminist politics of articulation within CDA is necessary to theorize and analyze the nature of gender in social practices.

The term “gender,” as explained by Lazar (2005) functions as an interpretive category that enables social actors to make sense of and structure their social practices.
Normatively, people are assigned one of only two commonly accepted genders at birth, resulting in consequences and constraints within concrete social practices. With sex/gender constructed as a limited, restrictive, heteronormative binary, “relations of power systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group” (Lazar, 2005, p. 5). Gender expression, however, is neither materially experienced nor discursively enacted in the same way for women (or men) universally. FCDA requires an acknowledgement of differences among women (and men) and the forms of sexism to which they are differentially subjected as complexly constructed social actors (Lazar, 2005). Social practices, far from being neutral, are run through with relations of gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, geography, and intersections therein. McCall (2005) addressed the necessity of being mindful of the way people are multiply positioned as subjects. Her research engages “provisionally” with “existing analytical categories” as non-static points of understanding, in order to examine changing inequalities among social groups through the complexity of different contexts and social formations (p. 1773).

FCDA challenges the status quo in favor of a vision of a society in which gender does not predetermine our relationships or our sense of our selves (Lazar, 2005). The analysis of discourse, seen as a site of struggle where forces of social (re)production and contestation are played out, reveals the workings of power that sustain oppressive social structures/relations. This analysis is itself a form of “analytical resistance” with potential for “mobilizing theory to create critical awareness and develop feminist strategies for resistance and change” (Lazar, 2005, p. 6). FCDA provides a form of analysis and a political perspective on gender concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of
gender, power, and ideology in discourse. While Lazar prioritizes gender as the focus of her FCDA analysis, the intersections of multiple factors of the social structure interacting with gender should not be overlooked. An intersectional approach to FCDA would allow for a context-sensitive focus for analysis. Much can be learned about the “interconnections and particularities of discursive strategies employed in various forms of social oppression that can feed back into feminist strategies for social change” (Lazar, 2005, p. 5). Ultimately, a feminist political critique of gendered social practices and relations is aimed at effecting social transformation.

Gender ideology is hegemonic, often not appearing as domination but rather largely consensual and acceptable to most. This consent and perpetuation of relations of dominance is largely accomplished discursively as ideological assumptions are constantly “re-enacted and circulated through discourse” as “commonsensical and natural” (Lazar, 2005, p. 7). The taken-for-grantedness and normalcy of dominant, heteronormative sex/gender discourses serve to mystify and obscure the power differential and inequality at work in society’s institutions and social practices. Deviations from gender-appropriate norms are also policed through criticism and containment.

Lazar (2005) noted the potential for ruptures in the apparently “seamless and natural quality of gender ideology” that can be found in the “dialectical tension between structural permanences and the practical activity of people engaged in social practices” (p. 8). She also cautions that actions going against gendered expectations may unwittingly result in the reinforcement of the existing gender structure and, while appearing to transgress the expected gender norms, “inadvertently emphasize the underlying dualism of the gender structure” (Lazar, 2005, p. 8). Challenging the
normative roles and behaviours associated with a particular social group can uphold the notion of the group itself as a stable category of people with cohesive characteristics. For example, if women act in a way that is not normatively feminine, it can be interpreted as women acting like men, transgressing the divide between the two genders, instead of expanding notions of what it means to be a woman or questioning the truth of the category itself.

Gender inequity and power operate both blatantly and insidiously. Overt physical violence against women and the threat of such violence, for example, manifests in a “rape culture” where acts of sexual violence are common, normalized, excused, and encouraged. At the same time, subtle, pervasive, and seemingly innocuous forms of discursive power are also embedded in social relations. Lazar (2005), like Fairclough (2001), argued that it is useful to “complement the concept of modern power with the view of power relations as dominance” (p. 9). She extended Butler’s notion of the “coerciveness of ‘rigid regulatory frames’ that police gender performances in a way which makes the accomplishment of identities neither freely chosen nor entirely determined acts” (Lazar, 2005, p. 13).

According to Lazar (2005), FCDA facilitates the examination of how power and dominance are both discursively produced and resisted through textual representations of gendered social practices. It also addresses issues of access to forms of discourse, communicative events and culturally valued genres, which can be essential for participation in public domains. Discourse and the social—situations, institutions, and structures—constitute one another. Meaning-making through language use contributes to
the reproduction and maintenance of the social order while also resisting and transforming it.

FCDA focuses on how “gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested” in discursive representations (Lazar, 2005, p. 11) of social actors. Marcus’s (1992) work highlights the importance of how cultural scripts position men and women according to normalized gendered inequalities. The script associated with rape relies on interpretations tied to ideologies about women’s subjectivities, and can be destabilized by denaturalizing and revising myths (Marcus, 1992). FCDA is critically aware of relations among women, for example, how they may organize in solidarity or contribute to the perpetuation of sexist attitudes and practices (Lazar, 2005). While the analysis of data in FCDA includes meanings that are expressed overtly, it pays particular attention to the “less obvious, nuanced and implicit meanings for the subtle and complex renderings of ideological assumptions and power relations in contemporary societies” (Lazar, 2005, p. 13).

Lazar emphasized reflexivity, the application of knowledge about social processes and practices toward shaping one’s own subsequent practices. Feminists should be critically reflexive of their own theoretical positions and practices so as not to inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation, rather than the subversion, of inequity. Institutional reflexive practices may, however, “recuperate feminist values of egalitarianism and empowerment for non-feminist ends” that entail an “insidious subversion” of feminism as a political force (Lazar, 2005, p. 15).

As a goal of FCDA, differentiated from flawed classical liberal notions of equality and freedom, “emancipation” entails a “radical social transformation based on
social justice that opens up unlimited possibilities both for women and men as human beings” in a long term, serious re-visioning of gender (Lazar, 2005, p. 16). Lazar points out that even while acknowledging the usefulness of certain liberal ideals, reconceptualized in feminist terms for current pragmatic politics, it is important not to slip into the current mainstream neoliberal thinking. Neoliberalism led to the development of a post-feminist way of thinking that relies on certain indicators, for example, entry into the paid labor force, to argue that women have supposedly achieved equality and freedom. While this post-feminist thinking is pervasive, many issues, including systematic male violence against women in various forms, continue to curtail social emancipation. In this thesis, I draw on Lazar in order to address the application of a critical, feminist perspective to representations of gendered social actors.

An analytical framework of gender is not useful for describing experiences of violence if abstracted from all other social dimensions, including sexuality, cisgenderism or transgenderism, racialization, economics, and (dis)ability. For example, the systems of racism and sexism “operate through each other so that sexual violence, as well as women’s narratives of resistance to sexual violence, cannot be understood outside of colonialism and today’s ongoing racism and genocide” (Razack, 1998, p. 59). Razack (1998) points to systems of domination from which violence emerges and asserts that failing to ask what makes sexual violence against certain women so “permissible and prevalent” means abandoning the “contextualizing needed in order to uncover sexual violence; it is to privatize” (p. 139).

Razack (1998) argued that a language “restricted to what men do to women does not sufficiently account for the violence in the lives of Aboriginal women, women of
colour, and women with disabilities. Indeed, it does not even account for the violence that white women suffer at the hands of white men” (p. 18). It is not possible to describe the violence that all women encounter with an analytical framework of gender abstracted from all other social dimensions, as this eclipses racial and economic violence and obscures how they constitute each other (Razack, 1998). Talking about women, men, and victims in relation to sexual assault carries assumptions about the bodies attached to those social actors. There is a stereotypical body attached to each actor that is already raced and classed and sexualized in relation to normative identity categories relied upon for common sense making. Disrupting the lack of complexity in an uncritical usage of categories is part of the work of FCDA.

Summary

In this chapter, I grounded the concepts from my research questions in a literature review drawing on the work of Gotell, Marcus, Kelly, Fairclough, Lazar and others. I contextualized my research on responsibility for sexual assault prevention within Canadian sexual assault law; the discourses of sexual assault theorists, centres, activists, and survivors; theories of both mass and alternative media; and CDA and FCDA methodologies. This chapter explored neoliberal impacts on the normalization and naturalization of gender roles and gendered violence, the individualization of needs, and the contestation between authoritative hegemonic constructions of “common sense” and grassroots counterdiscourses offering alternative understandings. This chapter looked at the importance of representation in the construction of victims and blame, and how discursive operations can create conditions that enable personalized violence. Decontextualizing sexual assault from the social power relations and context within
which it operates has allowed neoliberal risk management discourses to construct women as hyper-cautious potential victims. Sexualized violence has a significant influence on gender.

Language plays a key role in both maintaining and challenging the status quo. Discourse is a way of representing parts of the world and both affects, and is affected by, social structures. Linked to power, it is a social practice impacting social actors; it can be used in the service of legitimation for the existing social order. Corporate news media does not neutrally represent social actors, but instead plays a significant role in how people come to know themselves and each other. CDA examines how language can influence and uphold social structures and meanings. FCDA challenges the way this impacts multiple and intersectional experiences of gender.

In Chapter 3, I describe my methodology, including researcher positionality, data, and procedure for analysis. I explain my application of FCDA to an examination of ideological discourses and texts, as well as my feminist theoretical perspective. I discuss the media and campaign texts from which I derive my data, as well as the linguistic analysis of existing categories and interdiscursive analysis of intertextual relations that constitute my procedure.
Chapter 3 Methodology

The context of this study is a neoliberal society in which social agents act, but are constrained by and read within the bounds of structural, institutionalized discourses that are always positional, partial, and incomplete. I do not see a way to bracket myself in this study, but rather find that I am writing myself into my research. As Lather (cited in Lazar, 2005) points out, this kind of research “cannot and does not pretend to adopt a neutral stance; in fact... it is scholarship that makes its biases part of its argument” (p. 6). My assumptions and ideologies locate me as a feminist researcher interested in power and inequity, as well as social transformation through sustained labour, theory, and social and political action (Butler, 2004).

In this chapter, I present the methodology I used to explore my research questions on the changes in language and discourses in media representing social actors over time. My three research questions examined ideological discourses about responsibility for sexual assault prevention, as well as linguistic and interdiscursive changes in the media representations of sexual assault in Edmonton. This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I discuss the application of FCDA to my own research. In the second, I position myself as a researcher. In the third, I discuss the data this research examines from among the mainstream newspaper articles and GS campaign material. In the fourth, I describe my procedure for conducting this research.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist critical discourse analysis was employed as the methodology for this thesis, focusing on specific texts and ideological discourses as gendered and intersecting elements of social life (Lazar, 2005). The effects of texts on people, actions, social
relations, the material world, and ideologies are of the utmost importance, as well as the commitments made to various truths by virtue of choices in wording (Fairclough, 2003). This approach is feminist because it critically takes account of the constitutive nature of language and experience for the subject with a particular focus on gender and sexuality, as well as social class and ethnicity. Responsibility for prevention is strongly tied to the normative gender roles of social actors. The sanctioned truth—discourses accepted and functioning as true—and the “status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault, 1984, p. 73) are enmeshed within the institution of gender itself.

Feminist critical discourse analysis provides an opportunity to look closely at the make up of the discourses—the sentence structure itself—and address its relevance to the larger message.

**Researcher Positionality**

My feminist theoretical perspective can be found growing precariously among critical theory and poststructuralist approaches. As a researcher looking through a post-structural lens, I am interested in unpacking discourses and making visible that which goes largely unnoticed. As a researcher looking through a critical lens, I am also interested in examining the extent to which the activist work of the GS has potentially socially transformative effects and the possibility for this research to contribute to their work in troubling the status quo of sexual assault perceptions.

Activist work also has the potential for reproducing processes that maintain certain social hierarchies. For example, early feminist work was critiqued as homogenizing the category of “women” when the conditions and lived experiences of women as a group—including women who differ in terms of social class, ethnicity and
sexuality—differs considerably (e.g., Mohanty, 1991). In addition, according to Razack (1998), the challenge for activists is “how to build critical consciousness about how we, as subjects, position ourselves as innocent through the use of such markers of identity as the good activist” (p. 18). By reiterating the same language, such as an uncritical use of gender categories, resistance discourses can become implicated in reproducing roles and subject positions that were intended for transformation. Resistance discourses can also be co-opted by the dominant discourse and recontextualized in unintended ways.

I have been involved with feminist media for several years as a producer and host of the Edmonton radio show, *Adamant Eve*, and the Vancouver radio show, *The F Word*. I am involved in the material effects of critical, alternative discourses and social transformation. At the time of the Garneau attacks, I was involved in a number of social, academic, and activist engagements in the area. The subsequent fear resulting from the attacks was palpable, and the response was immediate. I approach this study with an impulse toward social transformation, made possible through the influence of community voices on people, media, and public policy.

As a producer of alternative feminist-labeled media, I am particularly interested in the role of news as public pedagogy. The more I look to theory to understand my actions and their societal context, the more I realize how layered and complex the messaging and their reasons for dissemination are. Much of this can be so subtle as to go largely unnoticed. Pointing out and unpacking these layers is an important step in understanding what we are being taught everyday by the media we encounter.
Data

The data for this study include four *Edmonton Journal* articles, one *CBC News* article, one Garneau Sisterhood op ed in *VUE Weekly*, and three Garneau Sisterhood poster campaigns (see Table 1). The GS posters were displayed on public property, including bus stops, park benches, and telephone poles. The GS poster campaigns are referred to as the Original Campaign, the Question Campaign, and the New Years Campaign. The Original Campaign and op-ed emerged after police discussed the first three attacks in the mainstream press. The Question Campaign came after the commentary by police and journalists on GS activity. The New Years Campaign emerged in 2010 as a reminder of previous GS campaign points and a concern for mainstream media representations of alcohol related sexual assault.

This analysis centers around the social actors variously represented as responsible for sexual assault prevention in the four *Edmonton Journal* articles, the *CBC News* article, the *VUE Weekly* op ed, and the GS posters. Responsibility for prevention involves actions that should be taken or avoided by various social actors. An examination of the naming of various social actors, and the corresponding expectations of responsibility, enabled me to address my first research question on what ideological discourses are reflected in the texts. Social actors included the Edmonton Police, individual detectives, Garneau residents, women, the man who broke into the homes, potential victims, landlords, abstract entities like crime and alcohol, the GS, University of Alberta staff, and the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton. They are people or groups mentioned in the texts whose actions are expected, as portrayed through the language, to affect sexual assault.
Examining the texts produced in chronological order of events, articles, and campaign responses addresses the focus in my second research question on the changes in representations across time linguistically. The language changes in the texts over the two-year period, carrying social and ideological reproductions and transformations with it. Events and social actors are redefined, reconstituted, and reestablished through processes of representation. Examining how these texts interact with each other in the order they emerge enables me to address my third research question focusing on changes in text interdiscursively. The “conversation” between the texts also changes over the two-year period, playing out relations between voices in public discourse.

Table 1: *Edmonton Events and Media Responses* (chronological from top to bottom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Campaigns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garneau Assault</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>late February 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garneau Assault</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>early May 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garneau Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>late May 2008</td>
<td><em>CBC</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 27, 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Edmonton Journal</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Senger)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 28, 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Op Ed in <em>VUE Weekly</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 11, 2008</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspen Gardens Assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>early August 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Edmonton Journal</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Gelinas)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 12, 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Additional Posters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>August 2008 (1 v)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol Related Assaults</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Edmonton Journal</em></td>
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<td>(Collum)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>August 14, 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Question Campaign</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Summer and Fall 2009 (5 v)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Procedure

For this research, I conducted a linguistic analysis of categories or classifications of social actors, along lines of gender, sexuality, social class, and ethnicity, through internal processes as described by Fairclough (2003). I noted both what was explicitly included and what was absent or excluded. These processes contribute to a picture of events, in this case sexual assaults, and the responsibility of particular social actors to prevent these events from happening. In order to investigate representations of responsibility in the texts, I systematically examined the use of nominalization, collocation of words, and grammatical roles associated with social actors. These linguistic features contribute to the positioning of social actors, given different access to activity, passivity, and responsibility in relation to assumed gender. This analysis looks at the way social actors are linguistically gendered through text in a male privileged hierarchy.

Nominalization was used because it involves the deletion of agency and modality, often excludes social agents in the representation of events, generalizes/abstracts, and obfuscates agency and responsibility. The absence of agents contributes to a “widespread elision of human agency in and responsibility for processes” (Fowler as cited in Fairclough, 1998, p. 13). According to Fowler (1985), nominalizations are “endemic in authoritarian discourses of all kinds” thereby “making mysterious participants, obligations, and responsibilities spoken of by the discourse” (p. 71).
As a grammatical metaphor, nominalization represents processes as entities by turning clauses with verbs into a type of noun or a noun-like word (Fairclough, 2003). It can be used for generalizing and abstracting. All this has a great influence on the “story” being created by the producers of the texts. The presence or absence of nouns attached to verbs, and the clarity or obfuscation of social phenomena, have great impacts on how responsibility is assigned and social actors are positioned. Fairclough recognizes nominalization as a key concept in understanding discursive representations of social actors. Collocation is related to word association, or the patterns of co-occurrence between words. Grammatical roles are the ways in which social actors are realized as participants, for example, actor or affected, within a clause or circumstance.

I extended this analysis to Fairclough’s (2003) intertextual or external relations as well. In order to gain an understanding of how discourses are implicated in relations of power, I examined recontextualization, the use of legitimation, and the situating of gendered voices. Recontextualization is the appropriation/relocation of one social practice in the context of another. The widespread acknowledgement of the legitimacy of explanations and justifications for how things are and how they are done in a particular social order is what Fairclough calls “legitimation.” Male and female voices other than the author’s are engaged in dialogue, assumed, or rejected using direct words and indirect summaries.

My procedure involved the creation of a list of the social actors involved in each text, followed by the categorization of each social actor as authority, suspect/perpetrator, or survivor/victim. I listed the words with which each social actor was collocated and the grammatical roles of each actor as they were named in sentences. I examined each text, in
order, through the variables available to represent social actors (Fairclough, 2003) and the ways they were connected to each other and to responsibility for assault prevention. I also looked across the texts to make note of how these connections and representations were discussed, maintained, and changed across time.

These analytic tools facilitated an examination of the way gender predetermined and mediated relations between people in a hierarchically gendered context and the way the language and discourse of police warnings essentialized gender roles. A critical discourse analysis of mainstream news articles and alternative GS campaign materials enabled this investigation to pursue questions of how these texts are positioned, whose interests are served and negated by this positioning, and what the consequences of this positioning are. Through a feminist lens, this research focused on gendered discourses and their implications for power relations in a neoliberal society where sexual assault remains a prevalent issue.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the importance of applying FCDA to my research to examine the connections between discursive representations of responsibility and the institution of gender. I positioned myself as a researcher interested in unpacking discourse, as well as orienting toward social transformation. I discussed my selection of articles and campaign posters as data for study. Finally, I described my procedure for conducting this research exploring linguistic features contributing to the positioning of social actors and intertextual relations contributing to how discourses are implicated in relations of power.
In Chapter 4, I analyze a series of nine texts authored by mainstream media institutions and members of the grassroots feminist campaign, the GS. I present my analysis of the discursive representations of social actors’ varying responsibility for the prevention of sexual assault. I organize my analysis according to the chronology of texts, as well as categories of social actors produced through discourses of responsibility.
Chapter 4 Analysis of Social Actors

In this research, I examined the representation of social actors as participants in clauses or circumstances (Fairclough, 2003). I identified patterns of agency, co-occurrence, and action by considering nominalization, collocation, and grammatical role. This generated three categories of social actors positioned in the media and campaign texts. In this analysis, I grouped and analyzed social actors as authorities, suspects/perpetrators, and survivors/victims in relation to the sexual assaults the authors addressed. I employ these terms, not as fixed and totalizing identities for individuals or groups, but rather to refer to their actions in specific interactions.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I analyze the reporting and campaign material following the initial attacks in Garneau, including the May 27 CBC article, the May 28 Edmonton Journal article, the GS Op Ed, and the Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign. In the second section, I analyze the reporting and campaign material following the Aspen Gardens attack, including the August 12 Edmonton Journal article, the GS Press Release, the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign, and the August 14th Edmonton Journal Article. In the third, I analyze the Garneau Sisterhood New Years Campaign and the March 5th Edmonton Journal article connected to the broader Edmonton area, which emerged approximately two years after the original story. I explore theories surfacing to explain nominalization, collocations, and grammatical roles for the social actors. When I refer to the author of the article, I take into consideration that the author may not have sole control over the content and that this content also reflects the perspective of the newspaper as well.
Garneau

According to the maps section of the City of Edmonton website (2012), the
eighbourhood of Garneau is

[o]ne of the oldest inner-city neighbourhoods... and became part of Edmonton in
1912. This attractive and energetic area features a high proportion of multi-unit
dwellings, which provide housing for students at the adjacent University of
Alberta. Residents enjoy excellent access to most areas of Edmonton, as well as to
the commercial and cultural centres of Old Strathcona and Whyte Avenue. (n.p.)

