May 2016

A False Sense of Security: A Feminist Content Analysis of Media Representations of Rape Prevention Devices

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A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY: A FEMINIST CONTENT ANALYSIS OF

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF RAPE PREVENTION DEVICES

by

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A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies

at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

May 2016

Under the Supervision of Anna Mansson McGinty, Jennifer Jordan, and Cary Costello

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Introduction

Rape prevention devices are any object specifically created to help an individual prevent or avoid rape. Products such as drug-detecting, color-changing nail polish and anti-rape condoms are currently being sold to women as "rape prevention" materials. Even more common items such as pepper spray appeal to women as ways to protect oneself from rape and sexual assault. In this project, I want to focus on devices that are specifically created as tools to help women avoid or prevent rape. Even everyday objects like knives can be considered as rape prevention devices when carried in public places specifically for the purpose of protecting oneself from rape and sexual assault. Chastity belts represent one of the earliest known rape prevention devices. Rape prevention products are part of a history of technological "solutions" to social problems. New tools and smart phone apps are constantly being created and discussed as innovative ways to prevent rape and sexual assault. However, none of these products cannot actually *prevent* rape. These products may make women feel safer and enable women to protect themselves in some sense. These are not inherently bad products for women to want or own. However, in their own ways, all of these products can inscribe blame, shame, and guilt for rape onto female bodies. The differing ways in which these products can associate blame for rape with female bodies needs to be examined on a product-by-product basis through a feminist lens. How are rape prevention devices represented in the media? What social meanings and messages do these products reflect? For this project, I will be specifically examining three different rape prevention products: the Rapex condom, color-changing and drug-detecting nail polish, and rape prevention undergarments through the written media representations about these products. Many other rape

prevention products exist and new technologies are constantly being developed in order to try to help women prevent rape. However, I have chosen these three devices to examine because they are the ones most often discussed in news articles about rape prevention. Examining these products and the meanings and motivations behind their creation is important for understanding larger trends in the way rape prevention functions, as well as understanding our society's ideas about gender and sexuality. This understanding of rape prevention discourse can hopefully aid in shifting the responsibility of preventing rape off of women as potential victims and onto the shoulders of men, as well as relocating the blame for rape away from victims and onto perpetrators. While rape prevention products could give a woman the knowledge that would empower her to leave a dangerous situation, it does nothing to change our society's rape culture.

Rape prevention discourse relies on the construction of binaries. These binaries are often reflected in the language of the news articles I will be analyzing in this project. My own language in this paper will often mirror the binary language of the media representations I am analyzing, however, I hope that this practice will display the problematic nature of rape prevention discourse. Although I will mirror the language of my source material at times, it does not mean that I share the views offered in these pieces. I will be analyzing these written media representations through a poststructural theoretical framework that emphasizes deconstruction. Poststructural theories also highlight the need to analyze language and to recognize the power of discourse. Rape prevention discourse specifically relies on the language of the gender binary. Current rape prevention discourse paints women as perpetual victims and males as the perpetrators of rape, while in reality, we know this is not always the case. People from any gender could be the victim or perpetrator of rape or sexual assault. This is problematic because it makes rape seem like an inevitable problem that faces only women.

Discourse is defined as, "the process of creating knowledge or a culturally constructed

representation of reality. It involves language and other categories of meaning that work with social, material practices that produce 'regimes of truth'. These regimes of truth tell us what is 'appropriate' in any given context" (Shaw and Lee 60). I will be using this conception of discourse to explore rape prevention discourse throughout the paper. The rules of what is "appropriate" under rape prevention will sound very familiar to many women and are often taken for granted. For example, rape prevention discourse asserts that women should not walk alone at night or wear revealing clothing in public. Such suggestions display the connection between rape prevention discourse and rape culture. The rules of rape prevention discourse are often sexist and aimed only at the bodies of individual women. The emphasis of rape prevention on individual bodies gives this discourse a very neoliberal character. Another suggestion of rape prevention discourse that women often hear would be that they need to carry a weapon of some kind in order to protect themselves from potential rapists. Since this is a suggestion that many women are familiar with and take for granted, rape prevention discourse remains unquestioned and rape prevention devices then appeal to many consumers. Discourse analysis is a particularly useful method for displaying how power and language interact. "One of the most commonly utilized methods in feminist postmodern research is discourse analysis. This approach allows for the analysis of language, spoken or written, and of images, symbols, and other media representations. Discourse analysis aims to understand how realities are constructed through these media, and to observe cultural and societal influences on subjective experiences" (Frost Elichaoff 46). This method will be productive in this project for illuminating the different forces that aid in the construction of rape prevention discourse that influence the public's perceptions of rape prevention devices.

Rape prevention discourse is formulated within the context of rape culture in our society. In their book, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth set out to define rape

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culture. They ask, "What is a rape culture? It is a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women…A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women *as the norm*" (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 1). When rape culture is treated as the norm or just as business as usual, the structural causes of rape culture remain unquestioned. Women are much more likely to be raped than men. One in seven women will experience rape at some point in her life while only one in 73 men will experience rape (Herman). This also means that women are trained to accept the suggestions of rape prevention discourse and do not examine the ways in which the suggestions are products of rape culture. Brownmiller explains this process and its connections to gender in saying, "Women are trained to be rape victims. To simply learn the word 'rape' is to take instruction in the power relationship between males and females…Rape has something to do with our sex. Rape is something awful that happens to females…" (Brownmiller 309). It is a myth to think that men do not get raped too. There are many other myths that are also circulated as part of rape culture. One rape myth that is addressed in much of the literature I reviewed for this project is the prevalence of stranger rape. Rape myths would have us believe that stranger rape is more prevalent than acquaintance rape. The majority of rape prevention devices are constructed to respond to a stranger rape situation. However, "More than half of reported rapes are committed by someone the survivor knows" (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 1). In fact, about two thirds of all rapes are committed to someone known to the victim prior to the assault.

In the classic feminist text *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, Susan Brownmiller lists the legal definition of rape that was used at the time the book was published in 1975. This definition reads, "…the perpetrations of an act of sexual intercourse with a female, not one's wife, against her will and consent, whether her will is overcome by force or fear resulting from the threat of force, or by any drugs or intoxicants; or when, because of mental deficiency, she is

incapable of exercising rational judgement; or when she is below the arbitrary 'age of consent'" (Brownmiller 368). Although martial rape has been made illegal in the time since 1975, there are several interesting facets in this definition that impact how rape is defined today. This definition encompasses several factors that would interfere with one's ability to consent. This definition from 1975 also describes rape as a crime specifically perpetrated against a *female*. As of 2014, rape has been redefined as, "The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (Department of Justice). However, prior to 2014, definitions of rape used by government agencies still did not include male victims or any acts other than vaginal penetration. Redefining rape is important to government and law enforcement agencies as a way to better capture the true nature of sexual violence in our society.

Statistics about the prevalence of rape in our society differ depending on the definition of rape used by a given study. However, these statistics are important as they will influence society's response to sexual violence and any prevention efforts that are made to curtail rape. In their book *Preventing Sexual Violence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Overcoming a Rape Culture,* Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell explain that in 2013, "…the WHO (World Health Organization) found that overall 35 percent of women worldwide reported having experienced either physical or sexual violence by a partner, or sexual violence, by a friend, family member, acquaintance, or stranger" (Henry and Powell 1). This statistic considers women worldwide and seems quite high when compared to statistics about the rates of rape in just the United States. In the context of the United Sates, the FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR) for 2014 reports 84,041 rapes reported to law enforcement agencies across the country that year. However, Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth caution that we should only use this figure as, "the baseline or minimum rape figure..." because of the vast under-reporting of rape in the United States (Buchwald, Fletcher,

and Roth 1). The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) for 2014 included rape and sexual assault as the same category when reporting their data. This means that the NCVS reported much higher numbers than the UCR. The NCVS reported 284,350 rapes and sexual assaults reported in 2014. We can see from the differences in these statistics how the definition of rape or sexual assault will alter the numbers give by a particular survey. Falsely inflated or incorrectly gathered statistics influence society's thoughts and feelings about rape. Differing statistics also lead to the prevalence of rape myths. In *Transforming a Rape Culture*, Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth also report that only about, "One in 100 rapists is sentenced to more than once year in prison" (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 9). They have found that 25% of convicted rapists are never sentenced to prison at all. (Buchwald Fletcher, and Roth 9). They also show that intimate partners of victims commit about 20 percent of reported rapes. Acquaintances, or someone known to the victim prior to the assault, commit 50 percent of assaults and strangers are responsible for 30 percent of all rapes (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 8). In *Against Our Will*, Brownmiller reports that, in the United States, young Black women living in low-income, urban areas are most likely to be victims or rape or sexual assault (Brownmiller 349). Brownmiller demonstrated how individuals who are multiply marginalized are more prone to being the victims of rape or sexual assault.

It is necessary to address and possibly debunk rape myths in order to expose the flawed logic of rape prevention. One of the most important rape myths to address is the prevalence of stranger rape. Suggestions made based off of current rape prevention discourse are usually in the form of tips about how to keep oneself safe from strangers in the public sphere. Because this particular myth is so prevalent, prevention is often misdirected. Women are instructed about how to prevent stranger rape, but not given any suggestions about how to protect oneself from acquaintance rape, which is much more common. The myth of stranger rape, and the suggestions

spawned from it, distract from the structural and systemic causes of rape. This mean that rape culture is not addressed and is largely ignored in these prevention suggestions. While rape prevention discourse would have us believe that most rapes are committed by men who are strangers to the victim, stranger rape only accounts for about one third of the rapes committed in the United States. Studies have shown that two thirds of rapes and sexual assaults in our society are classified as acquaintance rape, meaning the perpetrator of the rape is someone known to the victim prior to the assault. In their book, "Preventing Sexual Violence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Overcoming a Rape Culture, Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell explain that, "… women continue to represent the majority of victims of sexual violence, while perpetrators are overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, male. Young women continue to be at the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence, and most likely at the hands of a known man, such as a boyfriend, friend or acquaintance, rather than at the hands of a stranger" (Henry and Powell 1). This information impacts the resistance strategies that a victim would be exposed to prior to assault. Perhaps a victim is prepared to face an assault from a stranger in the public sphere but was not equipped to handle a more private assault perpetrated by someone she is familiar, and maybe even intimate with, based on the information and suggestions she has received through rape prevention discourse.

Brownmiller also explains how the myth of stranger rape impacts the stigmatization that rape victims and survivors often face after an assault. "When a woman is rape by a total stranger, her status as victim is clean and untarnished…" (Brownmiller 351). However, when a woman is attacked by someone she knows, it increases the perception that there is something she could have done to prevent the assault. This also leads society to believe that the perpetrators of acquaintance rape are somehow not real criminals and the credibility of the victim or survivor is called into question. Brownmiller explains this phenomenon by saying, "'She was asking for it' is

the classic way a rapist shifts the burden of blame from himself to his victim. The popularity of the belief that a woman seduces or 'cock-teases' a man into rape, or precipitates a rape by incautious behavior, is part of the smoke screen that men throw up to obscure their actions." (Brownmiller 312). The myth about the prevalence of stranger rape is important for several other reasons. The fear of stranger rape is often mobilized to limit women's movements. Jill Filipovic speaks to this constant fear of rape being used as a tool of male power. "Obviously, women and men need to take common-sense measures to avoid all sorts of victimization, but the emphasis on rape as a pervasive constant threat is crucial to maintaining female vulnerability and male power" (Filipovic 24). This fear of stranger rape is also used to circulate fear of certain racial minorities and marginalized groups as potential rapists in a very problematic manner.

A product that allegedly "prevents rape" is the Rapex condom. The Rapex or Rape-axe condom was created by Sonette Ehlers, a South African medical doctor as a way to help young South African women feel that they were protecting themselves against rape and taking control of their bodies. The Rapex condom is easy for a woman to insert on her own, however, only a doctor can remove its sharp barbs from a man's penis. The beauty of this device is that since the spikes from the condom must be removed by a doctor, the rape gets reported. After the barbs are removed, the perpetrator can then immediately be arrested and taken into custody. The other benefit of this device is that the female who has inserted this device is never at risk of being exposed to any fluid once the device has been triggered by a rapist, hence she is safe from sexually transmitted infections as well as pregnancy. However, this device does not really protect women from rape. This device does, however, provide women with some peace of mind and allows them to take control of their sexuality and their bodies. The Rapex condom is also different from many other "rape prevention" strategies because there is a greater chance that the rapist will be arrested.

Critics of this method of "rape prevention" like Victoria Kajja do point out that this device requires women to constantly monitor their bodies and does not assuage fears about rape, but rather exacerbates those fears. In a CNN article by Faith Karmini, Kajja states, "It's also a form of enslavement. It not only presents the victim with a false sense of security, but psychological trauma" (Karmini 1). Other critics call the Rapex condom "a medieval device" (Karmini 1). However, the creator of this device responds by saying rape is "a medieval deed" and hopes that the availability of the Rapex condom will prevent women from using more dangerous methods of avoiding rape (Karmini 2). This device is just one of many "rape prevention" tools that implies that women are responsible for protecting themselves from rapists and by doing so, some of the blame and responsibility for rape is shifted away from male rapists and onto female bodies. Ehlers also acknowledges that she created this device with a specifically South African context in mind. Since this product was created specifically for South African women and their safety concerns, it might not function in the same ways when marketed outside of South Africa (Karmini 1-2). These products, like the Rapex condom, serve as a lens through which we can examine rape culture and rape prevention discourse.