Many multi-unit dwellings usually means fewer single-family homes, and given the
proximity to the university, there may be a large number of rentals and, therefore, a
regularly shifting population as students move to the area, complete their degrees, and
then move out of the area. Whyte Avenue is a bar and business area where much of
Edmonton nightlife takes place.

May 27th 2008 CBC Article: Police issue warning to women in Garneau

This article, written by Gerow, was the first to be published about the sexual
assaults in Garneau. It is written in direct response to police reports that were made
public three months after the survivor reported the original attack to police.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police issue warning to women in Garneau</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CBC News</strong>   May 27, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police are warning women in the Garneau neighbourhood of south Edmonton to take extra precautions after three sexual assaults in the area in the past three months. The latest assault took place on the weekend when a male broke into a home near 111 Street and 80 Avenue early in the morning, pepper-sprayed a 21-year-old and then</td>
</tr>
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</table>
sexually assaulted her before fleeing.

In late February, a 24-year-old woman was attacked while sleeping when a male broke into her apartment at 111 Street and 81 Avenue. The same building was again broken into in early May and a 47-year-old woman in another suite was assaulted, police said.

"Because of the similarities in the crimes we felt it was necessary for the safety of residents to be notified," Edmonton police Det. Scott McMorran said Tuesday.

McMorran offered advice for people living in the community.

"Ensure [you] are diligent in locking doors and windows. Be aware of what is going on around the residence during the night. Any unusual circumstances, any suspicious people in the area, we would encourage people to report that to police."

The three incidents are not necessarily related, he said, but there are similarities in all of the attacks.

The suspect described in each case was a man of average build, wearing dark clothing.

Residents uneasy after police issue warning

"[I] feel a little bit scared, a little bit uneasy," said Heather Norstrom, who lives in the area which is home to hundreds of university students and other young people.

Norstrom said she often feels uneasy walking the tree-lined streets late at night.

"I have been half-way around the world and felt safer than I do sometimes on this block," she said.

Others said they will take more precautions following the police warning.

"I haven't been cautious at all, I haven't thought about it," said university student Diana Douglas. "But I'm sure I'll be more cautious in the future, at least walking around late at night."
Authority

In this article, *police*, as specific (Edmonton Police Service) and classified social actors, are collocated and activated with action verbs (*warning, said, issue*). The police are activated because they are represented as the actor in these circumstances, not the affected or beneficiary of what happened. Police are also linked to *Edmonton police Det. Scott McMorran*, a named, male social actor connected to the police through the pronoun *we*, and activated through his own set of action verbs (*said, encourage, offered*). Both the police and Scott McMorran are represented in this text as involved with providing something to *women, residents, or people living in the community* for their “safety.” The police are collocated with a “warning” that results in “precautions.” Scott McMorran is collocated with “advice” and directive statements that instruct *women, residents, or people* to “be notified,” “ensure [they] are diligent,” “be aware,” and “report to police.” The *police* are written as the main social actors in this article. Their action is highlighted in the headline (*Police issue warning to women in Garneau*) and the author’s focus on police in the first half of the article.

Suspect/Perpetrator

In the first half of the article, all the writing revolves around either police actions or events with passivated social actors. This includes the circumstances of the sexual assaults described through nominalization. When the author includes the male perpetrator of the assaults, it is part of the circumstance (*The latest assault took place on the weekend when a male broke into a home near 111 Street and 80 Avenue early in the morning...*). He is mentioned twice and is not the focus of the sentence as an activated social actor in either case (*In late February, a 24-year-old woman was attacked while sleeping when a*)
male broke into her apartment at 111 Street and 81 Avenue). These statements provide an explanation for the police tips and activity. He is also mentioned once as the suspect. Through nominalization, however, he is “described in each case” without an agent listed as describing him. The women who reported his attacks are not included as agents knowing and providing information.

The focus on the attacks and backgrounding of the perpetrator in some sentences creates the impression that these attacks are happening without an agent (Police are warning women in the Garneau neighbourhood of south Edmonton to take extra precautions after three sexual assaults in the area in the past three months.). Backgrounding refers to a form of exclusion, wherein a social actor is mentioned somewhere in a text, but must be inferred in other places (Fairclough, 2003). Other participants in the sentences are part of this nominalization (unusual circumstances, night, incidents, crimes, the area, this block) and establish the need for awareness, police encouragement and notification, the need for precautions, and safety. The setting of the events that led to the police warnings is collocated with generic social actors (suspicious people, students, other young people).

Survivor/Victim

In the second half, residents in the neighbourhood take focus. Those selected for the article, their circumstances, and their words provide legitimation for the police warnings in the first half (Others said they will take more precautions following the police warning.). These specific activated social actors are named and quoted by the author. These women serve as examples of the intended audience of the police notifications, warnings, and encouragement of diligence and awareness (I haven’t been
cautious at all, I haven’t thought about it,” said university student Diana Douglas. “But I’ll be more cautious in the future, at least walking around late at night.”). Women, mentioned twice as a specific group, and the individual women of various ages who were assaulted are always passivated, gendered, race-less social actors to whom events occur and who are called upon by the police to take future action to avoid such events. The safety of residents, women, the Garneau neighbourhood, a 21-year-old, a 24-year-old, a 47-year-old, the community, people, the residence, Heather Norstrom, others, Diana Douglas, and the building are all the focus of police warnings as a result of the attacks.

May 28th 2008 Edmonton Journal Article: Police warn of Garneau sex assaults

This article, written by Senger, is in direct response to police reports that were made public regarding the sexual assaults in Garneau. It was published shortly after the police released their information, three months after the first attack was reported to police.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police warn of Garneau sex assaults</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Edmonton Journal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Edmonton police are warning residents in the Garneau area to lock up their homes after three women were attacked and sexually assaulted while they slept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first attack was in February when an unknown man broke into a house on 111th Street and 81st Avenue in the early morning and sexually assaulted a 24-year-old woman who was sleeping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man went to the same residence earlier this month and sexually assaulted a sleeping 47-year-old woman who lived in a second suite in the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most recent attack occurred last weekend when a man broke into a house at 111th</td>
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Street and 80th Avenue. He pepper-sprayed and sexually assaulted a 21-year-old woman.

"We have concerns there are similarities in all three cases," said Det. Scott McMorran, who works with the Edmonton Police Service's sexual-assault section.

Police say they are looking for a man with an average build wearing dark clothing, but the attacks occurred in the dark, making a better description difficult, said McMorran.

McMorran said police knocked on doors in the neighbourhood to warn residents after the most recent sexual assault. They are now asking residents to be on alert.

"Ensure that they're diligent in locking their doors and windows," he said.

"Be aware of what is going on around their residence at night. Any unusual circumstances, any strangers in the neighbourhood, we would encourage people to report this to the police."

Despite the police efforts to inform the neighbourhood, several Garneau residents who were out enjoying the sun on Tuesday afternoon said they hadn't heard anything about the assaults.

The Garneau area south of Whyte Avenue is home to a mix of students and long-term residents.

Despite the quiet, tree-lined streets, crime is always a problem in the neighbourhood, said Barbara Nipp, who has lived in her white bungalow in Garneau for 20 years.

Theft from cars and garages is common, and some of her neighbours have also had problems with peeping Toms, said Nipp.

"People living around here have found lawn chairs up against their windows," she said.

"There is such a high transient population."

Some landlords in the area don't do enough to keep their renters safe, said Melissa
Garland, who lives a block away from the 81st Avenue assault site.

"I don't know about the houses around here. Some of them are pretty run down and it might be pretty easy to get in," said Garland, as her 10-month-old daughter played on the lawn nearby.

The assaults were several blocks from the University of Alberta.

Students have not been notified at this time, but U of A spokeswoman Bev Betkowski said campus security staff and staff in student residence buildings have been alerted.

"We are confident that there will be a campus-wide alert," said Betkowski.

Authority

In this article, police, as specific (Edmonton Police Service) and classified social actors, are collocated and activated with action verbs (warn, warning, say, looking, knocked, asked, encourage, inform). All of these action verbs are collocated with and are aimed at residents and people in the Garneau area or neighbourhood except for one, which is collocated with the man who attacked the women in their homes. The police activity is aimed at the residents to “[e]nsure they are diligent,” “be aware,” and “report this to the police.” Police are also linked to Edmonton police Det. Scott McMorran, a named social actor connected to the police through the pronoun we and his descriptions of police activity (McMorran said police knocked on doors), and activated through his own set of action verbs (have concerns, works, said). The police are written as the main social actors in this article. Their action is highlighted in the headline (Police warn of Garneau sex assaults) and the author’s focus on the events. The term “sex assaults” implies that these assaults were sexual acts.
The author points out that the “assaults were several blocks from the University of Alberta” and features U of A spokeswoman, Bev Betkowski, as another named social actor in the text. She is quoted, saying that she is “confident that there will be a campus-wide alert.” Any thoughts or feelings about the events are absent from the article. While U of A students have not been “notified,” campus security staff and staff in student residence buildings have been “alerted.”

Suspect/Perpetrator

In the first half of the article, the focus is on police activity, the police message to women and residents, and the actions of the man. The man is collocated with action verbs (attack, went, broke into, pepper-sprayed, sexually assaulted) as an activated social actor, but is either part of the circumstance of the attack, not the focus of the sentence (The first attack was in February when an unknown man broke into a house), or part of the police discourse (Police say they are looking for a man). The man is only the focus of the sentence when he “went to the same residence” and “sexually assaulted a sleeping 47-year-old woman” and when he “pepper-sprayed and sexually assaulted a 21-year-old woman.”

The assaults are written about through nominalization when the author mentions they “were several blocks from the University of Alberta.” Through nominalization, the author includes details of his appearance (average build wearing dark clothing) without listing an agent as describing him. The women who reported his attacks are not included as agents knowing and providing information. The author describes the man as “unknown,” excluding the women who are the agents of knowing or not knowing.
Survivor/Victim

In the second half of the article, the author focuses on other social actors (residents, students, neighbours, renters) and features the words of named neighbourhood residents who draw the reader’s attention to several other factors. Barbara Nipp and Melissa Garland offer other explanations for the events that draw attention away from the perpetrator and the police (strangers, crime, peeping toms, transient population, landlords). Strangers are something people need to be aware of and report to police as well as any “unusual circumstances.” The police, author, and named social actors emphasize “unusual circumstances,” strangers, and a high transient population.

This represents a selective understanding of sexual assault as perpetrated by someone who is an external threat, someone outside the neighbourhood, who isn’t a long-term resident. In Barabara Nipp’s quotes, the high transient population is collocated with peeping toms, who have been a problem for people. This connection goes unquestioned. The author does not ask what the police where doing about that problem or what the neighbourhood did to respond to this problem to try to prevent a situation where a man could break into the same residence twice and another nearby to sexually assault three women without being caught. The author does not ask why the man would do that. Barbara Nipp also says that “crime is always a problem in the neighbourhood.”

Through nominalization, the agent responsible for the crime is excluded and de-gendered. Melissa Garland says that some “landlords in the area don’t do enough to keep their renters safe,” thereby contributing to the author’s framing of the perpetrator as an outside threat. There is no discussion of violence that takes place within homes. The author of this article, and those of the other newspaper articles, wrote pieces on stranger
assaults without addressing the prevalence of assaults perpetrated by someone the victim knows. This contributes to a particular way of viewing sexual assaults.

The neighbourhood residents selected for the article, their circumstances, and their words provide legitimation for the police warnings in the first half and provide a representation of the neighbourhood as the kind of place where these events were bound to happen (peeping toms, crime, transient population, landlords, mix of students and long-term residents). The author does not address that sexual assault happens in all neighbourhoods. These activated social actors are named and quoted by the author as they provide information about the neighbourhood even though “[d]espite police efforts to inform the neighbourhood, several Garneau residents... said they hadn’t heard anything about the assaults.” Barbara Nipp and Melissa Garland serve as examples of the intended audience of the police warnings and encouragement of diligence, awareness, and reporting. Melissa and her 10-month-old daughter live a block away from the site of one of the attacks. The daughter’s age is included as are the ages of the women who were assaulted by the man (a 24-year-old woman, a 47-year-old woman, a 21-year-old woman). Melissa is quoted as saying that some of the houses in the area are “pretty run down and it might be pretty easy to get in” while “her 10-month-old daughter played on the lawn nearby.” The author demonstrates that anyone could be next.

Twice women, when they are mentioned as a group and when they are mentioned as the individual women of various ages who were assaulted, are represented as passive social actors to whom events occur (sexually assaulted, attacked, pepper-sprayed) and are only collocated with the action verbs sleeping or slept. They are also collocated with their ages and their addresses. Police call upon women and residents to take future action
to avoid such events. Any resistance by the women to the perpetrator before or during the attacks is entirely absent, as is the significance of their action in reporting a considerably underreported crime to police. The gendered nature of the police warnings is hidden when the author states that “police are warning residents in the Garneau area to lock up their homes,” knocking on doors to “warn residents,” and “asking residents to be on alert.” The author includes interviews with only women, but refers to “residents who were out enjoying the sun.”

All the victims and potential victims in the article are female, yet the police warnings are aimed at gender-neutral residents and people (we would encourage people to report this to the police). The interviewees also refer to gender-neutral people who “have found lawn chairs up against their windows,” implying the presence of peeping toms. While the author overtly presented institutional representatives—including the police, Det. Scott McMorran, and university spokeswoman Bev Betkowski—as holders of information, the neighbourhood is the target of “police efforts to inform,” residents must be warned, students “have not been informed at this time,” and the women’s knowledge from the three attacks is excluded.

June 11th 2008 Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed: Garneau Sisterhood organizing in response to sexual assaults

This piece, written by GS members, was published as an op ed in the self-proclaimed “alternative” newspaper, VUE Weekly. The publication included a brief description of the GS written by its own members.
Issues – Garneau Sisterhood organizing in response to sexual assaults

Garneau Sisterhood       June 11, 2008

Following the recent string of sexual assaults in the Garneau area perpetrated by a man breaking into women’s homes when they are alone at night, women in the area are being warned to “lock their doors and windows” to stay safe. Not only will tips like this not keep us safe, they perpetuate a culture of fear. Women in the area would like to issue their own warning... to the perpetrator: we are organizing and we are channeling our fear.

According to the Criminal Code of Canada, sexual assault is any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent, including situations where non-voluntary consent is obtained through pressure, coercion, force or threats of force. According to many dominant narratives, women should be able to avoid these situations if we follow certain tips: don’t walk home alone at night, don’t wear “provocative” clothing, don’t put down your drink at the bar, don’t engage in “risky” behaviour.

Growing up in a violent, patriarchal culture we are used to continuously being reminded of these tips and we can believe—consciously or subconsciously—that many of them will keep us safe. And yet we know that these tips assume that the perpetrator will be a stranger. We know that only about two per cent of sexual assaults are assaults by a stranger and that the overwhelming majority are perpetrated by partners, family members or co-workers. These tips do not guarantee safety from these people we know, particularly in situations of unequal power, such as in the case of sexual assault of children by adults.

Perhaps we cling to these tips because it’s what we’ve always been told. Or because we need that idea of safety, of being able to protect ourselves. We need to get through the day
and keep living.

On the other hand, we really do need to keep living! Why should women have a curfew? Why should our fear dictate our clothing choices, our types of transportation, our sexuality? It’s okay to be angry about this, because it can make us feel helpless and disempowered.

It is unacceptable that the responsibility to try to prevent these crimes continues to fall to women. Women are expected to live in fear and act accordingly—“lock your doors and windows.”

The articles and police reports regarding the Garneau attacks say the women were in their homes and the man “broke into them.” Doesn't that mean the women had already locked their doors? Sleeping in one’s home at night isn't exactly risky behaviour. These articles never say that in our current society, male violence is accepted, even encouraged. That we live in a toxic society where sex and violence are conflated. That trauma like this is psychologically oppressing an entire community of women.

So, how do we actually deal with this problem?

We must begin from the fact that stopping sexual assault and ending rape culture is the responsibility of everyone in the community, not just the women.

We must truly acknowledge the astounding prevalence of rape in our culture. Truly take a moment to let it sink in that one in four women, and one in eight men, will experience sexual assault in their lifetime.

We must start questioning the behaviour of the offenders instead of that of the survivors. We must start talking about sexual assault so more people will come forward and feel believed. Through this we will break the silence and stop perpetrators from thinking they
can get away with it.

The message from this community to the perpetrator of these heinous crimes is simple: we are watching you.

A lot of brilliant women all thinking about the same thing at the same time is very powerful. We do not have to blame ourselves or quietly accept this violent reality. As Inga Muscio says, women can be kicked when we are down, but no one is stupid or strong enough to kick us when we are standing up, all together.

If a woman is raped, other women react. We understand there is no such thing as an isolated attack on an individual woman. All women are us. When a sister is raped, it is a rape of the sisterhood and cannot go unpunished. No one feels “lucky” that it was “some other woman” who got raped. There is no such thing as “some other woman” when you have compassion and love for yourself.

We may feel powerless, but we are not powerless. The women in this neighbourhood are organizing. The Garneau Sisterhood is watching.

If you have any tips that you would like to disclose regarding the identity of the perpetrator, please email us at garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com.

Garneau Sisterhood is a group of fiesty concerned citizens in the Garneau area and the larger Edmonton community who are organizing and mobilizing to catch the most recent serial rapist in the neighbourhood, challenge the culture of violence and reclaim safe spaces for women in their communities.

**Authority**

In this opinion editorial, the GS, as specific and classified social actors, are collocated and activated with action verbs (organizing, watching, mobilizing, catch,
challenge, reclaim) in relation to the perpetrator and the community. The Garneau Sisterhood is also linked to women in the area, women in general, and society at large through the pronouns we and us. The authors of the op ed refer to commonly held beliefs and cultural attitudes that contribute to the way we understand sexual assault and responsibility for safety (Growing up in a violent, patriarchal culture we are used to continuously being reminded of these tips...). They discuss the impacts the events can have on women (It’s okay to be angry about this, because it can make us feel helpless and disempowered.), which serve as legitimation for their actions.

They refer to the ways that we as a community can deal with rape using the imperative must (We must start talking about sexual assault so more people will come forward and feel believed.). They ask for the participation of the reader in a different way than the police do (If you have any tips that you would like to disclose regarding the identity of the perpetrator, please email us at garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com.). Instead of providing tips to women, the authors ask for tips from the community to identify the perpetrator, thereby shifting the sole responsibility of catching the perpetrator from the police to everyone.

The authors evoke the authority of the Criminal Code of Canada to define sexual assault and ways of obtaining consent. They question the authority of dominant narratives that involve tips for women to prevent their own assaults (don’t walk home alone at night), as well as the articles and police reports in other newspapers covering the events (These articles never say that in our current society, male violence is accepted, even encouraged). The authors also evoke the language of civic belonging through the use of citizens in naming themselves (Garneau Sisterhood is a group of fiesty concerned
citizens) and their role in the neighbourhood (The women in this neighbourhood are organizing.). The description of the group is general and vague in terms of its members, although they are taking action.

**Suspect/Perpetrator**

The roles of the social actors, as written in the newspaper articles, are reversed in the op ed. The Garneau Sisterhood and neighbourhood women are the ones issuing the warnings. These warnings are directed at the perpetrator, not women (The message from this community to the perpetrator of these heinous crimes is simple: we are watching you.) using the pronoun you, implying that he could be a reader of the op ed. The man is named right away as the perpetrator of the assaults and is later referred to as a “serial rapist.” The word perpetrator is used to refer specifically to the social actor who committed these assaults on the Garneau women, but also to discuss perpetrators in general (we will break the silence and stop perpetrators from thinking they can get away with it). The term offenders is also introduced and used synonymously with perpetrators.

The assaults are put into a broader context by the authors, including the Canadian definition, the prevalence, and the possibility for perpetrators to be people other than strangers (We know that only about two per cent of sexual assaults are assaults by a stranger and that the overwhelming majority are perpetrated by partners, family members or co-workers.). These other people remain genderless, however, as the authors do not say that the partners, family members, co-workers, adults, and people we know who perpetrate most assaults are male. The authors’ position on responsibility for assault prevention is explicitly stated (We must begin from the fact that stopping sexual assault and ending rape culture is the responsibility of everyone in the community, not just the
women. The language of prevention is never used in either the May 27 CBC or May 28 Edmonton Journal articles. In coverage of the assaults, it is seen for the first time in the op ed (It is unacceptable that the responsibility to try to prevent these crimes continues to fall to women.). This is also the first time the term “rape” is used. The authors of the op ed refer to “rape culture” as the context for these assaults and argue that rape is never an individual act, but always affects all women (There is no such thing as an isolated attack on an individual woman.).