A group of four male students from North Carolina State University, Ankesh Madan, Stephen Grey, Tasso VonWindheim, and Tyler Confrey-Maloney, created "Undercover Colours" nail polish (Sullivan 1). This new line of nail polish is not like ordinary nail polish because the varnish will change color in the presence of the most common date rape drugs. Substances that the nail polish can detect include Rohypnol, Xanax, and GHB (Sullivan 1). There have also been color changing cups and straws that serve the same function. Color changing products are different from other "rape prevention" devices because they are more discreet than objects like whistles or pepper spray. An individual wearing this nail polish can simply dip her finger into her drink and stir and be alerted to the presence of any drugs by her color changing nails. This is a

very interesting product that intends to serve a very positive purpose. However, this is yet another "rape prevention" product that implies that it is a woman's job to protect her body to ensure she will not be raped. Many activists and academics fear that this product will send student the wrong message about preventing rape on college campuses (Culp-Ressler 1). This nail polish is problematic because it take blame and responsibility off of rapists and inscribes that blame and shame onto the bodies of female victims and survivors of rape. While the creators of this product had noble intentions, this product is also reinforcing and perpetuating a culture of victim blaming. This product was created in direct response to negative experiences of female victims and survivors of rape, but this product still puts responsibility for rape onto female bodies. Not only do women have to dress appropriately and avoid drunkenness in order to prevent rape, now they must also have a color changing manicure. This nail polish is just another way that female bodies are controlled and policed by the dictates of rape prevention discourse under the guise of protection.

AR Wear, a new line of "rape resistant" yoga pants and running shorts, is proposed to be marketed towards young women as a way to prevent rape. These "rape prevention" garments are essentially modern day chastity belts. The shorts and undergarments are fastened with locks and the fabric the garments are made out of cannot be ripped, torn, or cut. These products were created by two women named Ruth and Yuval as a response to sexual violence that they have experienced in their own lives. These products are valuable because they could give women an opportunity to escape from an attack. However, these "rape resistant" garments cannot prevent violence. AR Wear does recognize that their products do not provide a long-term solution. Their products only have the potential to stop a rape from being completed. However, if a woman is attacked there are still plenty of ways she can be hurt or injured even if she is wearing rape prevention garments (Gray 2). Rape is about power and control, not sex. These products also

emphasize the idea of stranger rape, while we know that most rapes are committed by someone the victim knows prior to the assault (Simister 3). Vicky Simister also points out the problematic nature of a clothing company making profits off of rape culture, especially when the product does nothing to counter rape culture itself (Simister 4). While these garments were invented with very good intentions, it demonstrates no progress for female empowerment. These "rape resistant" garments do give women some power and control over their own bodies, but they are required to protect and police themselves. If society could address the structural and social factors that create and perpetuate rape culture, women would not feel that they need rape prevention devices.

In this paper, I will analyze news articles about rape prevention technologies and interpret what written media representations can tell us about rape prevention devices. I will describe some of the current literature on rape prevention before addressing media representations of rape prevention devices. I will use the poststructural theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Judy Wajcman to explore some of the social forces and symbolic meanings behind the creation and development of rape prevention devices. Through this investigation I will illuminate the social meanings behind rape prevention discourse in our society by approaching rape prevention products as a lens to examine prevalent social ideas about gender, gender relations, and sexuality. These ideas themselves will shed light on how rape is understood in the twenty-first century in Western culture. I find that terms and phrases like "chastity-belt", "well-intentioned", "false sense of security", and "innovative" are used to describe rape prevention devices. The use of these terms to describe rape prevention devices is often contradictory. These contradictions and the controversy surrounding rape prevention devices demonstrates society's ambivalence towards rape prevention. This ambivalence ultimately hinders collective action and alternative solutions for combating rape culture. I also find that important discussions about cultural context and male victims of rape. By excluding these discussions, the authors of the articles I analyze rely on the

same problematic binaries as rape prevention discourse, homogenize and generalize women's lives and bodies, and perpetuate the notion that rape prevention is the task of individual women. However, many of the articles I investigate in this project also carry feminist ideas and maintain that we must focus on shifting the blame for rape off of victims and onto the perpetrators.

<u>**Literature Review**</u>

Rape culture expects women to conform to traditional gender roles, norms, and expectations. Rape culture undermines the credibility of victims and survivors by perpetuating rape myths and facilitating sexual violence. Rape culture is situated in a patriarchal social structure. "Situating rape and other forms of sexual abuse in the context of an oppressive patriarchy, feminists attempted to reconceptualize sexual violence and to represent it in terms of women's realities" (Ward 18). Colleen Ward (1995) illustrates and explains how society builds its perceptions of rape and rape victims. Society's ideas of gender roles and gender norms contribute to the silence associated with rape and sexual assault crimes. These types of violence are particularly difficult to measure because these sorts of crimes often go unreported. Rape and sexual assault crimes go unreported because women are afraid, they are afraid that no one will believe their stories or they fear more violence from their attackers (Ward). Women are taught from a young age to constantly fear rape and keep the threat of violence ever-present in our minds. On the other hand, our society teaches men that women are there for them and to be used as sexual objects. Violence against women has become practically normalized and accepted by our society. This attitude has allowed a rape culture to grow and flourish.

Our society's rape culture results in heavy consequences for the victims of rape. As mentioned previously, a victim's reputation is often called into question during a rape trial. Several factors influence jury decisions in these cases. Ward carefully details many of these factors and perceptions that influence judgments about rape cases and rape victims. She states,

"Rape occurs in a social context which brings together an offender and a victim in a particular situation and in a specific society. As such, multiple factors should be considered in predicting, explaining and interpreting sexual violence" (Ward 72). Victims are often blamed for the crime committed against them and the rape itself is attributed to characteristic of the victim or circumstances surrounding the crime itself. Why does our society seem to be so indifferent to rape and sexual assault crimes? Because of rape culture and society's permissive attitudes towards rape, the responsibility for these crimes is often pinned on the victim rather than on the rapist. Juries, law enforcement, and other agencies trivialize the accounts and stories recounted by victims especially if they do not conform to a very specific profile for a "good" victim of rape or sexual assault. Colleen Ward explains how blame, attribution, responsibility, and trivialization function in rape cases. These factors help us to understand rape culture in general.

Feminist content analysis of rape prevention discourse is not hard to find. However, these analyses generally investigate rape prevention discourse in the context of crime prevention literature. Campbell (2005) asserts that rape prevention discourse impacts constructions of femininity and relies on poststructural theory in her analysis of crime prevention literature. For example, Campbell states, "Safekeeping strategies become acts of self-surveillance, as women position themselves as fearful and at risk, thus seeming to authenticate their vulnerable natures. Rather than interrupt gender myths, prevailing forms of rape prevention not only acquiesce to this logic, but (re)consolidate it, as its disciplinary gaze places its sight on the female body" (Campbell 131). She acknowledges that current rape prevention discourse dictates that women need to monitor their bodies in order to prevent rape. Campbell understands how constant surveillance impacts women and our culture's scripts about what it means to be appropriately feminine. These constructions of femininity can be dangerous because they imply that women are inherently weak and defenseless. Campbell asserts that, "Women learn their frailty from a variety

of sources, while rape prevention literature (designed to stop rape) should not be one of them, there needs to be a proliferation of strategies across a variety of social, institutional, and cultural terrains which effectively frees gender from its metaphysical lodgings" (Campbell 136).

Campbell argues that this self-surveillance is important because it impacts not only women's self-constructions, but also how women will interact with the world. These ideas about weakness will also influence how men (and even other women) view women, specifically women who are victims of crime. Campbell argues that, "fear of rape is pervasive and evidently interferes substantially with women's routine activities, curtailing women's social and political mobility" (Campbell 120). Here, Campbell seems to understand how greatly fear of rape, and crime in general, will limit possibilities and opportunities for women. The fear of rape has the power to construct a certain type of femininity. According to Campbell, "the power of this omnipresence resides not in its faculty to violently dominate women, but rather the power resides in its capacity to (re)produce a specific self-disciplined feminine subject" (Campell 120). Our gendered performances are constantly monitored and judged by others in society. Women who do not perform gender in "appropriate" ways that would prevent rape are often publicly punished or stigmatized. Many would even say that a woman's punishment for not enacting proper feminine crime prevention roles deserve or are "asking" to be attacked. Campbell articulates society's victim-blaming mentality in this way, "if women fail to self-regulate, if they fail to do gender correctly, they confront external regulations: women who deviate from safekeeping performance heighten their risk of punitive reprisal in the form of an attack" (Campbell 132). This view is highly problematic, but Campbell demonstrates how this idea plays out in the context of rape prevention.

Using the gender performativity theories of Judith Butler, Campbell envisions an alternative for women participating in the public sphere. Despite the risk of attack and public

stigmatization, Campbell explains that according to Butler's theories, "bodily performances need not follow a script in an obedient manner. Since power is embodied, the body must also be the site of resistance" (Campbell 134). Women may be able to overcome the gendered prescriptions of rape prevention discourse by altering those scripts. According to Butler, gender is created and shaped by our performances (Butler). To enact a gradual change for women's gendered performances under rape prevention discourse, we must parody and disrupt the current gendered views about how to prevent crime.

Current rape prevention discourse inscribes the blame for rape onto female bodies in a number of ways. Campbell argues that this victim-blaming attitude does nothing to alter traditional rape prevention discourse and that this blaming might make rape seem "evermore unavoidable" to women. (Campbell 128). prevention discourse emphasizes the prevalence of rape, perhaps overemphasizing the pervasiveness of stranger rape, which may make some women feel that rape is inevitable and rape prevention is pointless. However, society will still try to place the blame for rape onto victims, especially survivors who did not take the "appropriate" steps to protect themselves. Campbell articulates this problem in the following way: "The emphasis thus shifts from offender to victim, who is encouraged, through crime prevention literature, to regulate their lifestyles to help avoid victimization" (Campbell 128). Campbell's article highlights how rape prevention discourse asserts that rape is a "woman's problem" and how this notion shifts attention away from male perpetrators. This piece also focuses on how the victim-blaming in rape prevention discourse may impact constructions of femininity in our society. Campbell states, "...victim-blaming discourse acts as a continual reminder that gender performances are not 'free theatrical self-representations', they are constrained and impelled performances with often punitive consequences" (Campbell 134). In this way, many rape victims and survivors internalize blame and start to view rape as some kind of punishment for not following the rules of

rape prevention. This internalization is problematic and impacts the way that women perform gender.

Nancy Berns also recognizes the role of victim-blaming in crime prevention discourses in her piece, "Degendering the Problem and Gendering the Blame: Political Discourse on Women and Violence". Berns, sees that the problem with victim-blaming is the shift away from focusing on the actions of male perpetrators of violence. "Degendering the problem while gendering the blame diverts attention away from men's responsibility and the cultural and structural factors that oppress women and foster violence" (Berns 277). Consequences of this shift in attention away from male perpetrators may include light punishments for rapists and abusers, which speaks volumes about how violence against women is not taken seriously in our society and this only serves to perpetuate the violence that women experience.

Gardner (1990) addresses how women act in order to prevent crime more generally, not specifically rape. However, this piece is very useful when considering how constructing women as weak affects how women interact with the public sphere. She explains how constructions of femininity have been shaped by a "rhetoric of limited competence". "Prescriptions to women in public places as to how to achieve safety are framed in terms of a rhetoric of limited competence, that is, a series of presentational strategies that project dependency and lack of skill" (Gardner 316). Part of Gardner's argument is that this "rhetoric of limited competence" often does not match up with what is expected of women in order to prevent rape or crime in general. "I will suggest that any crime-preventative rhetoric, however, will be somewhat at odds with other constituents of the general situated self we believe is appropriate in public places" (Gardner 316). Here, Gardner is specifically examining the suggestion that women vomit or urinate in order to prevent an attack from being completed. This seems ridiculous to Gardner as a suggestion, however, it is one often offered to women as a solution in rape prevention literature (Gardner

316). Many women may feel the same way Gardner does about such suggestions. Even though these behaviors are potentially seen as "ridiculous", they become a very serious part of some womens' prevention strategies. Gardner expands on this idea by saying, "For the sake of preventing crime, women are advised to manipulate their dress and behavior in a number of ways that restrict apparel choices and emotional expressions, and require them to present something less than what otherwise would be considered their best possible appearance" (Gardner 320). Gardner addresses crime prevention strategies that would involve a woman dressing like a man or inventing a male companion as a way to prevent crime. Garner is very concerned with what these ideas do to our conceptions of what it means to be a woman in public spaces.

Gardner also addresses victim-blaming in this piece, "Women's alleged responsibility for their own victimization has led them to define part of their task as 'becoming streetwise', 'taking necessary precautions', and 'preventing crime'" (Gardner 312). Women incorporate these factors that Gardner lists into their gendered performances so that they will be seen acting "appropriately" in public spaces. It should also be noted that traditional rape prevention discourse is highly gendered. Men would never be treated to the same suggestions (and definitely not the same number of suggestions) that women are constantly bombarded with from many different sources. Carol Brooks Gardner notices that this trend also holds true for crime prevention in general, "...there continue to be many books and articles directed to women in the name of street crime prevention. There is no complimentary male-directed literature...It represents what is available for, not necessarily taken up by, women in the culture" (Gardner 313). However, we know that men can prevent crime too, just perhaps in different ways. This idea highlights for many scholars and feminists the need to start educating young men and boys about the realities of rape culture so that they can learn what they can do to change the culture around them. It is problematic to place the burden of changing a culture solely on the shoulders of women,

especially when they are more likely to be victims of that culture.