Fear is included as a social actor that can “dictate our clothing choices, our types of transportation, our sexuality.” It is included in phrases stating that women are “expected to live in fear” and that tips “perpetuate a culture of fear.” The authors place women’s experience of sexual violence and a violent culture within the context of their lives by addressing women’s choice, clothes, transportation, sexuality, and trauma.

The op ed specifically critiques the articles and police reports in response to which it was written (These articles never say that in our current society, male violence is accepted, even encouraged. That we live in a toxic society where sex and violence are conflated. That trauma like this is psychologically oppressing an entire community of women.). The op ed also points out the discrepancy in the police reports and newspaper articles stating that the man “broke into” the women’s homes, yet women are warned to lock their doors and windows to stay safe (Doesn’t that mean the women had already locked their doors? Sleeping in one’s home at night isn’t exactly risky behaviour). The authors called into question the legitimacy of police warnings to women.

Culture is used as a specific, affected/passivated noun throughout the op ed, putting the specific sexual assaults in a context described as “patriarchal,” where there is
a “rape culture” and “prevalence of rape,” as well as a “culture of violence” that the Garneau Sisterhood is working to “challenge” and “reclaim.” Society is linked to violence and “male violence” in particular (These articles never say that in our current society, male violence is accepted, even encouraged. That we live in a toxic society where sex and violence are conflated.). The authors explicitly state that “there is no such thing as an isolated attack on an individual woman,” indicating the stance that the attacks are part of something larger and have broader reaching affects beyond the victims.

**Survivor/Victim**

Generic women and specific neighbourhood women, as activated social actors, are collocated with a range of tips the authors are challenging, feelings of helplessness and disempowerment, and action. By quoting Inga Muscio, author of the book Cunt, the op ed links individual women actors with all women, generically, by explaining a collective women’s experience of violence (If a woman is raped, other women react. We understand there is no such thing as an isolated attack on an individual woman. All women are us.). Women are also connected through the language of community as victims (trauma like this is psychologically oppressing an entire community of women) and as actors (The message from this community to the perpetrator of these heinous crimes is simple: we are watching you.). The action of watching the perpetrator is significant because it co-opts and reverses the gaze of peeping toms, police surveillance, and perpetrators. It borrows from the neighbourhood watch concept and connects it with a feminist ethic of collective safety making.

Women are also connected through the language of sister and sisterhood (When a sister is raped, it is a rape of the sisterhood and cannot go unpunished.). Linking all
women together also serves as a call to action and legitimation of Garneau Sisterhood activity (*women can be kicked when we are down, but no one is stupid or strong enough to kick us when we are standing up, all together.*). There is no discussion of diversity among women. Race, class, and other identities that shape women’s experiences of violence are not addressed. The authors’ emphasis on including *all women* can be read as excluding important differences in women’s experiences, ways of being targeted, and ways of being blamed by those around them, however it can also be read as inclusive of trans women. Women are simultaneously included as social actors who are authorities and also victims of violence. The term *survivors* is introduced along with *offenders*.

This message borrowed from Inga Muscio (*women can be kicked when we are down, but no one is stupid or strong enough to kick us when we are standing up, all together.*) refers to the widespread misogyny and violence that have significant and differential effects on the material reality of women’s lives. Dominant risk management safety discourses divide and isolate individual women. Rape is not about intelligence, but it is about strength and power. This message implies that if women were not isolated, but instead were pursuing collective safety-making and an end to rape culture for everyone, then someone would be stupid or foolish to commit sexual assault. There would be consequences for the perpetrator instead of impunity. It follows then, that it would not be easy to access the strength or power to commit an act of violence like this. Women would be making it collectively very difficult. In the absence of a rape culture where women are pitted against each other for individualized access to safety, sexualized violence would not be as common.
Children are named as victims of violence from perpetrators who are not strangers, and Men are named as victims of sexual assault as well. Everyone is specifically named as responsible for “ending rape culture.” Generic and genderless people are also included as victims who may come forward and feel believed if a generic we start to talk about sexual assault. The authors include this as part of a list of ways to deal with the problem of violence in ways other than what is presented by the police and newspapers. The pronoun you is named in the context of seeing yourself as connected to other women and therefore invested in ending violence for all women (There is no such thing as “some other woman” when you have compassion and love for yourself.). You is also included in a call to action when the authors invite tips from the readers (If you have any tips that you would like to disclose regarding the identity of the perpetrator, please email us). The word community is evoked in reference to the collective of women and also in reference to everyone having the responsibility to end rape culture, not just women.

June-August 2008 Garneau Sisterhood: Original Campaign

I have examined 13 variations of posters from this campaign created by the GS (see Figure 1). Posters were hand-written and photocopied, then affixed to various outdoor structures in the neighbourhood. While the GS did publish an op ed in a mass media outlet, they also created a physical presence taking up space in the neighbourhood. The poster series is personal, informal, and grassroots in its form. The handwriting, paper, and wheat paste alert the reader to the local presence of the authors and their lack of institutional affiliation. They are literally attaching their message to the neighbourhood. There is a sense of ownership or claiming of the space that is absent in a
published article. The posters are meant to be seen by Garneau women, the perpetrator, and anyone who enters the neighbourhood that the GS believes should be exposed to public education on sexual assault. While the GS did have an online presence—these photos are from their website—the main platform of discourse was their poster campaigns.

Figure 1: Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign Posters
ANY INFO
on the SEXUAL ASSAULT
EMAIL
garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com

TELLING ME TO
LOCK MY DOOR
WILL NOT MAKE
SAFE. PREVENTING
SEXUAL ASSAULT IS
EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Women of Garneau:
You are the
Sisterhood.
garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com

SEXUAL Assault
is any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent.
START questioning
Offenders' Behaviours
& not the Survivors

Have any info on the Garneau Rape?
Or any other person?
BE AS NICE AS
SAVE A SHIRT
garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com

RAPE IS NOT
“SOMETHING
that happens”
to WOMEN
(government.org the sexual assault
& domestic violence)
garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com

EPCOR
RAPIST
TURN YOURSELF
IN NOW
4165 496-3137
Authority

In this campaign, the Garneau Sisterhood is included mostly as an email address along with the invitation to the reader of the poster to be active by emailing (Any information on the Garneau rapes? email garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com). The Sisterhood and The Ladies are used interchangeably to sign off on the posters in a personal and colloquial way (Dear rapist: I am not changing my life because of a pathetic fuck like you! love The Sisterhood). The Sisterhood is used as an activated social actor (The sisterhood is watching!!!), as is the pronoun we (Attention ra“pest” we are organizing to find you and we will!!).

The pronoun you is included by the authors to refer to the reader of the posters as a social actor with potential information that can be emailed to the group (If you have any tips on the Rapist(s) in Garneau email garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com) and, when gendered, is considered to be a part of the group (Women of Garneau: You are the Sisterhood). On some posters, the pronoun “you” is omitted and the entire message is a colloquial call to action directed at the reader to be a “snitch” (Be a snitch save a snatch stop garneau rapes). The authors of the poster campaign are de-centering the police by
asking anyone to come forward with information via email, thereby working to elevate
women in the community and build solidarity. The police are further de-centered through
the inclusion of the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre as another authority on sexual
violence. In addition to offering the Garneau Sisterhood email for further contact by
readers, the Sexual Assault Centre and its Crisis Line are listed as options for people to
access. The authors also include a friend as an outlet for talking (To talk: Edmonton
Sexual Assault Centre or talk to a trusted friend).

Suspect/Perpetrator

The role of the friend is also included in a parody of the common tips offered to
women for rape prevention. The posters speak directly to men in the neighbourhood
through the pronoun you, implicating them and their friends in the responsibility to
prevent assault (Warning!! Men! There is a rapist in the neighbourhood Please do not go
out at night unless you are with a friend (I’ll do this if you will) – the ladies). The authors
hold heterosexual men, in general, accountable for the majority of sexual assault through
posters focused on statistics and definitions (98% of sexual assaults are perpetrated by
heterosexual men.). Men are also included as victims of sexual assault, thereby providing
a more complex picture of the issue (1 in 8 men are sexually assaulted in their lifetime.).

The authors have included definitions of sexual assault in the posters as they did
in the op ed (Sexual assault is any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent.).
The definitions are not included in the May 27 CBC article, nor the May 28 Edmonton
Journal article. Sexual assault is nominalized in this definition and in the request for
information on the sexual assault on other posters, however, it is included with a call to
“start questioning offenders’ behaviours & not the survivors,” which does not contribute
to erasing the agency of the perpetrator. The posters speak directly and personally to the man who committed the sexual assaults, using the label ra“pest”, rapist, pathetic fuck, and the pronoun you (Attention ra“pest” we are organizing to find you and we will!!).

The only reference given to the police in this poster series is in the posters that include their phone number for the rapist to call (Rapist turn yourself in now police # 423-4567). This gives the rapist the opportunity to take action in preventing sexual assault as well.

The authors make their position clear that “rape happens because of rapists” in general, not other factors like “locked doors,” and that “[p]reventing sexual assault is everyone’s responsibility.”

**Survivor/Victim**

The authors take a personal stance in implicating themselves in their posters. They use the pronouns I (I am not changing my life) and me (telling me to lock my door won’t make me safe). You and I are personally linked when the authors parody the messages to women with a message to men in the neighbourhood (Please do not go out at night unless you are with a friend (I’ll do this if you will)). The Sisterhood is linked with other women and individual woman or sister survivors through the pronoun us (All Women are us! When a sister is raped it is a rape of the sisterhood). There is a strong collocation of the words woman, women, all, us, sister, and sisterhood. These words are linked irreverently to the word “snatch” when the authors direct the reader to “save a snatch.” This is the only place the authors use the language of saving or reduce a woman to a slang word or a (cisgendered) specific body part.

While many of the messages in the June 11 VUE op ed are similar to those in the Original Poster Campaign, a section borrowed from author Inga Muscio is included
verbatim (If a woman is raped other women react. There is no such thing as an isolated attack on an individual woman. All Women are us! When a sister is raped it is a rape of the sisterhood and cannot go unpunished). For the authors, rape is not just “something that happens” to women, an impersonal fact of life understood with no agent responsible. It is something to resist (Rape is not “something that happens” to women (any tips on the sexual assaults in Garneau? email garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com)). In posters added later, “Solidarity” is offered to the women in Aspen Gardens where a man perpetrated another break-in sexual assault. The posters explicitly critique the responsibility placed on survivors’ behaviours in other media, directing the reader to question offenders’ behaviours instead.

**Aspen Gardens**

According to the maps section of the City of Edmonton website (2012), the neighbourhood of Aspen Gardens was built in the 1960s and 1970s [and] was designed to appeal to individuals and families in search of quiet, affluent residential neighbourhood characterised by larger homes, mature trees, and attractive paths for pedestrian and bicycle travel...

The residents are a largely stable population of older couples and families with older children.

The design of this neighborhood, as built for “affluent” families, rather than just families, with larger homes, larger trees, and pedestrian and park areas, is especially distinctive in comparison with the description of Garneau’s multi-unit housing and proximity to the university and Whyte Avenue.
Southside sex attack makes four

The Edmonton Journal       August 12, 2008

A man thought to be responsible for a series of sexual assaults in Garneau earlier this year is now a suspect in the Saturday assault of a 68-year-old woman.

She lives in Aspen Gardens, a neighbourhood 35 blocks south of Garneau.

Police say a "strange" man broke into her home early on Aug. 9. The woman did not know this man.

The manner in which she was assaulted, the dark clothing and facial disguise the attacker donned: It is all consistent with three 2008 attacks in the Garneau area.

The first attack occurred in February, when a man broke into a house on 111th Street and 81st Avenue early in the morning and sexually assaulted a 24-year-old woman who was sleeping.

A man entered the same residence in early May and sexually assaulted another sleeping 47-year-old woman who lived in a second suite in the house.

Approximately two weeks later, another woman, 21, was sexually assaulted and pepper-sprayed after a man broke into a house at 111th Street and 80th Avenue.

The victim of this fourth and latest attack near 40th Avenue and 122nd Street is recovering well, Det. Melanie Grace said.

The entire sexual assault unit of the police service is helping out on these four files.
"We want to encourage women in Edmonton, especially the ones who live alone, to be vigilant about locking their doors and their windows and securing their homes," Grace said. "At this time the suspect is still at large."

Police are only releasing certain details about their investigation.

They will not say how the attacker entered the 68-year-old woman's home.

They will not specify how the suspect disguises himself.

Grace said releasing the latter information wouldn't help identify the suspect.

"We have had a wide range of age in our victims. There is a male out there who wants to commit sexual assaults and right now it doesn't matter how old the woman is," Grace said. "We are feeling that it is a planned incident each time."

That said, none of the victims knew the man.

"Every time, the woman has been alone in her home."

The suspect is described as a stocky man, between five feet eight inches and five feet 10 inches tall. Police are asking anyone living in the Aspen Gardens area to report suspicious individuals and activity.

The Garneau assaults prompted a group, calling themselves the Garneau Sisterhood, to put up threatening posters in the neighbourhood. While Grace said mobilizing one's community is a good thing, she warned against "vigilanteeism, where the public is going after or targeting or finding their own suspects."

Authority

Gelinas provided coverage of the fourth sexual assault in the series. This one took place in Aspen Gardens, a “neighbourhood 35 blocks south of Garneau.” Like the May 27th CBC article and the May 28th Edmonton Journal article, this article is focused on
police reporting. The police are the focus of the article as activated, classified social actors and as keepers of information (Police are only releasing certain details about their investigation.). Using the pronoun they, Gelines writes that the police “will not say how the attacker entered” or “how the suspect disguises himself.” This is the first mention of a disguise. The information about the ages and addresses of the first three victims are repeated. Age is stressed once again, this time directly addressing the “wide range of age in our victims” since the woman attacked in Aspen Gardens was 68 years old.

There are, however, some major differences. The first line of the article includes a specific and gendered perpetrator (A man thought to be responsible for a series of sexual assaults in Garneau earlier this year is now a suspect in the Saturday assault of a 68-year-old woman.). In addition, the police detective named and quoted in this article is a woman, Det. Melanie Grace, and the priority of these files for the police are stressed (The entire sexual assault unit of the police service is helping out on these four files). This is the first time the sexual assault unit is mentioned instead of simply the police in general or the specific detective. Melanie Grace is collocated with the pronoun we to link her to the police (“We have had a wide range of age in our victims.”). She is quoted using the language of “feeling” to state the police position on the attacks (“We are feeling that it is a planned incident each time.”). On behalf of the police, she issues a warning to women like the other articles, but extends the warning to “women in Edmonton” instead of just the specific neighbourhood (“We want to encourage women in Edmonton, especially the ones who live alone, to be vigilant”). The warning is also “especially” for “the ones who live alone,” who are once again asked to “be vigilant about locking their doors and their windows and securing their homes.”
Suspect/Perpetrator

Gelinas uses *sex attack, sexual assault, attack, assault, and incident* interchangeably throughout the article. The title of the article is an instance of nominalization as the perpetrator of the attack is not included (Southside sex attack makes four) as is the statement comparing this attack to the other three (It is all consistent with three 2008 attacks in the Garneau area.). Nominalization occurs again when Gelinas mentions the Garneau Sisterhood, saying that the “assaults prompted” the group’s action and leaving out the perpetrator. This is also a very simplified explanation of the group’s reasons for forming. There is less nominalization in this article than in the May 27th and May 28th articles as the *man* or *male* is included in the sentences. The language of “sex attack” in the title is consistent with the May 28th *Edmonton Journal* article by Senger and is interesting given that an attack cannot be consensual and, therefore, not sex. Utilizing the language of sex when discussing rape blurs and confuses the violence of the act. The language of “incident” excludes the nature of the event and the inherent violence.

While there is more focus on the *man, suspect, attacker, male* who committed the sexual assaults in this article than the May 27th and May 28th articles, there is still a lack of responsibility directly attached to him. When Gelinas writes that the “first attack occurred in February, when a man broke into a house,” the sentence construction creates the impression that the nominalized attack simply occurred while the man is responsible for the break in. This focus on the break in diminishes the violence of the perpetrator's actions. Focusing on the act of entering the residence, instead of the violence he perpetrated or the women’s resistance, creates a sense of banality about the rapes.
Minimizing the assaults by highlighting the break in diminishes the impact of understanding the consequences of violence on the women's bodies and psychological wellbeing. A focus on the break in also legitimizes police warnings of locking doors and windows. If there was a focus on the sexual assaults instead, the police warnings would seem less appropriate as they attend only to the prevention of break ins and not to the prevention of rape, for example cultivating a society where men do not feel this is possible. There are no connections made between this sexual assault and sexual assaults in general. Keeping the focus on the individual, Gelinas quotes Det. Melanie Grace saying that there “is a male out there who wants to commit sexual assaults.” There is no discussion of why he might want to do it, or how it is possible that he can, within a cultural context.

For the first time in the newspaper coverage of these events, the police are asking for action from those in the public, beyond risk-management. The police, however, are asking only a specific group to get involved through reporting by “asking anyone living in the Aspen Gardens area to report suspicious individuals and activity.” They do not define “suspicious” or “activity” and they leave “individuals” without a gender. The police are only asking people living in Aspen Gardens for action and input, not Garneau. Unlike Gerow and Senger, Gelinas does not include information about or interviews with the residents of Aspen Gardens.

**Survivor/Victim**

Gelinas mentions the Garneau Sisterhood briefly, using the term “threatening” to describe their posters and implying that the assaults alone, not the perpetrator or the newspaper coverage, prompted the campaign (*The Garneau assaults prompted a group*
calling themselves the Garneau Sisterhood, to put up threatening posters in the
neighbourhood.). There is no mention of the op ed in *VUE* or of the Garneau Sisterhood
critiques of police and newspaper coverage. Gelinas legitimizes the police focus on
“mobilizing one’s community” and asking for reports on “suspicious individuals and
activity” by comparing it to the undesirable “vigilanteeism, where the public is going
after or targeting or finding their own suspects” that Grace connects to the Garneau
Sisterhood activity. Previously, police have warned women to manage their behaviour
with regard to preventing sexual assaults on an individual level. Grace’s comments in this
case serve to warn a group of women to manage their behaviour in their efforts to prevent
sexual assault at a community level. The GS transgressed the boundaries of the expected
actions for women and attempted to position themselves in a space reserved for police.

The women mentioned in the article are the three Garneau women listed with
their ages and addresses and whether they were at home, sleeping, sexually assaulted,
and/or pepper-sprayed. The women are also referred to as “our victims” (*We have had a
range of age in our victims.*) and the events as *files*, property of the police (*The entire
sexual assault unit of the police service is helping out on these four files.*).

Gelinas includes a reassuring statement from Det. Grace that the “victim of this
fourth and latest attack near 40th and 122nd Street is recovering well.” There have been no
previous updates on the wellbeing of the women who were sexually assaulted. This is the
first time the affects on women have been mentioned in the news articles. The Garneau
Sisterhood talked about affects in their op ed and posters. This is the first time in all of
the coverage that something positive has been written about the welfare of a survivor, in
this case a 68-year-old woman. *The Garneau Sisterhood* and *neighbourhood* itself are
The Garneau Sisterhood responds to the Aspen Gardens rape

**Garneau Sisterhood**  
August 13, 2008

The Garneau Sisterhood is appalled to hear of the recent rape in Aspen Gardens. We stand in solidarity with the survivor as well as all women in Edmonton who are suffering the effects of this horrifying event.

We are outraged that women’s ability to feel safe in their neighbourhoods has been diminished by this attack. We might as well have a female-only curfew in effect in Garneau and Aspen Gardens.

We do, however, want to take issue with some of the responses we’ve seen from police and the media over the past few days.

In Tuesday’s Journal, Edmonton police “encouraged” women to be “vigilant about locking their doors and their windows and securing their homes.” This lock-your-doors advice puts the onus solely on individual women to protect themselves and leaves them open to blame if they are attacked.

First of all, it’s probably safe to say that most women in this city already lock their doors on a regular basis. Secondly, this focus on locking doors as a method of protection...
distracts from our culture of rape in which one in four women and one in eight men will be sexually assaulted during their lifetimes. The vast majority of survivors know their perpetrators.

Locked doors do not protect women from their family members, partners, and dates. This is the context of violence that we, the Garneau Sisters, are seeking address. We need to publicly denounce all perpetrators of sexual assault. Each of us in this city needs to ask ourselves what we can do to stop all rape, not just this particular rapist.

We’re also questioning the police refusal to release specific information about the attacks. If something is happening to women in this community, why can’t we have all the details? What would be the disadvantage of having an empowered and informed community? Why not use a strategy that could combat fear, rather than perpetuating it with vague, shadowy details under newspaper headlines that simply run up tallies of attacks as if there’s nothing that we can do about it?