Kristin Day (2001) also explores gendered interactions with public space in her piece, "Constructing Masculinity and Women's Fear in Public Space in Irvine, California". Day investigates constructions of both femininity and masculinity in relation to one another and how these constructions impact feelings of safety in a city that is considered to be very safe: Irvine, California. In this study, Day interviews male students living in Irvine about public safety issues. Her respondents seem to understand that safety concerns in public space differ for men and women. "Men's characterizations of women as vulnerable in public space, especially in a 'safe' place like Irvine, hinged on a conceptualization of danger as differently located for women and men. Men often characterized danger for women as ubiquitous and random..." (Day 114). As such, the male respondents often replied that they think women should be afraid of crime since fear would cause individuals to prepare for potential attacks. The male students also emphasized rape and sexual assault in their interview responses. "Rape was described as the most feared or dangerous incident for women" (Day 114). Hence, this study was particularly relevant to my research. The focus of Day's piece is on fear in public spaces. Day emphasizes that this fear is a learned behavior and is often thought of as a feature of femininity. Day explains that, "Many channels reproduce women's fear in public space. These channels, which have been explored by numerous authors, include societal factors such as myths regarding rape, legal definition and prosecution of crime, cultural and religious norms, child-rearing practices, and media constructions of violence" (Day 115). Through this project, I hope to display how rape myths, legal definitions, and media representations indeed influence women's fear of moving in public spaces. All of these factors would impact an individual's decision to buy and own a rape prevention device.

Day displays an understanding of the ways in which disciplinary power (which will be

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discussed more in the next chapter) operates in public space and how this power influences crime prevention. This power is also essential in maintaining the gendering of public space. Day articulates, "The structure of space – and the way that it defines and distributes human activity – is key to maintaining masculinist perspectives" (Day 116). When space is gendered in this manner, it also dictates the ways in which people can behave in public space. Day explains that there are "appropriate" ways to perform masculinity and femininity in public. In this process, gender identities and expressions are also constructed, shaped, and changed. "Space shapes the way in which gender identity is performed, distributing identities and dictating their meanings" (Day 118). Day identifies different types of masculinity that her respondents perform in public space. The forms of masculinity she identifies would all be considered "appropriate" but entail different behaviors, actions, and responses in public space. She also explains how femininity is then constructed in relation with masculinity. "(Privileged) feminine gender identity is traditionally associated with the qualities of vulnerability, timidity, and weakness in the USA" (Day 119). This kind of femininity is problematic in connection with the idea that women also must be aggressive and protect themselves under the precepts of current rape prevention discourse. This construction is also problematic in the fabrication of women as perpetual victims and the seeming inevitability of rape and sexual assault. These features of ideal femininity are taken for granted and left unquestioned. This means that crime prevention tactics also remain uninterrogated. However, Day claims there may be a solution to the problem. "Reducing women's fear in public space may require rethinking both men's and women's gender identities, and new understandings of gender that are more fluid, ambiguous, and uncertain" (Day 123). Day shows that gender is inextricably bound up with crime prevention and fear in our society. She suggests that reworking how gender is though of in our society will ultimately help women feel more comfortable navigating public space.

Sarah Ullman (2007) also addresses this punishing of women who do not hold to gendered expectations of rape prevention. "Although it should not be women's responsibility to avoid rape, society and the legal system still expect women to do so. Because of this expectation, advising women to resist may reinforce society's expectation that women must resist and that they are to blame if they do not. On the other hand, women need to be told what works and then be free to choose how they want to respond. Failing to inform them about how to avoid rape makes it less likely they will resist because of fear or belief the cannot avoid rape" (Ullman 415). New rape prevention strategies need to be created and used in the ways that Ullman suggests to bring about the end of rape culture. The traditional "rape prevention" tactics are proving to be ineffectual for many women and also demonstrate some very sexist processes, all while intending to keep women safe.

Ullman explains that, "Forceful physical resistance strategies or fighting refers to physical actions women use against their attackers, including biting, scratching, hitting, using a weapon, and martial arts or other physical defense techniques. These strategies are not commonly used by victims in rape situations, with studies showing only approximately 20% to 25% of women using these types of forceful physical resistance" (Ullman 413-414). If only 20% to 25% of victims and survivors of rape are using forceful strategies to resist rape in the first place, then how many of those women would be using weapons or "rape prevention" devices? What percentage of male perpetrators use force against female victims? The studies that Ullman examines in this piece also show that, "If victims have weapons, they are less likely to be raped, but few women have weapons ready to use in situations involving men they know and trust, who commit the majority of sexual assault" (Ullman 420). Here we see that weapons can indeed be effective in a rape or sexual assault situation where a stranger perpetrator used force and possibly weapons. However, since the majority of rapes are perpetrated by someone the victim is acquainted with, are there

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better and more effective alternatives for women to prevent rape in situations where they may be attacked by an acquaintance?

Ullman claims that it is important to encourage women to participate in self-defense classes and take them seriously because this kind of action could provide a long-term solution for preventing rape. Teaching self-defense skills to women may make women realize that rape is not inevitable and they might feel like they have more power than they thought to change rape culture simply by being active and learning to defending themselves. Ullman draws a distinct line between two types of rape prevention, "Arguing for resistance and self-defense training based on extant empirical results does not mean that women are responsible for rape prevention, which is a pitfall of interventions aimed at women. However, there is a distinction between prevention that restricts women's freedom (e.g., providing information about risk, teaching self-defense skills)" (Ullman 426). Many feminists encourage and support rape prevention that can empower women, like developing physical self-defense skills. However, many feminists would critique and take issue with the kind of "rape prevention" that "restricts women's freedom". Traditional rape prevention discourse makes many suggestions that would limit freedom. The general public also could play a larger role in protecting women from crime by creating communities and neighborhoods where women feel safe and empowered. "Engaging the community in broader efforts to collectively prevent rape can avoid putting the sole burden of avoiding rape on potential victims" (Ullman 426). It cannot be down to women, particularly rape survivors and victims, to prevent rape alone. Many other factors have to fall into place before rape can be eradicated from our society.

Criminologists Edwards et al. (2014) claim that, "research has consistently documented that women often use a variety of resistance strategies and their responses typically reflect the tactics used by the perpetrator" (Edwards et al 2529). This fact is particularly interesting when

considering the use and effectiveness of rape prevention devices or weapons by women in a rape or sexual assault situation. Edwards et al claim that, "Given that victims tend to match their strategies to those of the perpetrators', it is important that risk reduction programming, in addition to teaching physical self-defense skills, provides an opportunity for women to learn and practice both verbal and non-verbal strategies to address problematic perpetrator behavior before it escalates" (Edwards et al 2542). Much of the literature I found dealing with rape prevention suggest teaching physical self-defense skills or educating young men about rape culture as a long-lasting solution to truly prevent rape. Given what these studies have shown about the effectiveness and use of weapons in a rape or sexual assault situation, perhaps education and teaching self-defense skills would provide a better alternative in order to prevent rape than buying and carrying weapons or rape prevention devices. In fact, in their study, Edwards et al. found that rape myths present in rape prevention discourse made women less prepared to escape from an acquaintance rape situation. "In other words, as intimacy with the perpetrator increased, women were less likely to respond in physically assertive ways, despite the perpetrator's use of physical tactics" (Edwards et al 2539). Women who are trained and conditioned to expect an attack from a stranger rather than an acquaintance are less likely to respond with physical resistance, like using a weapon or device.

Edwards et al. point out that both men and women must participate in social change in order for there to be a culture shift. "We must remember that women cannot prevent sexual violence and that our efforts must also continue to focus on creating and implementing multi-level primary prevention efforts that target individual men, their peer groups, and the larger social institutions and norms that legitimize sexual violence" (Edwards et al 2543). However, this is still not a popular strategy when our society is so preoccupied by more traditional rape prevention discourse and the more traditional suggestions about how to prevent rape. This also indicates a

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preoccupation with traditional gender roles when considering violence against women in general.

Kathleen Cuminskey and Kendra Brewster do specifically examine two devices, mobile phones and pepper spray, and their potential uses for rape prevention. These authors interviewed women about their thoughts on the effectiveness of these devices as rape prevention and their preferences in rape prevention technologies. Cuminskey and Brewster found that the mobile phone does something particularly interesting for women in terms of rape prevention because of the way that the cell phone can create the feeling of "mobile intimacy" that may make women feel empowered and safe. Hence they claim, "Womens' access to mobile technology can support building confidence in public. This access continues to put pressure on societies to end the sexual assault, harassment, and oppression of women" (Cuminskey and Brewster 591). The authors see this "mobile intimacy" as a way of addressing some of the problems that are perpetuated by rape culture. According to Cuminskey and Brewster, perhaps the use of mobile phones and new apps aimed at preventing rape may be one way of creating a longer lasting solution for rape prevention.

The participants in Cuminskey and Brewster's study were only asked to respond about either pepper spray or cell phones. However, the researchers got quite different results regarding how their respondents felt about each product. While they found these devices to be similar in how women used them, much more women used cell phones than pepper spray as a "rape prevention" device. They explain "the significant result indicated that not only did participants view mobile phones to be like pepper spray but that they evaluated mobile phones to be more effective than pepper spray" (Cuminskey and Brewster 593). Many of their informants claimed it would be "crazy" got go out into the public sphere these days without a cell phone. However, they also found that, "pepper spray has the potential to enact justice in a very specific way: it empowers them with the ability to physically defend themselves. But the results call into

question the importance of the ability to physically defend oneself" (Cuminskey and Brewster 596). Here, the participants in this study seem to be indicating something about the ridiculousness of some suggestions that rape prevention discourse makes about carrying a weapon. These women saw cell phones as the more effective tool for "preventing" rape. But does this fact make pepper spray obsolete in the eyes of women? The findings of this study indicate that women view cell phones as more effective crime prevention tools because of the ways cell phones create mobile intimacy. Mobile intimacy is about the ability to rely on other people for a feeling of safety. Mobile intimacy is not generated by pepper spray or any of the other rape prevention tools I will discuss in this project. Cuminskey and Brewster found that for their respondents, "Their self-confidence in being able to take care of themselves did not relate directly to owning an actual weapon of self-defense" (Cuminskey and Brewster 596). This finding suggests that factors like intimacy and connection with the community may make women feel safer than owning a "rape prevention" device. This would also suggest that cell phones and rape prevention apps may be more practical and effective than new "rape prevention" technologies like drug-detecting color-changing nail polish, anti-rape underwear, and condoms with teeth.

On the other hand, Cuminskey and Brewster recognize some of the faults with using both mobile phones and pepper spray as rape prevention tools. They realize, for example, that, "mobile phones are promoted to women (by mainly male advertisers) this may in fact encourage the reproduction of gender roles and behavior" (Cuminskey and Brewster 596). The researchers here, like other academics investigating rape prevention, assert that devices like this influence gendered performances. The authors of this article also acknowledge that men and women may have different motivations for owning devices that can be used for rape prevention, like mobile phones. According to the findings of Cuminskey and Brewster, many women purchase and carry

cell phones because, "security is a primary impetus for the ownership of cell phones among women...the mobile phone becomes a tools for generating a sense of self-assurance, comfort, and protection – something that users can risk becoming dependent on" (Cuminskey and Brewster 597). This may differ from the ways that men view and use mobile phones. Rape prevention devices, like other technologies, are gendered and sexualized.

Sharon Marcus also offers some solutions for changing current rape prevention discourse. Marcus points out some tensions between rape prevention and postmodern theory in general. Several of the suggestions that Marcus makes to change rape prevention discourse sound similar to Butler's suggestions about subverting gender roles. "We can avoid these self-defeating pitfalls by regarding rape not as a fact to be accepted or opposed, tried or avenged, but as a process to be analyzed and undermined as it occurs. One way to achieve this is to focus on what actually happens during rape attempts and on differentiating as much as possible among various rape situations in order to develop the fullest range of rape prevention strategies" (Marcus 388). This idea could represent a positive application of Butler's theories to rape prevention discourse. Using the idea of subversive gender performances, Marcus makes two concrete suggestions about how women can alter the ways in which rape narratives are enacted in our society. Marcus claims that, "To prevent rape women must resist self-defeating notions of polite feminine speech as well as develop physical self-defense tactics." (Marcus 389) Here, Marcus offers us concrete suggestions where Butler does not. Marcus is also working specifically within the framework of rape prevention where Butler is discussing gendered performances more generally.

Marcus sees rape as a script, this seems similar to Butler's notions of gendered scripts that shape the ways that we construct our gendered performances. However, "rape is not only scripted - it also scripts" (Marcus 391). The fear of rape alone may alter how an individual performs gender. Current rape prevention discourse requires women to act as if the violence they

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experience is inevitable and women must protect themselves in the acceptable ways that have been predetermined by society. Marcus argues that since rape is a script there is room to change and reshape this gendered script. Marcus asserts that one way of disrupting rape scripts is for women to practice self-defense. When women have to use self-defense skills to prevent rape, for a moment the scripts of rape are reversed in a way. "Be defining rape as a scripted performance, we enable a gap between script and actress which can allow us to rewrite the script, perhaps by resisting the physical passivity which it directs us to adopt" (Marcus 392). Unlike Butler, Marcus proposes this as an actual solution, not just a way to "poke fun" at the system. By physically defending themselves from rape, women would be able to alter current rape scripts. Marcus also believes that even verbal self-defense would go a long way for altering rape scripts. However, self-defense classes are often offered by current rape prevention discourse as a solution to ending rape in our society. While self-defense emphasizes, "women's will, agency, and capacity for violence", this alone may not be enough to change rape scripts altogether. Self-defense still requires women to be the ones to end rape culture, rather than educating men or putting the responsibility on male rapists. Marcus recognizes this fact towards the end of the piece and states, "While the ethical burden to prevent rape does not lie with us but with rapists and a society which upholds them, we will be waiting a very long time if we wait for men to decide not to rape. To construct a society in which we would know no fear, we may first have to frighten rape culture to death" (Marcus 400-401). Changing the language of rape scripts and using self-defense strategies may be immediate solutions that women can use to alleviate the effects of rape culture, these tactics may not be enough to end rape culture entirely. However, in this piece Marcus offers us some concrete applications of Butler's theories to rape prevention.