Lastly, we’d like to comment on the use of the term vigilante to describe us. We certainly aren’t out roaming the streets with guns. But if putting up a show of solidarity and empowering women in our neighbourhood by challenging rape myths makes us vigilantes, then we will happily accept that label.

And lastly, our posters have been described as ‘threatening.’ We certainly hope the perpetrator feels as threatened as we do.

-30-

For more information, contact the Garneau Sisterhood at garneau.sisterhood@gmail.com.

Authority

In their press release, the Garneau Sisterhood is the central social actor and
authority. The authors are located in the writing as specific, classified, and personal social actors. They are collocated with action verbs (responds, hear, stand, feel, want, take issue, seen, seeking, questioning, combat, do, like, comment, roaming, empowering, challenging, accept, hope, threatened) and states of being or feeling (appalled, outraged, informed). The Garneau Sisterhood is clearly represented as knowers of information and ways to move forward. They “hear” about rape and “have seen” police and media responses. They are “appalled” and “outraged” at what is happening. The Garneau Sisterhood takes the opportunity to respond to having been associated with “vigilanteism” by Det. Melanie Grace in the Edmonton Journal on August 12th (While Grace said mobilizing one’s community is a good thing, she warned against “vigilanteism, where the public is going after or targeting or finding their own suspects.”). They identify what they were doing in their terms. They resist the label by accepting and redefining it (We certainly aren’t out roaming the streets with guns. But if putting up a show of solidarity and empowering women in our neighbourhood by challenging rape myths makes us vigilantes, then we will happily accept that label.).

The Garneau Sisterhood are also represented as active (We’re also questioning the police refusal), outspoken (we’d like to comment on the use of the term vigilante), and connected to community, neighbourhoods, other women, and the city (We stand in solidarity with the survivor as well as women in Edmonton who are suffering the effects). They are connecting these particular rapes to a broader “culture of rape.” They are looking for solutions beyond police, and even their own, responses. The focus turns to “each of us” and “what we can do to stop rape, not just this particular rapist.” The generic pronoun we is collocated with action verbs (need, denounce, ask, can do, stop rape, have,
We refer to public work that we “each” “can do” “ourselves” to “stop rape” as part of an “empowered and informed community.” The end of the press release is a call to action to the reader, members of the general “we” who are responsible and able to do something about rape, to seek more information by emailing the authors.

Suspect/Perpetrator

The authors point to a large number of social actors contributing to sexual assault that broadens the scope of who is considered responsible for prevention beyond the man who committed these particular sexual assaults. The rapist himself, also referred to as the perpetrator, is included as a social actor twice. Once he is mentioned as part of a call to action to stop rape and “not just this particular rapist” and once he is mentioned as part of a response to the Garneau Sisterhood having been described as threatening (We certainly hope the perpetrator feels as threatened as we do). The authors make it clear that they see this one perpetrator/rapist as part of a larger “culture of rape” that provides the “context of violence” in which the rapes in Garneau and Aspen Gardens were carried out by this one man. The emphasis by police and media on individual women locking their doors and windows “distracts” from the culture of rape that is connected to high numbers of both women and men experiencing sexual assault in their lifetimes. Rape myths and blame also play a big part in this culture and context. This is something the Garneau Sisterhood is “challenging” when they “take issue” with the police advice that “puts the onus solely on individual women to protect themselves and leaves them open to blame if they are attacked.” Blame is nominalized as the purveyors of the blame are not specifically included.
The specific Aspen Gardens rape/event/attack and the Garneau attacks are nominalized throughout the press release. While the perpetrator is included elsewhere, the sentences are constructed in a way that leaves the actions without a direct agent (We are outraged that women’s ability to feel safe in their neighbourhoods has been diminished by this attack). The authors use strong words to convey the impact of the rapist’s actions (appalled, suffering, horrifying, outraged, diminished, fear). The authors do not connect this violence to strangers, but rather to people the survivors know (family members, partners, dates). The authors’ language centers on locked doors and women. The social actors responsible for the context of violence are written about as passive, classified, generic social actors whose gender is excluded (Locked doors do not protect women from their family members, partners, and dates.). The authors do not stress the male gender of the vast majority of perpetrators. They also center their language of knowing around the survivors, which differs from the mainstream newspaper articles centering only on the police as knowers. By indicating that the “vast majority of survivors know their perpetrators,” they are also addressing the fact that these particular highly publicized stranger assaults exist in a context of many other cases of rape and we need to “publicly denounce all perpetrators.”

The authors question the media and police and hold them responsible as social actors instead of neutral writers and authorities. While specific authors and detectives are not named, these two powerful institutions are critiqued for their roles in perpetuating a culture of rape, fear, and blame. While they are constructed as knowers of information, they are also constructed as withholders of information and challenged for not using a “strategy that would combat fear” as if “there’s nothing we can do” to stop rape.
Survivor/Victim

The authors do not use the language of victim in their press release. Instead, they speak about the survivor of the Aspen Gardens rape, survivors in general, and women in the community, neighbourhoods and city at large who are “suffering the effects of this horrifying event.” The authors’ response to all these survivors is to “stand in solidarity” with them. The Aspen Gardens survivor is written about as a passive/affected, specific, classified social actor with whom they stand in solidarity and is collocated with words that describe the impact of the event (appalled, suffering, effects, horrifying) and connect her to the larger issue of rape, instead of personalized information about her age and location (solidarity, all women, Edmonton, suffering).

The authors explicitly state that both men and women experience sexual violence (one in four women and one in eight men will be sexually assaulted during their lifetimes). This is the second time that men are acknowledged as victims or survivors of sexual violence, included as passive/affected, generic social actors. The first time was in the Garneau Sisterhood’s Original Campaign posters that stated, “1 in 8 men are sexually assaulted in their lifetime.” In the press release, these statistics are included within the context of addressing our “culture of rape” where the rates of sexual assault are very high and the “vast majority” of generic survivors “know their perpetrators.” The authors critique the police and media’s “focus on locking doors as a method of protection” because it “distracts” from this “context of violence.”

The authors address the impacts of the rapist’s actions within this context on women as a broad generic social group by challenging the police’s focus in the Journal on encouraging women to be “vigilant about locking their doors and their windows” and
indicates that this advice “puts the onus solely on individual women to protect themselves” and does “not protect women from their family member, partners, and dates.” They address the impacts on specifically affected women in communities in Edmonton. They acknowledge the experiences of “all women in Edmonton who are suffering the effects of this horrifying event,” that “women’s ability to feel safe in their neighbourhoods has been diminished by this attack,” that “most women in this city already lock their doors on a regular basis,” and ask why they can’t “have all the details” if “something is happening to women in this community.” They also state that they are showing “solidarity and empowering women in our neighbourhood” and question why the police and media are not trying to build “an empowered and informed community.”

Women are collocated with words that describe what they are dealing with (survivors, suffering, effects, horrifying event, feel, safe, diminished, attack, female-only, curfew, encouraged, vigilant, advice, onus, individual, protection, blame, culture of rape, one in four), as well as what the Garneau Sisterhood is working for instead (solidarity, community, empowered, empowering, informed).

The Garneau Sisters themselves are named in a personal way as specific social actors who are “seeking address” (sic) and feel “threatened” within the context of violence. The neighbourhoods of Garneau and Aspen Gardens are included as spaces that are impacted by violence (we might as well have a female-only curfew in effect in Garneau and Aspen Gardens) and as a community that could be “empowered and informed” to combat fear and rape if police would provide details of the attacker. The city of Edmonton is also included as a space impacted by violence (all women in Edmonton who are suffering the effects) where women “already lock their doors on a
regular basis” and where each of “us in this city needs to ask ourselves what we can do to stop all rape.”

August 14th 2008 Edmonton Journal Article: Some women disagree over rape warnings

This article, written by Collum, was published after the police released information about the sexual assaults in Aspen Gardens. It provides coverage of the ongoing police investigation, as well as information about the GS’s work.

Some women disagree over rape warnings

The Edmonton Journal AUGUST 14, 2008

The fourth in a series of sex assaults in women's homes has raised new criticism of how the police are communicating with the public about the cases.

A 68-year-old woman was sexually assaulted in her home in Aspen Gardens on Saturday after a man broke in. Police have said they think he is the same man responsible for three similar sex assaults earlier this year in Garneau.

The police this week warned the public to "take extra safety precautions when home alone. (We) advise that windows and all doors be locked, and your home secure at all times."

The Garneau Sisterhood is a loose association of neighbourhood women that formed after the third incident in that neighbourhood. One member disagrees with the police message. "The police response has largely been limited to,'Lock your doors, lock your windows, don't go out by yourself at night,'" said the woman, who doesn't want to be named.

"That's just so frustrating, when the police are telling women that the onus is on (us) to keep safe," she said. "I think it's victim-blaming."

Lise Gotell, an associate professor of women's studies at the University of Alberta, was
also upset by the police recommendations.

"Warnings like (that)do much more harm than good," she wrote in an e-mail to The Journal. "They limit women's movement and create the impression that it is women who are responsible for managing rape through vigilance."

But a senior sexual assault investigator defended his department's warnings.

"The Edmonton Police Service, and in particular the sexual assault service, is certainly not in the business of blaming victims at all," Staff Sgt. Brian Readman said. "It would be extremely tragic if we didn't offer suggestions for personal security and because we didn't, there were additional victims."

Readman wouldn't confirm whether or not the four women who were attacked had locked their doors, but said that locking doors and windows is important safety advice.

"We're not suggesting that people were negligent at all," he said. "But I think that everybody should be able to buy into the concept that a locked house is a safer environment than an unlocked house."

Gotell criticized investigators for the "vague" description of the attacker and his methods.

Readman insisted that they have released everything they can about the man's description.

The community league in Aspen Gardens will be hold an information meeting tonight Residents will be able to talk to police and each other about ways to stay safe.

Authority

For the first time in newspaper coverage of the assaults, the author includes open and specific criticism of police action. Collum’s article is titled “Some women disagree over rape warnings.” While neither the perpetrator nor the police themselves are actually
named, this title centers women’s opinions and using the word “rape” instead of a variation of sexual or sex assault. Police, as specific (Edmonton Police Service) and classified social actors, are collocated and activated with action verbs (suggestions, recommendations, response and communicating, said, think, warned, advise, telling, offer,) related to safety (precautions, personal security, ways to stay safe). The police are also collocated with negative feedback (criticism, victim-blaming, blaming victims).

Gotell is a named, classified, activated social actor, collocated with the authoritative title of Associate Professor of women’s studies, action verbs (wrote, criticized), and also the emotional state of being “upset.” In mentioning Gotell’s e-mail to the newspaper, Collum names The Journal specifically and includes the newspaper as a passive social actor in the process of representing these events and a beneficiary of receiving information. Collum excludes information explaining why Gotell wrote to The Journal.

Staff Sgt. Brian Readman is a named, specific, classified (senior sexual assault investigator), activated social actor collocated with action verbs (defended, said, wouldn’t confirm, not suggesting, think, insisted). He is collocated with the The Edmonton Police Service through his use of the pronouns we (“We’re not suggesting that people were negligent at all”) and through the author’s description of his defense of “his department’s warnings.” The sexual assault service, like the police, is connected with warnings and “suggestions for personal security.” Investigators, as specific, classified, affected social actors, are criticized by Gotell for “vague” descriptions and supported by Readman for releasing “everything they can about the man’s description.” The police, the sexual assault service, investigators, and Readman are all named by Collum and support each
other in their actions. The Garneau Sisterhood and Gotell’s comments support each other as well.

The Garneau Sisterhood is included as a group that has registered an opinion by disagreeing over the police warnings. They are referred to as “some women” in the title of the article and described as a “loose association of neighbourhood women” and collocated with one anonymous member of the group whose disagreement is quoted. This is the first time anyone from the group is quoted in the mainstream newspapers. This is also the first time the language of “victim-blaming” is included (“That’s just so frustrating, when the police are telling women that the onus is on (us) to keep safe,” she said. “I think it’s victim-blaming.”).

The community league in Aspen Gardens is named as a specific classified social actor that will “hold an information meeting” with access to the authorities, where residents will “be able to talk to police and each other about ways to stay safe.”

Suspect/Perpetrator

Collum uses rape, sex assault, sexual assault, attack, cases, and incident interchangeably throughout the article. The title of the article is an instance of nominalization as the perpetrator of the “rape” is not included, nor is the social actor responsible for the “warnings.” The victims are erased from this as well. The entirety of the violence perpetrated by this man against the woman is hidden in these words. The term “sexual assault” is used in reference to the official police unit devoted to these crimes (Sexual Assault Unit), while newspaper articles often feature the term “sex assault” in headlines and articles. The term rape is included twice, once in the title of the article and once in a quote by Gotell.
Collum uses *warnings, message, response, recommendations, suggestions, and advice* interchangeably throughout the article to refer to the tips and information the police put forth in previous articles regarding safety and women locking their doors and windows in response to the rapist in the neighbourhood. *The Garneau Sisterhood* is quoted using the term “response” and Gotell uses the term “warning.”

The rapist himself, referred to as the *man* or the *attacker*, is mentioned three times in the whole article. Twice he is included as a noun and social actor, and once as an adjective (*the man’s description*). His “methods” are also mentioned when Gotell criticizes the “investigators for the ‘vague’ description of the attacker and his methods.” Sentence construction around him creates the impression that the nominalized assault simply occurred, while the man is responsible for the break in. Collum writes that a “68-year-old woman was sexually assaulted in her home in Aspen Gardens on Saturday after a man broke in.” While there are connections made to the “three similar sex assaults earlier this year in Garneau,” no connections are made between these sexual assaults and sexual assaults in general. Keeping the focus on the individual man and his description, Collum includes Readman’s insistence that the police “have released everything they can.” Collum does not actually include any of the description in this article.

**Survivor/Victim**

Those affected by the assaults are referred to in a generic way in this article, with only one individual woman included with her age and location (*68-year-old woman was sexually assaulted in her home in Aspen Gardens*). Readman refers to *people* instead of *women* when defending police warnings to lock doors and windows that were explicitly aimed at women in previous articles (*We’re not suggesting that people were negligent at*
Gender is again absent in the generic term \textit{victim} when Readman is quoted to say that the police are “not in the business of blaming victims at all” and that it would be “tragic if we didn’t offer suggestions for personal security and because we didn’t, there were additional victims.” \textit{Victims} are included here as passive, affected, classified social actors. They are also represented as individuals who need “personal security” instead of a politicized group who need community security.

The two neighbourhoods are represented in different ways in this article. Garneau is collocated with the Garneau Sisterhood (\textit{a loose association of neighbourhood women that formed after the third incident in that neighbourhood}) and Aspen Gardens is collocated with a \textit{community league} and a meeting for residents to get information and connect with the police. One neighbourhood is represented as home to those criticizing the police, and one is home to those cooperating with their authority.

Women are the subject of the article’s title instead of police (\textit{Some women disagree over rape warnings}), however the title is unclear over who those women are and with whom they are disagreeing. The title could be read two ways: women are disagreeing with each other, or women are disagreeing with someone else. Women in the article include the “four women who were attacked,” members of the Garneau Sisterhood, and women in general who are affected by the warnings (“\textit{They limit women’s movement and create the impression that it is women who are responsible for managing rape through vigilance.”}). This is the second time in a mainstream newspaper article that the impacts on women are discussed, beyond those directly attacked by this particular rapist. The first time was in the August 12\textsuperscript{th} article in the discussion of the Garneau Sisterhood. This time Gotell brings this forward.
Readman aims to appeal to the reader’s “common sense” when he states, “everybody should be able to buy into the concept that a locked house is a safer environment than an unlocked house.” This ignores the fact that the perpetrator broke into the women’s homes, something that can only be done when doors are locked. It also ignores the reality of sexual assaults that take place within homes, perpetrated by people known to the victim (i.e., family members).

Fall and Summer 2009 Garneau Sisterhood: Question Campaign

I have examined five variations of posters from this campaign. Posters were hand-written and photocopied, then affixed to various outdoor structures in Garneau and the surrounding area (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign Posters
Authority

This campaign started in the summer of 2009 and was reinforced with additional posters in the fall of 2009. The authors of these campaign posters feature three main social actors: You (the reader), the Garneau Sisters/Sisterhood, and the police. As the title indicates, the text of these posters is largely in question format, with the exception of the call to action to “visit” their website and “email” them.

The pronoun you, a genderless generic yet personal social actor with a “voice” that “matters,” is explicitly given authority as the “expert” (The Garneau Sisterhood is asking the experts... YOU) and asked a series of questions by the Garneau Sisters (Have you ever reported a sexual assault? What would help you feel more comfortable reporting? What sort of response would you like to see from your community when someone has committed a sexual assault?). The questions revolve around experiences of reporting sexual assault to the police, responses from the community around sexual assault, and police warnings. The reader of the poster (you) is invited to “tell us what you think” and voice what would “make you more comfortable reporting.” You is collocated with actions (reported, reporting, help, feel, tell, think, see, make, happen, like). You is invited into a personal conversation with the Garneau Sisterhood through their email
address where *you* can disclose information about previous assaults and discuss experiences of reporting and ideas for change. On one poster, “Women of Garneau” are told “you are the sisterhood.” In this case, the specific, personal, activated pronoun *you* refers specifically to the women in the neighbourhood.

The *Garneau Sisters* and *Garneau Sisterhood*, as specific, classified, personal social actors, are collocated with action verbs seeking information (*wants, know, wondering, wanna*). This campaign is directly following their press release that asked, “what would be the disadvantage of an empowered and informed community?” The authors ask how both *men* and *women* can “unite in order to combat rape culture,” what *we* can do “to lift the silence around offenders we know,” and how “we can ALL make it happen.” The social actor *we* is included here as a generic pronoun implicated in making change and capable of learning from those who answer the Question Campaign. The pronoun *us* is also used to refer to these social actors and authors (*Tell us what you think, tell us what you wanna see, tell us how we can ALL make it happen*).

The campaign briefly mentions *someone else* to whom the question respondents may have reported, other than police. This may imply third party reporting to sexual assault centres mentioned in the Original Campaign. The authors exclude further information on this generic social actor, but collocate it with the question about ways to make people “more comfortable reporting.”

Police and police warnings are written in as authorities, but included as part of questions, critiques, and perpetuation of “rape culture” (*What do YOU think about police warnings [or lack of warnings] about sexual offenders*?). Not only is the police *response* given partial responsibility for preventing sexual assault (*What kind of response would...*)
you like to see from police when reporting a sexual assault?), but the response from the community is also opened up for discussion (What sort of response would you like to see from your community when someone has committed a sexual assault?). The authors specifically address the silence of communities “around offenders we know” as something that can be lifted by men and women uniting in order to “combat rape culture.” The authors hold rape culture and all of our roles within it as largely responsible for sexual assault. While there is no explicit definition, listing men and women in this article as well as “each of us” and the “context of violence” in the Press Release indicates that the authors are looking beyond individual offenders for responsibility for sexual assault prevention.

**Suspect/Perpetrator**

Instead of focusing on a specific rapist, this campaign refers to a generic genderless social actor to be held responsible by a community in the case of sexual assault (what sort of response would you like to see from your community when someone has committed a sexual assault?). Information on offenders and their predominantly male gender is left out of this campaign. Each reader and their community are personally implicated in holding perpetrators accountable through the language of “your community” and “your neighbourhood.” The authors write about offenders as passive/affected, classified, generic social actors, and the subject of police warnings (What do you think about police warning regarding sexual offenders?). They are mentioned only as part of an open question to you about how you think we should all respond.
Classified, generic sexual assault is nominalized in the authors’ writing, backgrounding the social actors responsible. While offenders are mentioned in other parts of the Question Campaign, they are absent in the questions around reporting (Have you ever reported a sexual assault to the police? To someone else? Why or why not? Would anything make you more comfortable reporting?). Offenders are replaced with the generic “someone” in questions around community and police responses, however others implicated in rape culture are included there (What kind of response would you like to see from police when reporting a sexual assault? What sort of response would you like to see from your community when someone has committed a sexual assault?).

Survivor/Victim

There are only two victims included in the question campaign: Your neighbourhood and your community. The generic, personal neighbourhood is the site of violence. The community is represented as a generic, personal, affected social actor that is also capable of, and expected to have, a response to someone perpetrating a sexual assault. Focus on individual victims is replaced with focus on collective impacts.

Edmonton

Edmonton, Alberta was incorporated as a city in 1904 and is now the fifth largest Canadian city. On the south side of the North Saskatchewan River, the city contains the neighboring areas of Garneau, Aspen Gardens, the University of Alberta, and Whyte Avenue.
January 2010 Garneau Sisterhood: New Years Campaign

I have examined two variations of posters from this campaign (see Figure 3). Posters were hand-written and photocopied, then affixed to bus stops and windows in the commercial district of Whyte Avenue adjacent to Garneau.

Figure 3: Garneau Sisterhood New Years Eve Campaign Posters
Authority

In the New Years Campaign, the Garneau Sisterhood positions itself as the only authority, directing the reader of the posters to “let us assist you” (If you're having a hard time coming up with some New Years Resolutions, let us help.). They are represented as specific, classified, social actors providing information in a personal way (Happy New Year from the Garneau Sisterhood!). Playing on the cliché of “having a hard time coming up with some New Years Resolutions,” the authors strongly suggest, in a humorous way, that the reader do their part to end rape culture.

Suspect/Perpetrator

The authors position you, the generic personal reader, as responsible for the prevention of sexual assault. You is a social actor collocated with action verbs (will, brush up, use, get, peep, walking, expect, laugh, respect, do, remember). In the form of new years resolutions, the posters are full of “I” statements declaring the ways I will “do something to stop rape” by not using booze, friends’ sexist jokes, pressure, threats, or bribes and by “respecting people’s sexual choices, identities and boundaries.” The generic “rape” is nominalized without any particular social actors attached to it.

New Years is a time of year associated with parties and drinking. This is the first Garneau Sisterhood campaign dealing with alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, however, alcohol is not the sole, or even main, focus of the campaign. Consent is represented as the responsibility of those who “use booze to get into someone’s pants” or “peep” in windows, or “expect intimacy or use pressure, threats or bribes to get sex.” Beyond these actions, it is also the responsibility of those who, seemingly simply, “laugh at friends’
sexist jokes” or do not “respect people’s sexual choices, identities and boundaries” or need to “remember my partner date spouse does not owe me sex.”

The posters are directed at a generic reader, thus, the responsibility to “do something to stop rape” is represented as accessible to anyone following these New Years resolutions. Instead of focusing on policing or the actions of victims or survivors, this campaign focuses on everyday elements that contribute to violence against women. This is a campaign that was initiated by the Garneau Sisterhood without being in direct response to a particular police report or media article.

Survivor/Victim

This campaign does not include specific victims or survivors; it refers to generic people and their “sexual choices, identities and boundaries,” as well as the generic someone (I will not use booze to get into someone’s pants). While these are passive/affected, generic, genderless social actors, they are also presented personally in terms of “I” statements and relations between people (friend, partner, date, spouse). Generic and classified personal interrelations between people are also affected (consent, intimacy, sex) or are the beneficiaries of respect (choices, identities, boundaries, sex).

March 5th 2010 Edmonton Journal Article: Alcohol-fuelled sex assaults on the rise in Edmonton

This article was written by Gelines almost two years after the original sexual assaults in the Garneau neighbourhood were publicized in the Edmonton Journal and CBC articles. It provides coverage of a press conference held by the EPS.
Alcohol-fuelled sex assaults on the rise in Edmonton

The Edmonton Journal MARCH 5, 2010

Edmonton Police Service Supt. Danielle Campbell answers reporters' questions during a news conference at EPS headquarters on March 4 concerning alcohol facilitated sexual assaults.

EDMONTON — The number of sexual assaults reported to Edmonton police rose in 2009 and investigators say many complaints involved victims who were under the influence of alcohol at the time.

"Of the 645 sexual assaults that were reported to our service in 2009, more than 40 per cent were alcohol-facilitated sexual assaults," said Supt. Danielle Campbell, who heads the Criminal Investigations Division. "I'm tired of that trend. It needs to stop."

Campbell stressed that a sexual assault is never the fault of the victim. She said no means no the first time, and another drink can't change that.

"We need people to understand that consent cannot be given if the person is impaired by alcohol: If they're passed out, if they're unconscious, if they're sleeping," Campbell said.

"If you have to ask yourself: 'Are they sober enough to give consent?' Take a phone number. Call them the next day."

Many sexual assaults go unreported, making the actual number difficult to estimate, Campbell said. The vast majority happen between people who know each other.

There are alternatives for victims who wish to remain anonymous. Agencies such as the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton offer third-party reporting. The centre's executive director Karen Smith said victims sometimes choose to go to centre counsellors instead of police, and these victims may provide evidence such as suspect descriptions and
assault circumstances that the centre will pass along to police without identifying the victim. This information can be valuable for police in linking cases with similar motives or circumstances, Campbell said.

Police have angered some local feminists in recent years by making comments they said seemed to blame the victims.

When a woman was sexually assaulted in her Belgravia home last October by a stranger who came to the door, police warned the public not to open doors to strangers. When what appeared to be a serial rapist was targeting women in Garneau-area homes in 2008, a member of the sexual assault section urged women to be vigilant, to lock their doors and windows.

The EPS made no such warnings Thursday, choosing instead to focus on those who might consider taking advantage of someone who is drunk.

Campbell, who was promoted to the rank of superintendent in January, repeatedly said Thursday a sexual assault is never the victim's fault.

She said the EPS is changing the way it addresses sexual assaults, no longer sending out blunt warnings to potential victims.

"It's the wrong messaging," she said.

Authority

The author of this article, Gelinas, represents the police as the main authorities around the subject of alcohol-facilitated sexual assault. As classified, specific social actors, the EPS is collocated with action verbs (angered, making, warned, made, choosing, changing, addresses, sending) associated with the changes they are making.

The EPS is “changing the way it addresses sexual assaults,” by choosing to focus on
potential perpetrators and avoid “blunt warnings to potential victims.” Police are also represented as specific, classified, affected social agents who are the beneficiaries of information provided by victims through third parties like the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (victims may provide evidence such as suspect descriptions and assault circumstances that the centre will pass along to the police, information can be valuable for police in linking cases with similar motives or circumstances).

Most prominent among the police is Danielle Campbell, “promoted to the rank of superintendent in January” and head of the Criminal Investigation Division. As a named social actor, Campbell is collocated with work, location, and knowing exclusive to police (headquarters, reporting, complaints, evidence, suspect, descriptions, circumstances, linking cases, motives). She is represented, and represents herself, in a personal way through her quotations (I’m tired of that trend. It needs to stop.). She is quoted and attributed with statements that police have not made before in other articles, reflecting feedback from the Garneau Sisterhood (Campbell stressed that a sexual assault is never the fault of the victim). Campbell denounces previous police warnings as “the wrong messaging.” She addresses the rise in reports the police have received from victims of sexual assaults and the “more than 40 percent” that were alcohol-facilitated.

Campbell makes educative statements addressing how “consent cannot be given if the person is impaired by alcohol: If they’re passed out, if they’re unconscious, if they’re sleeping.” Consent is something Campbell says “we” need people to understand, however, it is unclear to whom this generic we refers. It could be the police or a general public concerned with sexual assault. In previous media and campaign coverage, only the GS has mentioned consent. Campbell is collocated with the word “said” eight times
throughout the article, indicating the centrality of her comments. The article arose out of a “news conference at EPS headquarters on March 4 concerning alcohol facilitated sexual assaults” where Campbell “answers reporters’ questions.” This is a context created by the police for the media. Campbell is prepared with reporting statistics (Of the 645 sexual assaults that were reported to our service in 2009, more than 40 percent were alcohol-facilitated). In the wake of the Garneau Sisterhood campaigns questioning the police reports and warnings, the police are clearly demonstrating their connection to reporting and distancing themselves from any warnings connected to victim-blaming.

In contrast to Campbell, an unnamed, impersonal, classified member of the sexual assault section is given responsibility for having “urged women to be vigilant, to lock their doors and windows” when “what appeared to be a serial rapist was targeting women in Garneau-area homes in 2008.” This singular member could refer to three different people who were quoted making related statements in the Edmonton Journal and CBC articles: Det. Scott McMorran from the May 27th CBC article and May 28th Journal article, Det. Melanie Grace from the April 12th Journal article, or Staff Sgt. Brian Readman from the April 14th Journal article. It is unclear to which member Gelinas is referring, however, the singularity of members appears false. More than one member of the sexual assault section of the Edmonton Police Service made comments instructing women to prevent attacks in this way. Gelinas has included incorrect information in his article. Police are also collocated with investigators who provide insight into the rise in sexual assault reported to police (investigators say complaints involved victims who were under the influence of alcohol at the time).
While the Garneau Sisterhood has mentioned the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton in previous campaigns, this is the first time the media has mentioned “alternatives for victims who wish to remain anonymous” and specifically the Centre as a classified, specific agency that offers third-party reporting. It is collocated with the centre’s executive director Karen Smith and centre counselors, who victims “sometimes choose to go to instead of police.” Smith is a named social actor collocated with the action word “said,” while the counsellors are classified, specific, affected/passive social actors who are a choice victims can make as a step toward moving information to the police. There is no other information provided regarding the role of the executive director or counselors. The Centre is represented as an alternative to police and knowers of sexual assault information, however, this information is represented as ultimately meant for police. The police are the beneficiaries of this information, as the centre will pass along suspect descriptions and assault circumstances to police without identifying the victim. This information is “valuable for police” in their work of “linking cases with similar motives or circumstances,” according to Campbell.

In this article, police are addressing victim blaming and they are offering the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton as an option, however, they are still concentrating on stranger assault. Perpetrators and victims remain explicitly genderless and this focus on alcohol helps to construct a particular kind of victim who is young and drinking. Campbell talks about ways victims are not giving consent—being unconscious, being impaired, sleeping—but does not address victims’ resistance beyond saying “no the first time.”
The author mentions reporters overtly in the article. The article came out of a news conference at EPS headquarters where Campbell answered reporters’ questions. Reporters, while included in this article merely as a classified possessive noun, are implicated in responsibility for assault prevention through media reporting around sexual assault, consent messaging, and police public relations.

Suspect/Perpetrator

The author nominalizes assaults, complaints, another drink, and cases in this article. Gelinas refers to generic, classified “alcohol-fuelled sex assaults” in the title of the article which excludes the social actor involved in the assaults. Campbell refers to sexual assaults that “go unreported,” and states that “sexual assault is never the fault of the victim,” while backgrounding the role of the perpetrator. Generic assaults are collocated with classifying and quantifying words (alcohol-fuelled, sex, alcohol-facilitated, 645, 40 percent, on the rise, unreported, actual number, majority, potential).

The author points out that the “vast majority happen between people who know each other.” This genderless, mutual language does not represent the nature of this violent event with a clear perpetrator and victim. Generic, genderless people are also represented as needing to understand consent in order to prevent sexual assault. Alcohol is used as an adjective to specify the assault, thereby creating another category of sexual violence and differentiating the violence.

The author points out that “many complaints involved victims who were under the influence of alcohol” and that “consent cannot be given if the person is impaired by alcohol,” thereby implicating the generic, nominalized alcohol in responsibility for assault prevention. Alcohol is represented as something that can facilitate and fuel sexual
assault and “sex assaults.” Another drink is also nominalized through Campbell’s language (another drink can’t change that). The author presents the information from investigators in a way that once again centers on victims and their state at the time of assault instead of the state of the attackers or their societal context. Focusing on the state of the victims implies that the women’s circumstances are capable of creating a situation that, if avoided, should decrease the likelihood of sexual assault. In this article, the police are presenting a context in which victims were assaulted while drunk, participating in risky behaviour that should be avoided. It is certainly more difficult to argue that women can avoid being raped by not sleeping in their homes, as the Garneau and Aspen Gardens women were when the rapist attacked.

For the first time in the mainstream media, you is implicated as a social actor responsible for sexual assault prevention. Campbell refers to a generic and genderless you (If you have to ask yourself: ‘Are they sober enough to give consent?’ Take a phone number. Call them the next day.). The author refers to a specific, impersonal, classified, genderless serial rapist who was attacking women in Garneau and Aspen Gardens. He is referred to as a stranger as the author reminds the reader that the “police warned the public not to open doors to strangers,” specific, classified, impersonal, affected social actors who are the beneficiaries of opened doors. The author represents a specific group of people as responsible for preventing specifically alcohol-facilitated sexual assault. Campbell speaks directly about “those” impersonal social actors “who might consider taking advantage of someone who is drunk.”
Survivor/Victim

The author represents victims as specific, classified, affected/passive social actors (many complaints involved victims, alternative for victims, sexual assault is never the victim’s fault) with the exception of victim’s choice to go to counsellors instead of police. Instead of their ages and addresses, these victims—or generic person—are collocated with states of being (under the influence, impaired, potential, passed out, unconscious, sleeping), alcohol, fault, blame, and choice.

Local feminists are represented as “angered” by police through their comments that “seemed to blame the victims.” The author represents feminists as emotional and influenced by the police only. Gelinas does not explicitly connect these generic, classified, affected/passive social actors to the Garneau Sisterhood or Lise Gotell, nor does he directly quote them. Instead he quotes Karen Smith, a direct service provider who works alongside police to pass on information through third party reporting.

Gelinas mentions one specific, affected/passive woman who was assaulted “in her Belgravia home last October by a stranger who came to the door.” In this case “police warned the public not to open doors to strangers” in the context of a serial rapist targeting specific women in Garneau-area homes. According to the author, the police were not only warning women, but also the generic, genderless public.

Summary

In the first section if this chapter, I analyzed the reporting and campaign material following the initial attacks in Garneau, including the May 27 CBC article, the May 28 Edmonton Journal article, the Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed, and the Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign. In the second section, I analyzed the reporting and campaign material
following the Aspen Gardens attack, including the August 12 *Edmonton Journal* article, the Garneau Sisterhood Press Release, the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign, and the August 14th *Edmonton Journal Article*. In the third section, I analyzed the Garneau Sisterhood New Years Campaign and the March 5 *Edmonton Journal* article connected to the broader Edmonton area, which emerged approximately one year after the original story.

In this chapter, I grouped and analyzed participants as authorities, suspects/perpetrators, and victims/survivors. These categories are based on nominalization, collocation, and grammatical roles surfacing in the texts. Authorities are placed by authors in central, active roles and are represented as knowing information related to the assaults. Authorities are collocated with active verbs, they are invited to speak, hold opinions, and take action. Suspects/perpetrators are placed by authors in active, though often background, roles and are represented as having committed the assaults or actions related to the assaults. At times, the agent responsible for the assaults is absent, resulting in nominalization. Victims/survivors are placed by authors in either active or passive roles and are represented as either knowing or lacking information related to the assaults against them.
Chapter 5 Discussion of Analysis

In this chapter, I present a discussion of my analysis informed by FCDA on the way that social actors are reflected in the *Edmonton Journal, CBC News*, and GS coverage of the sexual assaults between May 2008 and March 2010. This chapter is divided into three sections based on the categories of social actors from my fourth chapter: authority, suspect/perpetrator, and survivor/victim. In each section, I attend to my research questions. What ideological discourses about responsibility for sexual assault prevention are reflected in *Edmonton Journal, CBC News*, and Garneau Sisterhood coverage of the attacks between May 2008 and March 2010? In what ways do these texts reflect linguistic changes in the representation of responsible actors across time? In what ways do these texts reflect interdiscursive changes in the representation of responsible actors and across time?

In this research, linguistic changes refer to the shifts in internal processes of representation of responsibility and the positioning of social actors at a linguistic level. These internal processes or lexical choices (Fairclough, 1989) include nominalization, collocation of words, and grammatical roles associated with social actors (Fairclough, 2003). Interdiscursive changes refer to the intertextual or external processes of discursive and generic choices that exist between the texts in chronological interaction across time (Fairclough, 2003), including recontextualization, the use of legitimation, and the situating of gendered voices (Fairclough, 1989).

Through my analysis, I identify ideological discourses that work to maintain rape culture in the *Edmonton Journal, CBC News*, and police coverage of the attacks. Dominant, “common-sense,” risk-management discourses maintain rape culture through
neoliberal decontextualization of sexual assault, enabled through the denial of social responsibility, and the construction of individual responsibility.

I find that the denial of social responsibility is facilitated by the centering of police authority and media objectivity, as well as the co-optation of and disregard for feminist strategies of collective safety making, such as those of the GS. I find that the construction of individual responsibility is facilitated through the representation of women as simultaneously at risk of sexual assault and responsible for prevention, as well as the erasure of both women’s resistance and men’s accountability. I also identify discourse that works to disrupt rape culture through contextualization of sexual assault, challenging individual responsibility, and constructing social responsibility.

The categories of authority, suspect/perpetrator, and survivor/victim include the following grouped social actors: police, GS, individual perpetrator, potential perpetrators, individual victims, potential victims, and the community at large. Social actors, or participants in social processes, clauses, and circumstances, can be classified and categorized thereby shaping how people think and act as social agents (Fairclough, 1998). According to Fairclough (1998), “the ‘work’ of classification is constantly going on in texts” (p. 88) producing characters of particular social orders through representation. Ideological assumptions behind what exists, what is the case, and what is (un)desirable are made clear through language choices (Fairclough, 1998). Ideologies upholding authority and victimization were enacted in the ways the genres of police report, news report, and citizen interview interacted, serving to inform, instruct, and warn through hybridity.

Through my analysis of the articles published by the Edmonton Journal and the
CBC, I explore the subtle ways the collocation of certain verbs and nouns lend legitimacy and primacy to certain social actors and placed others in passive roles. Other than the GS, women as individuals or groups are predominantly associated with passive verbs and are disconnected from knowing and agency, while police are consistently associated with action verbs that denote them as knowers and doers. The verbs themselves—the language choices—send a message about the ideologies behind them. They have significant effects on maintaining the structure and functioning of society according to received wisdom.

These patterns were disrupted by the work of the GS. The grassroots movement discourses linguistically and interdiscursively interacted with the neoliberal institutionalized discourses, placing other social actors at the centre of the messaging and challenging the neutrality of accepted ways of writing about sexual assault.

**Authority**

Social actors produced within the category of authority consisted, initially, of police and an individual detective, McMorran. This was expanded to include university personnel, under police advisement. The GS introduced itself as an authority, along with the Criminal Code, the Sexual Assault Centre, women in general, and readers themselves. Following this introduction, the police were once again represented as authorities, along with another detective, Grace, supported by the sexual assault unit. The GS responded by reasserting women’s and their own authority, while introducing a broader sense of authority in the community, neighbourhoods, the city, and each of us. Subsequently, police were once again produced as authorities in response to the GS campaigns, supported by Sgt. Readman, investigators, and the sexual assault service. The GS and Associate Professor Gotell were included as authorities, as well as the Aspen Gardens
Community League working in collaboration with the police. The GS produced additional representations of authority that included the reader, women of Garneau, and their own Garneau Sisters. In the last text I examined, feminists were included while police were once again positioned as authorities, backed up by investigators, the Criminal Investigations Division, and Supt. Campbell in collaboration with the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton and its executive director, Smith (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Social Actors Constructed as Authority* (chronological from top to bottom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Campaigns</th>
<th>Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC (Gerow) May 27, 2008</td>
<td>EPS, Det McMorran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28, 2008</td>
<td>EPS, Det McMorran, Bev Betkowski, campus staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Gelinas)</td>
<td>Original Campaign June 2008 (13v)</td>
<td>GS, Criminal Code, readers, SAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12, 2008</td>
<td>Additional Posters August 2008 (1v)</td>
<td>Women of Aspen Gardens, GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Collum)</td>
<td>Press Release August 13, 2008</td>
<td>GS, community, neighbourhoods, women, the city, each of us/we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 14, 2008</td>
<td>EPS, Sgt Readman, investigators, sexual assault service, prof Lise Gotell, GS, Aspen Gardens community league</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Campaign Summer and Fall 2009 (5v)</td>
<td>reader (you), women of Garneau, Garneau Sisters, GS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Years Campaign January 2010 (2v)</td>
<td>GS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Police

In the denial of social responsibility for prevention of sexual violence, police authority is centered and mainstream media claim objectivity in representing the events and social actors involved. With the emphasis on individual responsibility instead of social responsibility for assault prevention, individual victims and victims-in-waiting must then be determined as deserving of police protection and state representation in court or not. Despite decades of pressure from feminist and other groups to alter police practices and attitudes, the Statistics Canada General Social Surveys (2004, 2007) have found that less than 10 percent of sexual assault survivors report to police, and an even smaller percentage result in charges, convictions, or jail time. Nevertheless, police are consistently the central authority figures in media reporting on sexual assault. The espoused neutrality of mainstream media institutions plays a powerful role in interpreting social events and positioning social actors, while appearing neutral with a “view from nowhere” (Kelly, 2010). The positioning of social actors through language represents the dominant ideologies of the social institution or those who control it, building common sense assumptions around the naturalness of authority and the control it entails (Fairclough, 1989).

Statements and actions by those associated with the Edmonton Police Service serve to support and legitimize each other within each newspaper article and across articles. The articles include two detectives, a senior sexual assault investigator and staff sergeant, a superintendent, investigators, the department, the sexual assault service, and
the sexual assault unit. They also include a University of Alberta spokeswoman, campus security staff, staff in student residence buildings, four neighbourhood residents, the Aspen Gardens Community League, and the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) who are all responding to the police.