In conclusion, while most of the current rape prevention literature does not specifically revolve around rape prevention devices, the specific pieces I selected to examine in this review

are highly relevant and applicable to an exploration of the ways in which the availability and use of rape prevention devices impacts our constructions of femininity. Studying the theme of femininity in this body of literature is key to understanding the ways in which rape prevention discourse, through rape prevention devices, shapes and frames gendered performances and alters constructions of what it means to be feminine in our society. Blame is another theme in these pieces that is essential to scrutinize if we are to comprehend how rape prevention discourse implies that it is the job of women to prevent rape and how women are often blamed for the crimes committed against them. Many of the authors of these pieces I reviewed for this project felt the need to address and debunk rape myths, particularly myths about stranger rape, because these myths are prevalent in rape prevention discourse and impact our preconceptions about the use and effectiveness of rape prevention technologies. Lastly, the majority of this literature concludes with suggestions about how to actually prevent rape at a more practical, effective, and foundational level by teaching physical self-defense skills to women and educating young boys and men about what they can do to end rape culture.

Theory

In this paper, I will analyze the topic of rape prevention products with a poststructuralist framework through which gendered bodies are understood as constructed and described through discourse and disciplinary power. This paper will examine how blame for rape is inscribed onto the female body by these "rape prevention products" through the theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Judy Wajcman. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *History of Sexuality* (1976) illuminate the disciplinary processes of rape prevention and what happens to females who refuse to participate in rape prevention discourse. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) sheds light on disciplinary body practices and how these practices become gendered and sexualized in the

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context of preventing rape. Finally, Judy Wajcman's *TechnoFeminism* (2004) demonstrates the ways in which technologies like rape prevention devices are created, used, and shaped within a particular context and how our patriarchal social context impacts the functionality of these technologies. I will perform an analysis of current rape prevention discourse through an inspection of three rape prevention products and utilize these three social theories.

Michel Foucault's theories focus on how power is distributed in society. In works like *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault argued that power is everywhere. Power can be oppressive or can be used for positive social change. Foucault's theories demonstrate how strict controls are exercised and enforced over an individual's body as a function of disciplinary power. It is an individual's responsibility to self-police and self-discipline their body in order to fit with societal standards. This relates to Foucault's concept of docile bodies, which is introduced in part three of *Discipline and Punish*. In this section, Foucault articulates how the body can be both a source of power and also a "target of power" (Foucault 136). The docile body is created through the control of activity and strict time management. The docile body is "manipulated, shaped, and trained" to meet the standards and needs of those in power (Foucault 136). "One may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "'docile' bodies" (Foucault 138). New technologies are constantly being invented in order to help the individual monitor their body and their schedule. Butler also acknowledges that certain boundaries are inscribed onto bodies through the process of gender performativity.

The problem of rape prevention is closely related to womens' relation to public space. The fear of crime, hence the sale of rape prevention devices, depends on a certain kind of interaction between women and the public sphere. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault claims that,

"discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (Foucault 141). Foucault's conception of discipline is very applicable to the topic of rape prevention as well as rape prevention devices. Discipline in general relies on a certain kind of "distribution" of people in a space. Rape prevention rules and concerns change as women interact with the public sphere. Discipline is involved with being able to locate individuals in physical space. Under the kind of discipline that Foucault discusses physical spaces are also allotted certain functions and individuals within those spaces are then responsible for certain tasks according to the function of that space. Foucault explains that the goal of disciplinary space, "was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able to at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using. Discipline organizes an analytical space" (Foucault 143). Rape prevention discourse is just one arena where women are subjected to the disciplinary gaze that Foucault describes. Current rape prevention discourse ensures that women's conduct is observed and judged. Foucault also states that physical spaces have not only allotted functions, but that these spaces also carry (patriarchal) values

Foucault's concept of discipline also relies on a strict time table. The function of this time table is to, "regulate the cycles of repetition..." (Foucault 149). Foucault's idea of the time table is similar to the notion of a rape schedule. Women often construct a rape schedule for themselves in order to meet with the demands of rape prevention discourse and to ultimately protect themselves. These rape schedules have a temporal element but also incorporate many different rape prevention suggestions. The concept of the rape schedule was introduced by Dianne Herman in the 1980's. For example, women may avoid being out alone after dark, but also carry pepper spray if they do have to be in public at night. Foucault describes the time table by saying, "it is

rather a collective and obligatory rhythm, imposed from the outside; it is a 'programme'; it assures the elaboration of the act itself; it controls its development and its stages from the inside" (Foucault 152). Rape schedules are often imposed by the outside regulations of rape prevention discourse but implemented in unique ways based on the needs of the woman in question. Not having to live by a rape schedule represents a point of privilege (Herman). Men often do not live by rape schedules while many women do in our society. Foucault emphasizes the "collective" nature of the time table. Similarly, rape schedules are enacted by many (but not all) women. To women who do live by a rape schedule, this schedule feels obligatory as a way to avoid crime. A woman who lives by a rape schedule may also rely on others, for example friends or relatives, in order to perform that schedule. A woman may choose to walk home every night with a friend to ensure that they will not be out alone after dark. This incorporation of others into one's rape prevention routine adds to the collective mentality of the time-table. Foucault also emphasizes that the temporal element of discipline even dictates one's gestures and movements, "Between these two instructions, a new set of restraints had been brought into play, another degree of precision in the breakdown of gestures and movements, another way of adjusting the body to temporal imperatives" (Foucault 151). Rape prevention products are often part of a woman's rape schedule. Hence, rape prevention technologies also rely on the temporal dimensions of rape prevention. In these ways, "Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power" (Foucault 152). Power, time, the body, and control are inextricably linked in discipline and in rape prevention discourse.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains that discipline requires an interaction not only with space and time, but also with objects. Foucault uses the example of the soldier and a rifle within the disciplinary context of the army. Foucault elaborates, "Discipline defines each of the relations that the body must have with the object that it manipulates...a meticulous meshing"

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(Foucault 153). When enacting disciplinary power, objects seem to become part of the body. For example, rape prevention nail polish applied to the finger nails then becomes part of the finger, and in this way discipline defines the body and power is enacted upon the body. Foucault also explains how the body becomes infused with power, "Over the whole surface of contact between the body and the object it handles, power is introduced, fastening them to one another. It constitutes a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex" (Foucault 153). Through the use of rape prevention products, women's bodies have the potential to become like weapons or tools as Foucault describes. We must also consider how practical it is for women to use objects like rape prevention devices in order to feel that they have become "body-weapon" or "body-tool".