The authority of the police, as an institution, is sustained through the positioning of several supporting social actors, including individual members of the police force, the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, and University of Alberta staff. Police authority is also situated through naming specific groups within the institution, including the sexual assault unit or service and investigators. Four different individuals speak on behalf of the police. The rank of these individuals increases over time. The first individual representing the police is a male detective; the second is a female detective; the third is a male sergeant; and the fourth is a female superintendent. This has the effect of reasserting authority on the issue of sexual assault after public critique. It also has the effect of demonstrating an increased priority for the issue of sexual assault.

The earliest articles position police as authorities on the sexual assaults, represented by Det. McMorran. In his article, “Police issue warning to women in Garneau,” Gerow featured warnings to women from EPS, quotes from McMorran, and quotes from female residents of Garneau who legitimize police warnings. He focuses on police warnings to women and presents the events from the police perspective, showing them as individual, isolated crimes. The police are represented as responsible for attending to the perpetrator and warning women. Police provided tips to address women’s need for safety, that discursively construct women as perpetually responsible for individualized acts of prevention, instead of announcing their own strategies for
prevention of violence. The use of the colloquial term “tips” to address the need for safety regarding sexualized violence also has the effect of diminishing and ignoring the direness of what is being discussed. In his article, “Police warn of Garneau sex assaults,” Senger also featured the police and McMorran as authorities. The police are represented as responsible for attending to the perpetrator and warning women. Like Gerow, Senger focuses on police warnings to women and presents the events from the police perspective of individual, isolated crimes. University of Alberta spokeswoman Bev Betkowski endorses police authority by passing on their warnings to campus security and student resident staff. University of Alberta residence staff and campus security are in a position of authority as they are charged with protecting students who may be considered “at risk” of assault.

In the Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed, “Garneau Sisterhood organizing in response to sexual assaults,” the authority of the police and other newspapers is questioned. The GS op ed responds to the CBC and Edmonton Journal representations of police warnings to women and dominant understanding of sexual assault prevention that put the onus on women to manage the risk of violence against them and leave out the perpetrators’ and society’s responsibility. The GS reworks the police warnings aimed at women and applies them to everyone, acknowledging their own role and everyone’s role in preventing violence. The Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed also challenges the emphasis on stranger assault in a context where assault perpetrator by those known to victims is rampant. In the Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign, the police are included as an option for women wanting to report. The language around the GS watching the neighbourhood is in response to the police and the perpetrator, challenging ideas of who
can be in positions of surveillance and power.

In the August 12 *Edmonton Journal* article by Gelinas, “Southside sex attack makes four,” the police, Det. Melanie Grace, and the sexual assault unit of the police are authorities. The police are represented as responsible for attending to the perpetrator, warning women, and providing advice to neighbourhoods. The police remain central figures responsible for attending to the perpetrator, warning women, and providing advice to neighbourhoods. Quotes from Det. Grace support the earlier quotes from Det. McMorran. Focusing on individual cases of sexual assault as if they are happening in isolation perpetuates rape culture because it does not account for the context of violence or the role everyone has in preventing it.

In the Garneau Sisterhood Press Release, “The Garneau Sisterhood responds to the Aspen Garden rape,” the GS frames the police and media as social actors who should be held accountable for their role in perpetuating a rape culture. The GS challenged police warnings to women and Det. Grace’s warnings to the GS itself. This is the first time the GS created the opportunity to respond to the way they had been represented in the media by the police. The defense of their actions was, itself, a critique of police warnings.

In the August 14 *Edmonton Journal* article by Collum, police, Staff Sgt. Brian Readman, police investigators, and the sexual assault service of the police are positioned as authorities. The community league in Aspen Gardens is also included as an authority through its connection working with the police. Collum features quotes from Staff Sgt. Readman who speaks on behalf of his department and the sexual assault service of the police. The police are presented as social actors responsible for assault prevention, along
with the GS. Collum provides the first article to feature views opposing the police, and those of Staff Sgt. Readman in this case. She represents the GS’s criticism of police warnings in contrast to Readman’s defense of police actions. She features quotes from Associate Professor Gotell who also critiques police warnings and the lack of information provided to the community with the expectation for women to manage the risk of sexual violence.

In the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign, the GS invites an active questioning of the authority of the police, and specifically police warnings. The GS indirectly responds to police warnings by asking the neighbourhood for feedback. The police are positioned as just one of the social actors responsible for preventing sexual assault and combating rape culture. In addition to perpetrators in general and the community, the GS focuses on the responsibility of police to act in accordance with the community’s needs. In the Garneau Sisterhood New Years Campaign, the police are left out entirely as a source of sexual assault prevention. The GS places all emphasis on everyday suggestions for ending violence. They point to actions and attitudes that the general public can participate in on a daily basis to take responsibility with the people in their lives.

In the March 5 *Edmonton Journal* article by Gelinas, “Alcohol-fuelled sex assault on the rise in Edmonton,” the police and police investigators are represented as the main authority linked with the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton and represented by Supt. Campbell of the Criminal Investigation Division. The authority of an unnamed member of the sexual assault section is questioned for previous warnings to women. Gelinas covers an EPS press conference featuring the new Supt. Campbell discussing changes in
police responses to sexual assault in a personal tone. Gelinas quotes Campbell addressing consent, alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, and potential perpetrator responsibility to prevent assault. The language changes from previous police statements to reflect some of the critiques from the GS, though it does not address these concerns in depth. Supt. Campbell states that “consent cannot be given if the person is impaired by alcohol,” yet this assumes that consent is being sought in the first place. She uses a new personalized approach to say “I’m tired of that trend” (Gelinas, 2010). It is interesting to note that she uses an expression of fatigue, instead of outrage or anger, about widespread sexualized violence. For the reader, this trivializes and diminishes the trend’s urgency and impact.

Coates and Wade (2007) pointed out that changes in language are not enough, stating that “the notion that crimes of violence can be prevented or reduced simply by changes in language use, without addressing the structural inequalities that afford one group privileged access to social power, discursive space and other social benefits, is to say the least, naive” (p. 520). While police language is changing, this does not necessarily signify a change in policy, action, or distribution of authority. Change cannot be kept at the level of language; it is not enough without also implementing material affects on social inequality. Survivors may be more inclined to report sexual assaults as a result of language used publicly by police even if sex crimes continue to be handled the same way, including asking victim-blaming questions or focusing on individual cases as if they do not exist within a cultural context.

Gelinas discusses the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) as an option for third-party reporting to police, featuring information from SACE Executive Director Smith that Campbell incorporates into her messaging around police investigations. The
Police are the focus of the article as social actors responsible for prevention. This is the first of the articles to mention the SACE as an option for women. Only the Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign referenced SACE when providing options for people to seek support. Gelinas only presents SACE as a source of third-party reporting to police, with Campbell discussing the usefulness of SACE to the police investigation.

Restrictive state funding for individual victim services, to the exclusion of advocacy and education, risks undoing the politicization of violence by movements like those described by Brownmiller (1999)—and exemplified by Doe (2003)—and reframing violence as a private issue to be negotiated through individual risk-management. When SACE was mentioned in the *Edmonton Journal*, the author did not describe the ways the centre could provide support or act as an advocate for survivors; it was included as the first stop for valuable “evidence” in linking cases, “such as suspect descriptions and assault circumstances,” that victims can provide and “the centre will pass along to the police” (Gelinas, 2010).

Espousing neutrality and non-ideological objectivity (Kelly, 2010), the *Edmonton Journal* and the CBC exclude any discussion of the ways they are implicated in representing sexual assault from a particular perspective and featuring the police as the focus of their reporting. Recognition of the authors’ own ideological discourses on assault prevention are absent. Instead, Gelinas’ (2008) *Edmonton Journal* article exemplifies Kelly’s (2010) “view from nowhere,” by presenting the GS and the police in opposition to each other as two supposed “extremes” and authorities in the debate (p. 14). There is, however, no mention of the GS’s critiques of police and newspaper coverage.
The GS, itself, directly acknowledges its own role in responsibility for prevention, for example, by holding the general public responsible.

**Garneau Sisterhood**

The authority of the GS, as a group, gains credibility by referencing the texts of other institutional authorities, including the Criminal Code of Canada and Sexual Assault Centre literature, and is represented by some anonymous individual GS members. In the Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed, “Garneau Sisterhood organizing in response to sexual assaults,” the GS itself is positioned as an authority linked with women in the area and women in general, the community, and the reader of the op ed. The GS is represented as a responsible social actor taking action to prevent rape. According to Stack and Kelly (2006), op eds provide an educational opportunity to challenge the naturalness of normalized discourses in mainstream media. Despite a diminished sense of authority, op eds provide more control for the speaker than do articles written by authors who may misquote or de-contextualize messages (Stack & Kelly, 2006). In the Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign, the GS positions itself as connected with all other women in Garneau. The campaign also evokes the authority of the SACE as an option for people to consult.

In the Aug 12 *Edmonton Journal* article, Gelinas features quotes from Det. Grace, representing the GS posters as threatening and warnings against vigilantism. A clear distinction is drawn between the Aspen Gardens community league working in accordance with police warnings as social actors responsible for assault prevention and the GS working to disrupt and challenge police warnings. The two Edmonton neighbourhoods, as sites of consecutive and related violence, were represented in contrast
to each other. Garneau was home to the “vigilanteeism” and “threatening” posters of the GS, described by Collum (2008) as “a loose association of neighbourhood women that formed after the third incident in that neighbourhood.”

The Aspen Gardens Community League, cooperating with police, held “an information meeting” where it was promised that residents would “be able to talk to police and each other about ways to stay safe” (Collum, 2008). Aspen Gardens was not represented as a university neighbourhood with students, a “high transient population,” peeping toms, crime, and ineffective landlords like Garneau (Gerow, 2008; Senger, 2008). It was represented as home to a 68-year-old woman and an organized community league deserving of protection. By discouraging the actions of the GS and validating the actions of the Aspen Gardens Community League, the newspaper and the police were indirectly warning women to manage their behaviour and cooperate with police sanctioned risk management.

In the Garneau Sisterhood Press Release, “The Garneau Sisterhood responds to the Aspen Garden rape,” the GS responds to the coverage of the Aspen Gardens sexual assault, police warnings, and Grace’s warnings about their threatening posters and vigilantism. They respond to Grace’s comments by re-situating the terms and re-claiming them to describe their own experience. They challenged police warnings by introducing ideas around victim blaming, fear, and the context of rape culture. In the press release, the GS is positioned as an authority linked with community, neighbourhoods, other women, the city, and each of us (we). The GS writes about their feelings around the latest assault in Aspen Gardens and represents themselves as social actors responsible for addressing a culture of rape.
Mobilizing public interest and engagement is work that Kelly (2010) argued the news media should do, as a site of public pedagogy. In this study, I found that it was the GS campaign materials that introduced the possibility of widespread intervention in the societal problem of sexual assault. The challenge presented by the GS toward the mainstream media and police discourses is an example of Fraser’s (1989) contestation of politicized issues between alternative counterpublics and authorities with relatively more power, credibility, and access to constructions of the “common sense.” Stack and Kelly (2006) argued that dominant, harmful misrepresentations could be resisted if citizens use media to become involved in dialogue around power and inequality. However, this engagement will not be balanced in access to credibility or means of circulating ideas.

The GS campaigns counter the de-gendered, individualized, privatized, neoliberal risk management discourses operating in the police and mainstream media representations of sexual violence (Gotell, 2009, 2010). In their press release, the GS (2008) focuses on the “context of violence” and positions this one rapist as part of a larger “culture of rape.” They address the rapist himself, as well as men in general, and only briefly reference the police to provide the Crime Stoppers phone number.

In the August 14 *Edmonton Journal* article by Collum, “Some women disagree over rape warnings,” the GS is positioned as an authority whose questioning of police warnings is supported by Associate Professor Gotell, positioned as an expert authority. Collum features quotes from a GS member. The GS and the police are both presented as social actors responsible for assault prevention. Collum quotes the GS for the first time in media coverage of the sexual assaults perpetrated by the man in Garneau and Aspen
Gardens. The GS quotes reflect their previous writing and campaigns, critiquing police warnings to women.

In the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign, the GS is positioned as an authority alongside its members and other women of Garneau, including the reader of the posters (you). In their Question Campaign, the GS (2009) disrupts the media focus on two sides to the story provided by police and the GS, and the restriction to these two authorities on the topic. Addressing the reader of the posters directly, they situate “you” as an “expert” and ask a series of questions around reporting to police and community responses to sexual assault. By consulting members of the community, the GS expands the limited view of authority beyond the police and the GS.

In the Garneau Sisterhood New Years Campaign, the GS positions itself as the only authority and is featured as a source of assistance for the reader, providing suggestions around consent, alcohol, action, expectations, and respect. Seeking consent, and other everyday elements are open to the public to take responsibility in contributing to ending sexualized violence. If attended to, these suggestions for collective safety making could disrupt the naturalization of risk-management and encourage social responsibility for challenging rape culture.

In the March 5 *Edmonton Journal* article by Gelinas, “Alcohol-fuelled sex assault on the rise in Edmonton,” Gelinas briefly mentions feminists who had been angered by the warnings without naming the GS or Associate Professor Gotell. At the police news conference covered in the article, Supt. Campbell discusses the changes they were making in their approach to sexual assault, including focus on potential perpetrators
instead of potential victims and denouncing previous warnings to women (Gelinas, 2010).

While some of the language changes to reflect GS critiques, feminist discourse is easily co-opted. Language can be taken up without the corresponding action leading to the material affects of a police force committed to understanding and combating rape culture. Co-optation, “the insidious process by which outside critics are transformed into inside supporters and participants,” has been a challenge for feminist groups who are invited to participate in state processes (Price, 1988, p. 48). Instead of struggling for demands and “struggling against the way in which things are being done,” groups are “invited to try and persuade the representatives of the state [emphasis in original]” and to “show by example how things should be done [emphasis in original]” (Mathieson in Price, 1988, p. 48). Groups are invited to “participate in the decision-making process of state representatives” in this hegemonic process of “silencing by inclusion” where critics are absorbed without “fundamentally shifting the status quo” (Price, 1988, p. 48). The discourse and actions of police officers and the policing institution reflect the surrounding societal values and “common sense” discourses about violence, safety, and responsibility for prevention. In the denial of social responsibility for prevention of sexual violence, feminist disruption of victim-blaming discourses are co-opted or condemned while strategies for collective safety making are disregarded.

**Suspect/Perpetrator**

The suspect/perpetrator position consists of social actors described as responsible for—or suspected of—perpetrating the violence. These social actors are positioned in several ways: The individual associated with the specific assaults; generally suspect or
guilty people; circumstances associated with the specific assaults and assaults in general; crime in general; nominalized assaults; elements of rape culture; people in general or the community at large; and those related to the coverage, including media, police, and the GS.

At the beginning of the coverage, the focus is on the individual man, as well as circumstances and individuals perceived to be influencing the assaults perpetrated by the man. Many factors and other social actors are included. The GS introduces offenders in general and widens the responsibility for violence prevention to include everyone. Gélina’s subsequent article focuses specifically on the assaults perpetrated by the individual man against the Garneau and Aspen Gardens women. The Garneau Sisterhood Press Release addresses the specific assaults, but focuses on a wider culture of rape and mentions the role of the media along with the police. Like Gélina’s article, Collum’s also focuses on the specific assaults and the individual perpetrator, however she includes more than one perspective on the police warnings. The Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign and the New Years Campaign focus back on rape culture and elements that support it, including a universal sense of individual responsibility. Like the preceding GS campaigns, Gélina’s March 5 article featuring the police press conference includes responsibility beyond one single perpetrator. The focus is on alcohol and individual potential perpetrators, in general, who disregard consent (see Table 3).

Table 3: Social Actors Constructed as Suspect/Perpetrator (chronological from top to bottom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Campaigns</th>
<th>Suspect/Perpetrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC (Gerow)</td>
<td>May 27, 2008</td>
<td>male, suspect, suspicious people, students, other young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>Campaigns</td>
<td>Suspect/Perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Senger) May 28, 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>unusual circumstances, night, incidents, crimes, the area, this block, assault(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op Ed in VUE Weekly June 11, 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>man, strangers, crime, transient population, peeping toms, landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: assault(s), attack(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Campaign June 2008 (13v)</td>
<td></td>
<td>friend, offenders’ behaviours, rapist(s), men, everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: sexual assault, rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Posters August 2008 (1v)</td>
<td></td>
<td>man, suspect, attacker, male, individuals, GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: attack(s), assault(s), incident, activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Gelinas) August 12, 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>man, attacker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: rape, sex assault(s), attack, cases, incident, warnings, message, response, recommendations, suggestions, advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Release August 13, 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>media, police, perpetrator(s), rapist, family members, partners, dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: rape/event/attack(s), culture of rape, rape myths, blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Collum) August 14, 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>man, attacker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: rape, sex assault(s), attack, cases, incident, warnings, message, response, recommendations, suggestions, advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Campaign Summer and Fall 2009 (5v)</td>
<td></td>
<td>offenders, police, rape culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: silence, assault, warnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Years Campaign January 2010 (2v)</td>
<td></td>
<td>You, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Gelinas) March 5, 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>people, you, rapist, those...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NOMINALIZATION: assault(s), complaints, another drink, cases, alcohol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual Perpetrator

In the May 27 CBC article by Gerow, “Police issue warning to women in Garneau,” the perpetrator who is responsible for having committed the crimes is represented as a social actor responsible for the particular Garneau assaults, however, he is not charged with responsibility for preventing their occurrence. In the May 28th Edmonton Journal article by Senger, “Police warn of Garneau sex assaults,” the perpetrator is again represented as responsible only for having committed the crimes, not for their prevention. The Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign includes personal messages from the GS to the rapist responsible for the assaults and names the impacts that the perpetrator’s actions had on all women.

In the Aug 12 Edmonton Journal article, “Southside sex attack makes four,” Gelinas focuses on the man responsible for perpetrating a similar assault in the nearby neighbourhood of Aspen Gardens. Like Gerow and Senger, Gelinas includes the perpetrator as a social actor responsible for committing the four sexual assaults, but is not given responsibility for prevention. Gelinas names the man more clearly as responsible for perpetrating the assaults after attacking again in Aspen Gardens. In the August 14 Edmonton Journal article by Collum, “Some women disagree over rape warnings,” the perpetrator is positioned in the background, responsible only for the break-ins.

The focus on the attacks and the backgrounding of the perpetrator in some articles creates the impression that the Edmonton rapist’s attacks are happening without an agent, for example “Police are warning women in the Garneau neighbourhood of south Edmonton to take extra precautions after three sexual assaults in the area in the past three months” (Gerow, 2008). These first two articles use nominalization to refer to the
assaults as if they have no agent responsible for the actions. In his August 12 article, Gelinas reuses the language from the May 27 and 28 articles describing the agent-less nominalized assaults. In the August 14 article, the individual suspect’s role is minimized to perpetrating the break-ins while the assaults appear agentless through nominalization. Sentence construction in the articles (Collum, 2008; Gelinas, 2010; Senger, 2008) creates the impression that the nominalized attack simply occurred while the man was responsible for the break in. For example, Gelinas (2008) wrote that the “first attack occurred in February, when a man broke into a house.” This nominalization contributes to a sense of inevitability; without an agent, these events appear to simply be happening.

Potential Perpetrators

The authors of the newspaper articles covering the Garneau and Aspen Gardens rapes write about stranger assaults without addressing the prevalence of assaults perpetrated by someone the victim knows (Collum, 2008; Gelinas, 2008, 2010; Gerow, 2008, Senger, 2008). This contributes to a particular way of viewing sexual assault. Race was not addressed in these cases of sexual violence, nor is it named more generally in cases of sexual violence where whiteness is made invisible. Cases of white men committing assaults are often framed as individual acts. Unlike cases perpetrated by men of colour, they are rarely represented as a systemic and institutionalized problem symptomatic of gender, race, or culture. The discourse of individuality hides and obfuscates systemic racism, sexism and all structural violence, thereby erasing societal responsibility. White privilege keeps white masculinity unexamined and outside accountability (Gutiérrez, 2006; McIntosh, 1988) with the focus on individual men who are constructed as transgressing a norm of non-violence instead of participating in a
dominant culture of rape (Gotell, 2010; Lazar, 2005; Marcus, 1992), a history of colonization (Smith, 2005), or a weapon of war (Kelly, 2000).

Senger (2008) includes strangers as potential perpetrators, but not people known to victims. He quotes residents who describe peeping toms as responsible for contributing to an unsafe neighbourhood and landlords who do not do enough to keep their renters safe. The residents in Senger’s article divert attention further from the perpetrator’s responsibility by presenting several other factors as responsible for prevention, including landlords, crime, and a high transient population. Focusing on these factors is not the same as acknowledging a need for shared responsibility to end rape culture. Instead, this diversion emphasizes a need for improved security to manage sexual violence that appears inevitable and already happening. Obfuscating of perpetrators’ responsibility is a discursive operation that Coates and Wade (2007) identify as enabling violence. In the construction of individual responsibility for prevention of sexual violence, institutional representations of sexual violence in the media and police reports elide men’s accountability.

The Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed, “Garneau Sisterhood organizing in response to sexual assaults,” focuses on myth-busting around sexual violence, including victim-blaming and rape statistics, demonstrating the prevalence of sexual assault crimes and the rarity of stranger assault. In the op ed, the GS focuses on what we, the readers, can all do to be social actors responsible for ending a culture of rape. The GS introduces widespread responsibility for assault prevention, beyond individual victims, potential victims, perpetrators, and police. Institutions and individuals enable sexualized violence by linguistically and discursively positioning women as endangered and men as violent
(Marcus, 1992). Constructing required-yet-inefficacious prevention strategies for individual women (Marcus, 1992) and “policing” disruptions to gender-appropriate norms (Lazar, 2005) also enable sexualized violence. These norms and discourses are not natural or inevitable; they may be subject to change and potentially have material effects on sexual inequality.

The Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign includes men in general who are invited to be social actors responsible for assault prevention by managing their own actions. The Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign shares many similar messages with the op ed, particularly around perpetrator and societal responsibility for assault prevention. Both the Op Ed and the Original Campaign encourage action by readers around prevention, including tips about the perpetrator. This is in response to the tips from police to women. This campaign introduces men in general as social actors responsible for assault prevention.

The Garneau Sisterhood Press Release, “The Garneau Sisterhood responds to the Aspen Garden rape,” discusses a larger culture of rape that creates the context for individual crimes, and questions the information the police had provided about the perpetrator that contributed to fear instead of empowerment. In addition to perpetrators in general, the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign focuses on the responsibility of the community to act, minimizing and making vague the role of the Garneau perpetrator.

The Garneau Sisterhood New Years Resolution campaign focuses on potential genderless perpetrators who are not limited to strangers. The GS focuses on the poster readers, charging them as social actors with the responsibility to prevent any sexual assault they, themselves, might perpetrate. The GS utilizes its previous focus on
perpetrators instead of (potential) victims/survivors. They also reuse their tactic from the Question Campaign, speaking directly to the reader of the posters. This time the messaging is aimed at potential perpetrators around consent, alcohol, action, expectations, and respect.

In the March 5 *Edmonton Journal* article, “Alcohol-fuelled sex assault on the rise in Edmonton,” Gelinas (2010) quotes Campbell addressing consent, alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, and potential perpetrator responsibility to prevent assault. Potential perpetrators of alcohol-facilitated sexual assault are not the focus of the article, however they are the focus of the police discourses as social actors responsible for prevention. The Garneau Sisterhood New Years campaign-style messaging reappears in the March 5 *Edmonton Journal* article, based on Gelinas’ (2010) coverage of the EPS press conference. Supt. Campbell also addresses consent, alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, and potential perpetrator responsibility to prevent assault. Her colloquial insistence on just taking a phone number to call the person the next day—presumably as an alternative to sexually assaulting them—puts the responsibility to manage the risk of sexual assault on potential perpetrators instead of victims, however, it conflates intended sex with rape, a crime of power and control.

Supt. Campbell spoke directly about “those” social actors “who might consider taking advantage of someone who is drunk” (Gelinas, 2010). This language de-genders, then minimizes and softens the violence of sexual assault or rape. The language of “sex attack” (Gelinas, 2008) and “sex assault” (Senger, 2008) utilizes the language of sex when discussing rape, blurring and confusing the violence of the act. An attack is not consensual or mutual and, therefore, not sex. The language of “incident” excludes the
nature of the event and the inherent violence (Gerow, 2008; Gelinas, 2008; Collum, 2008). Gelinas (2010) rightly pointed out that the “vast majority happen between people who know each other,” however this genderless, mutual language misrepresents the nature of this violence. Of all the texts I analyzed, only the Garneau Sisterhood Op Ed, Press Release, and Question Campaign name the sexual assaults as “violence.” The media and police never used the word.

**Survivor/Victim**

Social actors produced within the category of victim/survivor, consisted initially of the specific women who were attacked by the man in Garneau. Women in the area were also warned and positioned as potential victims by the police. The GS initially responded by connecting their own experiences, and people in general, with the three survivors. Subsequent articles continued to refer to the individual victims in the Garneau and Aspen Gardens cases, along with women in the neighbourhoods. The GS interjected with focus on the broader community, readers, and people in general. The last article in the series features the police’s emphasis on potential victims in particular circumstances (see Table 4).

The main focus in articles and police reports covering the high profile Edmonton stranger assaults was on what was being done after the rapist committed violence against the women. The predominant messages of prevention were aimed at women managing their circumstances—ensuring they be “diligent in locking doors and windows” as a seemingly futile response to someone who “broke into” their homes (Gerow, 2008; Senger, 2008)—never on how the police or the community could substantially change the circumstances that enable rape. The decontextualization and individualization of
neoliberalism result in notions of individual responsibility for prevention of sexual violence. Institutional representations of sexual violence in the media and police portray women as simultaneously at risk of sexual assault and responsible for its prevention.

Table 4: *Social Actors Constructed as Survivor/Victim* (chronological from top to bottom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Campaigns</th>
<th>Survivor/Victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC (Gerow) May 27, 2008</td>
<td>residents, women, the Garneau neighbourhood, 21-year-old, 24-year-old, 47-year-old, the community, people, the residence, Heather Norstrom, others, Diana Douglas, the building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Senger)</td>
<td>residents, students, neighbours, renters, Barbara Nipp, Melissa Garland, 10-month-old daughter, 24-year-old woman, 47-year-old woman, 21-year-old woman, people, neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op Ed in VUE Weekly June 11, 2008</td>
<td>women, community, sister, sisterhood, survivors, children, men, everyone, we, you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Campaign June 2008</td>
<td>I, The Sisterhood, women, woman, sister, us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Posters August 2008</td>
<td>Women of Aspen Gardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Gelinas)</td>
<td>a 24-year-old woman, a 47-year-old woman, a 21-year-old woman, victim(s), files, 68-year-old woman, GS, Neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Release August 13, 2008</td>
<td>survivor(s), women, Edmonton, men, Garneau Sisters, Garneau, Aspen Gardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton Journal (Collum)</td>
<td>68-year-old woman, people, victims, women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Campaign Summer and Fall 2009 (5v)</td>
<td>your neighbourhood, your community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Years Campaign January 2010 (2v)</td>
<td>people, someone, friend, partner, date, spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual Victims

Both the May 27 CBC article by Gerow and the May 28th Edmonton Journal by Senger focus on the circumstances of three women of various ages who were sexually assaulted by the perpetrator. The mainstream media consistently represents the police as the authority on sexual assaults. Women, on the other hand, who may be victimized by male violence and who have lived their lives in a rape culture are reminded to lock their doors and windows and “not to open doors to strangers” (Gelinas, 2010). In order to disseminate reminders and warnings of this nature, women must first be discursively misrepresented as “deficient and therefore in need of assistance from proficient authorities” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 512). Gerow and Senger present the victims as social actors who are responsible for not having taken all possible precautions to avoid assault. In their Op Ed, the GS briefly discuss the circumstances of the women who were attacked, however they challenge the implied failure of individualized responsible action by the victims. Blaming victims and concealing the ways victims resisted are both discursive operations that Coates and Wade (2007) identify as enabling personalized violence.

In the construction of individual responsibility for prevention of sexual violence, institutional representations of sexual violence in the media and police reports erase women's resistance. These representations construct sexual assault victims as passive, concealing their resistance, as well as the perpetrator’s tactics to suppress it (Coates & Wade, 2007). In the Aug 12 Edmonton Journal article, Gelinas also presents the four
women of various ages who were sexually assaulted by the perpetrator, reusing the language from the May 27 and 28 articles describing the circumstances of the women/victims of various ages who were sexually assaulted. In their Original Campaign and Op Ed, the GS discusses the individual Garneau victims, however beyond these initial pieces, the GS focuses on victims in general. None of the articles or campaigns discuss individual victims’ resistance. The only mention of suppression tactics is the inclusion of the perpetrator’s pepper spray as a weapon against the 21-year-old woman (Collum, 2008; Gerow, 2008; Senger, 2008).

From the Aboriginal women of Jiwani and Young’s (2006) Vancouver study to the highly publicized Edmonton rapes, failing to appear as active agents or silenced as victims, the women who report rapists’ attacks are not included as agents who know and provide information. In the series of articles (Gelinas, 2008; Gerow, 2008; Senger, 2008) following the initial Edmonton assaults, a clear pattern emerges in the representation of women. Women, mentioned as a group, and the individual women of various ages who were assaulted are always passive, gendered, race-less social actors to whom events occurred and whom the police call upon to take future action to avoid the risk of such events. Women are represented as having been “sexually assaulted,” “attacked,” “pepper-sprayed,” and are only collocated with the action of “sleeping” (Gerow, 2008; Senger, 2008). While information about the ages and addresses of the first three victims is repeated (24, 47, and 21 years old) and the age of the fourth (68 years old) is stressed, any resistance by the women to the perpetrator before or during the attacks is entirely absent. In contrast, information about the perpetrator is provided only once and is
minimal and vague (Senger, 2008). Gotell’s criticism of this lack of information is quoted in Collum’s (2008) article.

In the March press conference held by the EPS, victims of sexual assault are once again represented as inactive and not entirely conscious and, therefore, not actively involved in resistance. Focusing on the state of victims, for example “under the influence of alcohol” (Gelinas, 2010), implies that women’s circumstances are capable of creating a risky situation that, if avoided, should decrease the likelihood of sexual assault.

Potential Victims

The main focus in articles and police reports covering the high profile Edmonton stranger assaults was on what was being done after the rapist committed violence against the women. The predominant messages of prevention were aimed at women changing their circumstances, ensuring they be “diligent in locking doors and windows” (Gerow, 2008; Senger, 2008), never on how the police or the community could substantially change the circumstances that enable rape. The individualization and decontextualization of neoliberalism, at work in media and police institutional representations of sexual violence, reinforce notions of individual women as simultaneously at risk of sexual assault and responsible for its prevention. Sexual violence is portrayed as something inevitable, yet requiring individualized and ultimately inefficacious preventative actions.

Both the May 27 CBC article by Gerow and the May 28th Edmonton Journal by Senger focus on police warnings to women. Gerow and Senger present women in general as social actors who are responsible for managing the risk of future assaults to prevent their occurrence. Gerow (2008) and Senger (2008) both quoted women who served as examples of the intended audience of the police notifications, tips, warnings, and
encouragement of diligence and awareness. One resident of the Garneau neighbourhood said “I haven’t been cautious at all, I haven’t thought about it [...] But I’ll be more cautious in the future, at least walking around late at night” (Gerow, 2008). The residents in Gerow’s article acknowledge police warnings by committing to acting in accordance with them in the future and discussing their fear of the neighbourhood.

Gerow represents the neighbourhood of Garneau as risky, yet also vulnerable, as a result of its population. Including the presence of young people provides an opportunity for the reader to either blame the residents for their lack of responsibilization or care about its residents due to their lack of safety. Either way, the neighbourhood is othered and distanced as a site where violence is possible. In Senger’s article, the risk of sexual assault is presented as more urgent with the introduction of one resident’s 10-year-old daughter who is not represented as responsible for preventing assault. Senger extends the risk of sexual violence to students at the nearby University of Alberta.

In the Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign, the GS shifts the potential victims’ role from passive to active social agents addressing violence in their community together. While resisting the warnings of the police and media discourses, the GS contributed to the notion of a stable subject and fictive solidity of gender. While challenging the individualization of the experience of sexual violence, the campaign materials also connected women through the language of sisterhood by insisting that “when a sister is raped, it is a rape of the sisterhood and cannot go unpunished” (Muscio, as cited in Garneau Sisterhood, 2008b). Linking all women together served as a call to action: “women can be kicked when we are down, but no one is stupid or strong enough to kick us when we are standing up, all together” (Muscio, as cited in Garneau Sisterhood,
Mohanty (1991) has addressed the lack of discussion in some feminist work regarding diversity among women. Racism, classism, ableism, and other oppressions that shape women’s experiences of violence were not addressed in this campaign. The emphasis on including *all* women can be read as excluding important differences in women’s experiences, ways of being targeted, and ways of being blamed by those around them. The GS (2008a, 2008b) did, however, complicate women’s positions to the extent that they were represented as knowledgeable instead of passive, and as both “victims” and “survivors” of violence. Both terms are claimed, rejected, found limiting, and found useful by those who experience violence.

It is possible that the GS (2008a, 2008b) mobilized a contingent use of sisterhood in the political service of discursive action. Admittedly this invokes a problematic regime of truth about gender unity and the idea that “all women are us” (Garneau Sisterhood, 2008a, 2008b), however, they put ways of experiencing the world “as women” into the service of creating a powerful alternative voice through sisterhood. This is, perhaps, an example of the “strategy” to which Spivak (1987, 1996) refers, that can involve a coalescing around particular issues and identities when politically necessary, but with the understanding that it cites dominant essentialising discourses. Though momentary and incomplete, it is possible to instrumentally draw boundaries of a group for political effect in order to work as allies across difference. Individuals may temporarily and strategically occupy a homogenous identity to achieve a common goal.

Reynolds (2010) points out that ally work is an “imperfection project,” always fluid and never complete in interrupting and resisting oppression (p. 16). According to Reynolds (2010), an ally is “a person who belongs to a group which has particular
privileges, and who works alongside people from groups that are oppressed in relation to that privilege” (p. 13). This unending work of addressing power and making space for those without privilege to “matter and not be dismissed” involves collective accountability to “create change and increase social justice” (Reynolds, 2010, p. 13-14).

In the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign, the women in the neighbourhood and previous victims/survivors are not represented as passive, but rather as experts with information solicited by the GS on experiences reporting sexual assault to the police.

In the Aug 12 Edmonton Journal article, like Gerow and Senger, Gelinas frames women in general as social actors responsible for managing the risk of future assaults and preventing their occurrence. Det. Grace responds to the GS posters, warning women again to manage their behaviour in response to sexual violence. She draws the line between police activity of surveillance to catch the perpetrator, and women’s roles as individuals to manage their own safety. She warns against women’s group efforts for safety. In the Aug 14 Edmonton Journal article, Collum features quotes from Associate Professor Gotell who critiques police warnings and the lack of information provided to the community with the expectation for women to manage the risk of sexual violence. Social actors represented as responsible for assault prevention still include women in general.

The Garneau Sisterhood New Years Resolution campaign refers to hypothetical genderless victims. No responsibility for prevention is placed on these victims, including those affected by alcohol. They are represented as worthy of respect, consent, and understanding. In the March 5 Edmonton Journal article, Gelinas represents genderless victims and potential victims as passive due to alcohol consumption. Campbell
emphasizes the police’s new avoidance of victim blaming, yet focuses on a passive victim unable to give consent as a result of behaviour considered risky. While the police may be asserting that they are no longer blaming the victim, continued focus on the victim’s circumstances—in this case drinking, going to bars, and being social—is consistent with previous police emphasis on individual risk management for sexual assault prevention. In what could be called a “politics of impossibility,” both going out and staying in one’s house alone are deemed risky behaviors.

**Community**

The community at large is represented as several different social actors throughout the texts over time, including: strangers, women in general, men in general, people, each of us (we), the reader of the posters and the newspapers (you), the neighbourhoods of Aspen Gardens and Garneau, residents, landlords, peeping toms, renters, the presence of crime and fear in general, friends, students, and a high transient population. The “ideal subject” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 41) addressed by news media and police is a reader who does not identify with responsibility for preventing assault. Based on these articles, the mass audience of the newspapers should not see themselves as authorities on sexual assault or as responsible for its prevention in a collective sense. In contrast, the ideal subject of the GS campaigns is one that does identify with collective responsibility. Social actors within this community are predominantly represented by police and mainstream media as victims until the March 5 *Edmonton Journal* article framing community members as potential perpetrators. The GS represented various community members as authorities, perpetrators, and victims. All are considered socially responsible to work for the prevention of violence, including victims.
Women in general, the community at large, the City of Edmonton, the neighbourhood, the reader of campaign posters (you), and each of us (we) are all brought forward as authorities in the GS texts. In the Garneau Sisterhood op ed, “Garneau Sisterhood organizing in response to sexual assaults,” the GS focuses on what we, the readers, can all do to be social actors responsible for ending a culture of rape, as well as the impacts of rape on all women, not just the victims/survivors. The GS question women’s responsibility for assault prevention as put forward by police and media.

In the wake of the highly publicized assaults in Edmonton, impacts on the community such as fear and trauma were never addressed by the news media. They were, however, addressed by the GS (2008a) who wrote that women are “expected to live in fear” and that tips “perpetuate a culture of fear” that can “dictate our clothing choices, our types of transportation, our sexuality.” The Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign discusses the impacts that the perpetrator’s actions had on all women. Similar messages to the op ed are included around the impact on women’s lives and the misplaced responsibility for prevention. The campaign emphasizes that all women of Garneau are the GS and are therefore invited to be responsible social actors for preventing and responding to violence. The campaign invites poster readers to take action through reporting to police or talking to the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton or a trusted friend.

The GS (2008a) challenged the police for not using a “strategy that would combat fear” as if “there’s nothing we can do” to stop rape collectively that does not rely on individual responsibilization. They argued that, as spaces impacted by violence, the communities of Garneau and Aspen Gardens could be “empowered and informed” to
combat fear and rape if police would provide details of the attacker (2008a). They insisted the women in Edmonton “already lock their doors on a regular basis” and do not need to be reminded by police, demonstrating that fear is constantly generated alongside the onus on women to prevent their own assaults (2008a). The police misdirection of public attention toward women locking their doors provides a false explanation for why these assaults took place.

In the Aug 12 *Edmonton Journal* article, Gelinas features quotes from Det. Grace, representing the GS posters as threatening, and warning against such vigilantism. A clear distinction is drawn between the Aspen Gardens community league working in accordance with police warnings as social actors responsible for assault prevention and the GS working to disrupt and challenge police warnings. The only community response to the Garneau and Aspen Gardens assaults promoted by the police, in the mainstream media, is that which involves reporting information to the police or working in accordance with their authority. The police, represented by Supt. Campbell, eventually encourage action by community members separate from police. This is directed at potential perpetrators in relation to alcohol-facilitated sexual assaults. While this refers to assaults in general, instead of specific high-profile cases, it is focused on situations where victims’ actions are deemed to be high risk and “worthy” of inclusion in headlines—the “foregrounded” piece of text that draws attention to the purpose of the article and contributes to the sale of newspapers (Fairclough, 2003, p. 91).

In the Garneau Sisterhood Press Release, the GS is positioned as an authority linked with community, neighbourhoods, other women, the city, and each of us (we). The GS wrote about their feelings around the assault in Aspen Gardens, offering the women
of Aspen Gardens solidarity and connecting them with women outside the neighbourhood to challenge the isolation of the one woman assaulted there. In the Garneau Sisterhood Question Campaign, the reader of the posters (you) and the women of Garneau are positioned as authorities alongside the GS. The GS focuses on the poster readers as experts who can provide information and feedback regarding police warnings and reporting sexual violence to the police. In addition to the police, the GS represents you/the reader and the community at large as social actors responsible for preventing sexual violence and combating rape culture. The GS shifts the focus of prevention from social actors embedded in the media coverage—like police, victims, and perpetrators—to the reader and the community at large.

While the GS (2008a) op ed highlights that “one in four women, and one in eight men, will experience sexual assault in their lifetime,” the headline of Gelinas’ August 12 Edmonton Journal article, “Southside sex attack makes four,” highlights only these specific “newsworthy” assaults. Unlike other assaults, newspapers selected these incidents for articles and “foregrounded” them with headlines that would catch attention (Fairclough, 2003). This focuses on specific assaults as if they are happening separately from the surrounding rape culture and assumes they do not reflect this general culture. Decontextualized and individualized understandings of the systemic issue of sexual assault reinforce gender roles and power relations and exclude issues of racialization, class categorization, sexuality, ableism, trans-misogyny, and sexism. The responsibility on individuals to prevent their own assaults as victims-in-waiting engaging in risk management contributes to a dichotomy of those who follow the rules and deserve protection versus those who fail to take on this responsibility and whose actions must be
managed (Gotell, 2010). After the attacks in Edmonton, Det. McMorran told women to “[e]nsure [you] are diligent in locking doors and windows. Be aware of what is going on around the residence during the night” (Gerow, 2008; Senger 2008). He does not explain how or specifically when to do this, given that most people are sleeping at night. Following public critiques from the GS and professor Gotell, Staff Sgt. Readman offered “suggestions for personal security,” while insisting that the police were “not in the business of blaming victims at all” (Collum, 2008).

Focusing on prevention, the GS cultivated women’s resistance to the assigned role of safety-conscious victim-in-waiting as an extra-legal strategy (Gotell, 2010). For the creators of the 2008 Garneau Sisterhood Original Campaign, rape is not just “something that happens” to women, an impersonal fact of life understood with no agent responsible. It is something to resist. The campaign posters asked for tips on the assault and offered an email address for communication. They explicitly critiqued the responsibility placed on survivors’ behaviours in the media, directing the reader to question offenders’ behaviours instead.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I presented a discussion of my analysis informed by FCDA on the way that social actors—divided according to the categories of authority, suspect/perpetrator, and survivor/victim—are reflected in the *Edmonton Journal*, *CBC News*, and GS coverage of the attacks between May 2008 and March 2010. In each of the three sections, I attended to my research questions, addressing the linguistic and interdiscursive changes in the representation of the events and responsible actors across time, as well as the ideological discourses about responsibility for sexual assault.
prevention. I explored the classification of social actors in texts and the ideological assumptions that are embedded within language choices that impact and shape society (Fairclough, 1998). While I briefly discuss nominalized social actors, such as crime and fear, my focus is predominantly on social actors that are specific individuals or groups of people.

I discussed the ideological discourses that work to maintain rape culture in the coverage of the Edmonton attacks and how rape culture is maintained through discourses around sexual assault that deny social responsibility and construct individual responsibility. This denial of social responsibility is facilitated by the centering of police authority and media objectivity, as well as the co-optation of and disregard for feminist strategies of collective safety making, such as those of the GS. The construction of individual responsibility is facilitated through the representation of women as simultaneously at risk of sexual assault and responsible for prevention, as well as the erasure of both women’s resistance and men’s accountability.

Coates and Wade (2007) argued that language is both a tool of domination and of resistance. They argued that language could be used to disrupt the discursive misrepresentation of events and social actors, including perpetrators’ responsibility and victims’ resistance. The GS used it to put forward strategies of collective safety making to counter individualized risk management discourses. While brief changes in language used by dominant institutions like police do not necessarily signal substantive change for women reporting sexual violence, they demonstrate the power of collective organizing to disrupt the prevalence of victim blaming as easy, common sense, and natural. Disruptions in the maintenance of rape culture constitute challenges to the construction of individual
responsibility, denial of social responsibility, construction of women’s naturalized risk, erasure of women’s resistance, obfuscation of men’s accountability, centering police authority and media objectivity, and disregarding and co-opting feminist strategies of collective safety making.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this research, I examined the ideological discourses of responsibility for assault prevention that are reflected in the Edmonton Journal, CBC News, and Garneau Sisterhood coverage of the attacks between May 2008 and March 2010. I explored the ways in which these texts reflect changes in representation of responsible social actors across time linguistically and interdiscursively. This study focused on the discursive construction, maintenance, and contestation of gendered social norms in relation to sexualized violence. It looked at institutionalized discursive practices, as exemplified by media accounts of police messaging, and marginalized discursive practices, as exemplified by the poster campaigns of the grassroots organization, the Garneau Sisterhood, that shape understandings of the social actors in social interactions characterized by sexualized violence.

This concluding chapter is divided into five sections. In the first three sections, I attend to the three major neoliberal discourses that I found to be operating in media representations of social actors in the Edmonton Journal and CBC News: individualism, authority, and feminization. In the fourth section, I address elements that remained outside the scope of this thesis and the limitations of my methodology. In the fifth section, I discuss next steps for further research.

Discourse of Individualism

Within a neoliberal discourse of individuality, the only people responsible are individuals and there is no systemic or institutionalized responsibility for prevention or cessation of violence constructed as inevitable. Public focus is directed by police and media authorities to individual incidents of violence as if they are discrete events and to
victim circumstances as if they are unique and somehow responsible for making the violence possible. This individualization constructs sexualized violence as only ever occurring on the individual level, with no broader implications. Sexist, heterosexist, cissexist, ableist, classist, and racist motivations for the actions of perpetrators are erased, as are the ways a rape culture provides permission and normalcy for violent masculinity and sexual assault.

Focusing on individuals also allows for a mutualizing of responsibility. Police, media, and government are called upon to provide explanations for why violence is occurring in communities. It seems violence is easier to explain to the public if the victim can be understood as somehow deserving of their experience or at least partially responsible through failure to avoid it. Believing victims are themselves to blame or deserving of the violence they experience softens the horror of what happened to them for those who must witness the violence. It allows this audience to keep living as usual and maintain the status quo with minimized disruption. Violent masculinity and rape culture are not required to change if people can be convinced that individual women can and should do something to avoid assault, while ignoring the systemic oppression inherent in that expectation and the intersections of multiple forms of oppression that lead to violence (i.e., racism, classism, heteronormativity, cissexism).

While individualization denies links between perpetrators, it ensures connections between victims. All those discursively constructed as potential victims are affected by any act of violence. Fear and the daily knowledge of the possibility of victimization have consequences for those who must constantly hold in their bodies an anticipation for violence, since “[j]ust living under such a threat of attack on oneself or family or friends
deprives the oppressed of freedom and dignity, and needlessly expends their energy” (Young, 2004, p. 62). There are traumatic psychological, emotional, and embodied effects of living daily in a culture where rape is normalized and established as inevitable (Hengehold, 2011). Warnings for vigilance, as a rape-avoidance tactic, diffuses the responsibility for prevention onto individuals who are discouraged from collective action to prevent assault and who are encouraged to rely on a police and court system that only responds in limited ways to violence after it has already occurred.

The denial of social responsibility for assault prevention, and the disregard for collective safety-making, contribute to a learned helplessness. With police assuming what appears to be a relatively inactive role of authority in pursuing justice after the fact for sexual assault crimes, there appears to be nothing that individuals can do. If people cannot be socially responsible or do anything to stop sexualized violence, this contributes to a sense of shared helplessness and a diffusion of responsibility. This diffusion of responsibility leads to the bystander effect wherein all parties believe someone else will take action and therefore no action is taken at all (Hengehold, 2011). Rape culture is supported by widespread acceptance that prevention is someone else’s responsibility.

When police and media describe sexual assault through nominalization, the apparent lack of agent helps to establish rape as inevitable and women as rapable. This helplessness is learned over time and contributes to traumatizing victims and anyone who identifies with victims through their gender or other intersections of identity.

In contrast to shared helplessness and diffusion of responsibility, discourses of collective responsibility can be used to disrupt discourses of individualism and challenge normative or dominant discourses of authority. The collective actions against street
harassment and the circulation of rape stories in the 1970s, that Brownmiller (1999) documented in her memoirs, built the foundations for feminists like Jane Doe and the GS to continue to politicize personal attacks and recognize patterns of sexualized violence as tools of oppression. Individuals are only responsible for their own actions: to avoid perpetrating rape. More generally, it is a wider societal responsibility to change culture in ways that denaturalize rape. In this research, neoliberal discourses were interrupted by the presence of multiple experiences and authorities, and the insistence of collective responsibility for violence.

**Discourse of Authority**

The neoliberal climate in which these assaults were perpetrated required challenging the established discourse of authority regarding assault prevention in order to question who can claim such authority. The continued focus on sexual assault as a criminal offence against the Canadian state, instead of a systemic societal issue with consequences for women, maintains the authority of the criminal justice system over sexualized violence. This focus relies on the ideology that whoever is in power deserves to be there. In mainstream media articles in Edmonton, trust in authority was repeatedly directed vertically from residents and women upward to police. Any dialogue or trust in authority on a horizontal level—for example among residents and women (i.e., the GS campaigns)—was discounted, challenged, or co-opted. The current low percentage of sexual assaults reported to police, particularly non-stranger assaults and those committed against marginalized women, reflects the ongoing failure of the criminal justice system and policing to adequately respond to violence against women.
Interestingly, the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry in Vancouver was established in September 2010 to look into 20 years of criminal investigative failures of police forces around reports of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and other vulnerable women from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside who had been raped, tortured, murdered, and disappeared. Following lobby efforts by the Women’s Memorial March Committee, the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, and other Aboriginal women’s organizations, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women announced in December 2011 that it was launching an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. In December 2012, the international organization Human Rights Watch called on Canada to appoint a national commission of inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The media coverage for sexual assault, a drastically underreported crime, continues to defer to police even though they are consistently under-prepared to provide expertise in comparison to sexual assault centres, researchers, and survivors. Over time, the GS gained credibility by providing a counterdiscourse to that provided by police and media. Their discourse linked to community resources, feminist analysis, and institutional authorities that police were not accessing. Recontextualized as an alternative source of protection or safety, the GS claimed space as an authority. They provided advice to women, constructed as a group with collective interest and potential for safety-making. By providing advice and options that did not rely on rape avoidance, but rather on rape culture disruption, the GS appears to have become enough of a threat to warrant a police response calling them vigilantes in comparison with the actions of the relatively cooperative Aspen Gardens Community League. In this way, the call for a collective
response from the GS, cast as vigilantism, denies the importance of women’s empowerment, solidarity, and agency. Instead, collective action is cast as dangerous to individual participants and the community as well. The GS’s New Years Campaign is the only campaign in this study that was not a direct response to police discourses in mainstream media. The GS body of work is an example of both speaking back to powerful institutions and also of working to create a culture in which rape is not a natural or taken for granted event.

**Discourse of Feminization**

The neoliberal climate in which these assaults were committed, reported, and resisted sustains powerful individualizing and privatizing discourses entwined with certain dominant conceptions of gender. This backdrop of neoliberalism includes institutional control over individualized victim services instead of support for systemic change. It perpetuates a focus on risk management discourses that construct individual women as hyper-cautious victims of sexual violence who are singularly responsible for preventing the assaults that are or could be perpetrated against them (Gotell, 2010). This naturalized gendered responsibility, and the normalized threat of violence that renders women rapable (Marcus, 1992), contributes to what could be called a discourse of feminization.

Risk for rape is entrenched within what it means to be a woman. A “proper” woman or a “good” woman is one who works constantly to mitigate this risk, despite the inefficacy of these actions, and the illogical misdirection of attention toward victims to explain perpetrator actions and systemic social issues. Femininity is linked to restricted freedom of movement, choice, and opportunity. The “grin and bear it” requirements of
femininity accompany the normalized expectation that women should simply adapt their lifestyles to accommodate the risk of rape and keep living their lives in a rape culture that is not widely expected to adapt to meet the needs of their safety. Victims are othered as those who did not perform appropriately, and women are invited to distance themselves from them with the comfort that they would never do anything to warrant such violence. This feminization is propped up by a continued focus on individual victims’ whereabouts and potential victim’s circumstances instead of (potential) perpetrator information or the state of a rape culture.

In a 2012 internal publication, Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) Rape Crisis Centre described a list of “[t]hings that don’t help end rape culture” stating that “[i]n a country that has clear sexual assault/rape laws and open conversations about what consent looks like, we continue to have systems and individuals questioning women on what they did to deserve what happened to them” (n.p.). Included in the list of “things that do help end rape culture, WAVAW focused on the often invisible role of men in preventing assault and made the following logical and practical suggestions:

Focus on perpetrators’ behaviour instead of victims’ behaviour. Ask questions like:

What did you do to ensure you obtained consent before you acted? How many different ways did she say yes? Since rape isn’t sex, why did you feel entitled to her body? How are you aware of and working on your male privilege in this rape culture? How do you feel about having impacted a woman’s sense of confidence and worth in this world?

This quote is a call for shifting the focus from attending to and controlling victims’
bodies and behaviours to addressing and engaging perpetrators and potential perpetrators of crimes.

Women’s required responsibility is matched by men’s apparent lack of responsibility. White male perpetrators are not linked to their cultural backgrounds the way men of colour often are. Individual men who are not constructed as acting within an othered culture can be constructed within a mental health discourse that diminishes their responsibility and disconnects them from a larger problem of masculinity and violence. Rape is treated in a racist manner in the criminal justice system, over-policing, and linking Black men and First Nations men with rape in court (Razack, 1991; 1994). As a result of racism, White supremacy, and colonization, men connected with Black, South Asian, and First Nations communities experience disproportionately high rates of public condemnation for sexual assault. White men, however, are depicted in media as rogue, abnormal, mentally ill, and otherwise outside of the status quo instead of acting “normally” within a rape culture. Their race and culture are not mentioned at all.

Through discourses of feminization, women are also constructed as differentially at risk in relation to each other. Without addressing root causes of sexualized violence and the rape culture within which it is so rampantly perpetrated by men with impunity, safety is mitigated by scarcity. Within a neoliberal discourse, where citizens are consumers and market actors, an individual should be able to purchase safety as a commodity. There is a plethora of commercials for alarm systems starring white suburban mothers and daughters protecting themselves against male intruders. Women are encouraged to purchase mace, travel in expensive cabs instead of public transit, and take self-defense courses. The gun lobby in the United States argues for the right to
purchase and carry firearms to protect oneself and a South African doctor worked to make barbed condoms available for women to insert into their vaginas in response to the inevitability of penetrative assault by men. Under neoliberalism, human interaction continues to move into the domain of the market, where consumer purchasing power and market exchange serve as the ethic guiding human interaction. This masquerades as “improving conditions” when it is more likely to be literally capitalizing on conditions.

Some women appear to have access to safety through individualized actions, for example, locking doors and avoiding alcohol, yet safety is not accessible to all women or to women as a group and these actions do not always provide safe conditions. Such competition for a scarce resource is not new for women. Women are socialized and discursively constructed through media to be in competition for heteronormative approval from men, idealized beauty norms, security through wealth or access to men with wealth, attention, employment, and worth. Individual women’s value is consistently measured against other women for a supposed scarcity of resources. This divide and conquer tactic, wherein women compete for limited safety instead of uprooting the source of danger, is distinctly neoliberal in its struggle to achieve at the cost—instead of to the benefit—of others collectively. It is important to consider what purpose it serves to convince women to stay home with their doors locked, hoping that they will not be the next victims, and in whose interest women are divided. Creating circumstances where one woman is safer if another is also safe, like those proposed by the Garneau Sisterhood, disrupts the authority of police and media on sexualized violence and challenges their role in sustaining hegemonic gender norms.
The ability to access the scarcity of criminal justice and police investigation is connected to racial, financial, geographical, linguistic, and other privileges like citizenship. Approximately 600 cases of missing and murdered First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women have been catalogued in Canada. If non-Aboriginal women were disappearing and dying at a proportionally similar rate, it is understood that the number would exceed 20,000. There is a clear disparity in who is considered valuable enough to protect. The way women are valued impacts the violence perpetrated against them.

The individualistic discourse of pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps, so entrenched in the “American Dream” and disconnected from notions of privilege and oppression, appears to be influential in normalized rape-prevention discourse. Neoliberal societies and market economies rely on the meritocratic ideology that if one simply tries or works hard enough and makes the right choices, one can succeed as an individual and acquire wealth, fame, power, or status. In the case of sexual assault discourses, it is implied that if a woman simply tries or works hard enough and makes the right choices she can succeed in acquiring more safety. This assumption is rooted in privilege, classism, racism, ageism, ableism, trans-misogyny, and sexism, as it assumes there are actions individual women can take to increase their safety. In a rape culture, all women cannot simply stop drinking, avoid walking alone, live in a “better” neighbourhood, work in a “safer” environment, or camouflage the parts of their identity that are targeted for oppression, such as financial status, relationship with addiction, transgender or transsexual identity, queer sexuality, (dis)ability, age, immigration or refugee status, or racial and Indigenous identity.
Discourses of safety as a commodity for purchase through individualized rape avoidance strategies are reminiscent of discourses of health as a commodity for purchase through individualized cancer cure strategies (see Ehrenreich, 2001). This emphasis on individual instead of collective well-being, post-cancer detection or post-rape, suggests a motive for profit instead of prevention. Just as a person cannot simply purchase a “safer” identity, wardrobe, or residence, a person cannot simply purchase “safer” genetic susceptibility, products, or environmental conditions. Many Indigenous or impoverished communities live in geographical areas made precarious by high rates of cancer and other diseases, such as the Lubicon Cree downstream from the Alberta tar sands. Cancer-causing products are widespread and often more physically and financially accessible than their healthier counterparts. Focusing on post-rape or post-diagnosis solutions maintains a focus and blame on individuals instead of societal conditions and possibilities for prevention and justice.

The discourse of feminization extends to the expectation that women will be pleasant instead of angry. Police critiqued the Garneau Sisterhood in mainstream media for their anti-rape tactics, while validating the Aspen Gardens Community League for its relatively neutral response to rape in the community. The mandatory cheerfulness for women in relation to breast cancer is an example of the culture of positive self-thinking and optimism that is seen as the key to success and prosperity in the face of illness, oppression, and social issues (Ehrenreich, 2001). This individualization of collective concerns directly connects failure to personal blame instead of government, corporate, and societal accountability. Women are expected to be pleasant even in the face of the daily threat of sexualized violence. Police-hosted women’s safety fairs are known to
encourage women to have a “will to win” and “a warrior mentality” about their own individualized risk avoidance. They promote the idea that if women “smile and make eye contact” with men, they can humanize themselves to a potential rapist. Alongside the requirement of women to defend themselves against sexual assault in their everyday lives is the expectation that they do so within the bounds of acceptable femininity. The requirements of neoliberal culture include having a positive mentality and never having anger about oppression, and certainly not collective anger.

**Beyond the Scope and Limitations**

One area that is outside the scope of this thesis, yet pertinent to this study, is the complex relationship between police and newspapers. These institutions may often be at odds since they do not have the same goals or purpose. In cases such as the sexual assaults studied here, police were reticent about providing details of the perpetrator during their investigation, while newspapers were intent on publishing information and details. It would be worth investigating the tensions between these competing interests, as well as the ongoing relationship of these institutions, including their reliance on each other for maintaining authority over time.

In addition, a limitation of this study is the need to be selective in choosing the articles to research. There is additional newspaper coverage of the assaults perpetrated in Garneau (Stafford, 2008; Thomas, 2008). It is possible that I may have missed information in terms of my data selection, the limitations of FCDA, or my focus specifically on social actors. In order to humanize the headlines, orient to justice, and attend to the valuing of victims of crime, I chose to focus on the ideology shaping the representations of those who are involved with and affected by violence.
Next Steps and Future Research

The social value for this research lies in the potential for understanding and challenging the current political climate of defunding women’s centres, the depoliticizing of Status of Women Canada, and the cooptation of feminist discourses. Legislative and policy changes have occurred while substantive changes lag far behind. Next steps could include an examination of links between police, media and women’s centres. It would be interesting to further investigate how established anti-violence organizations are represented in comparison with grassroots feminist movements and their relationships with legal and media institutions. The connections and co-optations that accompany funding and partnerships necessary for women-centered front-line service delivery are complex. It would also be interesting to better understand the different ways in which women’s centres are engaged with individual women and communities. For example, the extent to which they focus on service provision to the exclusion of actions that may contribute to changing rape culture, or service provision alongside of awareness raising and activism related to reducing inequality and crimes against women.

Future research could include an examination of media accounts of violent events and police reports to see if there have been any differences in coverage or police statements. It would be interesting to examine the work that has been done where the GS left off. Institutions and powerful others have often claimed the work of social movements. The GS pushed their discourse into the public policy process, faced immediate privatization and decontextualization, and fought to stay in the conversation. While there was never any coverage on the Garneau and Aspen Gardens rapist(s) being caught, the Edmonton Police Service has been involved with a group called Sexual
Assault Voices of Edmonton (SAVE) that formed shortly after the dates of my research. This group produced a poster campaign series called “Don’t Be That Guy” focusing on potential perpetrators and what the police call alcohol-facilitated sexual assault. This campaign is available to others and has been utilized in Ontario, Victoria, and Vancouver.

This thesis is useful in speaking back to news coverage and police warnings that normalize sexualized violence, and in supporting shifts in the way prevention is understood and enacted. In a global comparative analysis of policies on violence against women over four decades, Htun and Weldon (2012) found that the autonomous mobilization of feminists in domestic and transnational contexts—not leftist parties, women in government, or national wealth—was the critical factor accounting for policy change. I wonder if it is also the critical factor accounting for systemic, social, and attitudinal changes, as well as material consequences and possibilities in women’s lives. If it is, the importance of this work, and work like the Garneau Sisterhood, cannot be understated. Sexualized violence will not likely end without a shift in the culture of violence toward women. At a time when the federal government is defunding feminist advocacy and direct service organizations—forcing them to close or function precariously—the presence of collective-oriented, grassroots interruptions of normalized rape culture is both urgent and hopeful.
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