Foucault demonstrates that discipline is focused on individuals and will work to maintain this individuality. In *Discipline and Punish*, he explains, "Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it separates, analyzes, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units. It 'trains' the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements...Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (Foucault 170). Foucault shows in *Discipline and Punish*, that discipline needs individuals in order to continue functioning. Foucault articulates that discipline also relies specifically on the surveillance of individuals. Surveillance ensures that disciplinary power can be enforced. This surveillance requires that individuals observe one another and report flaws that do not meet society's expectations. When this surveillance becomes internalized an individual will also police their own behavior. Simply put, "The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation..." (Foucault 170). In the context of rape prevention, discipline is ensured and enforced by people observing women's behavior.

Judith Butler focuses on the construction of gender identities in her book *Gender*

Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. In this work, Butler questions the factors that constitute a feminine identity. Butler is also concerned with the ways that gender becomes internalized and reproduced through a series of gendered performances. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler emphasizes, "The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of reputation* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects" (Butler 185). Butler asserts that the gender binary itself is constructed and maintained through our own gendered scripts and performances. Butler draws on the theories of Foucault and builds upon them in *Gender Trouble*. There is no solid and universal female gender identity. Gender is socially constructed and fluid and is reproduced through our performances. Feminists push for females to be seen as subjects rather than objects. This can only happen by changing the ways we perform gender. "In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition" (Butler 185). Butler proposes this strategy as a way for women to recover their agency within our society. Women must alter their gendered performances and deviate from society's sexual scripts in order to ultimately change the way that our society views femininity (Butler).

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler discusses how, "Both masculine and feminine positions are thus instituted through prohibitive laws that produce culturally intelligible genders..." (Butler 37). Butler specifically uses the incest taboo as an example to demonstrate how prohibitive laws influence how gender is socially constructed. She also uses this example to demonstrate some of the consequences one could face for violating the rules and norms associated with gender. In the context of rape prevention, "gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequence..." (Butler 178). Building on Foucault's notion of discipline, surveillance and the observation of women who do not meet with the requirements of rape prevention discourse could lead to

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negative social consequences, for example, stigmatization and ostracism. When we are

performing gender we are also reproducing gender. Butler claims regarding gender, " As an

ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender

seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the 'congealing' is itself an insistent and insidious

practice, sustained and regulated by various social means" (Butler 43). Gender is maintained

through "social means" such as the surveillance necessary to keep up the disciplinary power of

rape prevention. As Butler articulates, gender is constructed and "congeals" through repetition.

Through the repetition of rape prevention routines, women are reinforcing and actively

constructing gender.

Butler discusses how our gendered performances might be altered as a way of

transforming society's constructions of gender. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler proposes parody as as

an avenue for the transformation of gender norms. The kind of parody Butler speaks of would

require small alterations to our gendered performances that are repeated over time until these

alterations become normalized parts of gender expectations. These alterations have the power to

reveal that gender is constructed and performative. Butler claims that this kind of change is not

necessarily easy and may take a long time to achieve. She states, "Parody by itself is not

subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic

repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling , and which repetitions become domesticated

and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler 177). One must carefully consider

what kind of parody will be effective and adopted into mainstream discourse. Butler claims that

change can be made through simply not repeating certain gendered performances. Butler states,

"The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and through, a radical

proliferation of gender, norms that enable the repetition itself" (Butler 189). We must consider

the social forces behind our performances, parodic or not. We must consider how parodic

performances will be received and whether such performances will even be possible. However, Butler emphasizes that one of the goals of parodic performance should be to enact behaviors that society has deemed impossible. "The task here is not to celebrate each and every new possibility qua possibility, but to redescribe those possibilities that already exist, but which exist within cultural domains designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible" (Butler 189). However, would women be comfortable or willing to parody their rape prevention routines when their physical safety may be on the line? What else may women risk by enacting the kind of parodic performances that Butler describes? Are there alternatives to parodic performances that could also transform rape prevention discourse and gender as we know it?

In her book, *TechnoFeminism*, Judy Wajcman analyzes a variety of technologies and how these innovations are impacted by the patriarchal social structure they are created within. Wajcman demonstrates that, "Social scientists have increasingly recognized that technological change itself is shaped by the social circumstances within which it takes place" (Wacjman 33). Wajcman also explains how technology and patriarchy are mutually constituted, meaning that technology can also have an effect on the patriarchal culture in return. This idea is applicable to rape prevention products. As I will argue, the rise of rape prevention technologies influences our cultural constructions of femininity in that they change what it means to be an acceptable woman in our society.

In *TechnoFeminism*, Wajcman explores traditional feminist conceptions of technology. As Wajcman explains, throughout the history of feminism, feminists have taken a negative attitude toward technology; however, Wajcman recognizes that technology can be both oppressive and empowering for women. The view of technology as simply oppressive for women relies on the traditional association of women with nature which places them outside the realm of technology. Wacjman describes the connection between men and machinery as "taken-for-granted" (Wajcman

144) because of how ingrained this connection has become in our society. Wajcman explains this phenomenon by saying, "We have begun to conceive of a mutually shaping relationship between gender and technology, in which technology is both a source and a consequence of gender relations" (Wajcman 7). We should consider rape prevention technologies in a similar manner. While these products were created with good intentions, they are inevitably a product of the patriarchal societal structure.

Wajcman explains that, "certain kinds of technology are inextricably linked to particular institutionalized patterns of power and authority..." (Wajcman 22-23). Rape prevention products would qualify as one such type of technology. However, many insist on trying to see all technologies as gender neutral. Feminists, like Wajcman, attempt to demonstrate it is not so. Wajcman explains that, "Gender roles and sexual divisions are part of the sociotechnical system or network" (Wajcman 35). In *TechnoFeminism*, Wajcman analyzes technologies such as the microwave, the typewriter, and birth control pills to demonstrate how technologies are gendered and used to either maintain gender hierarchies or dismantle them. Wajcman claims, "If we regard technology as neutral, but subject to possible misuse, we will be blinded to the consequences of artefacts being designed and developed in particular ways that embody gendered power relations" (Wajcman 23). Since technologies, like rape prevention technologies, are not and cannot be gender neutral, one solution that Wajcman sees to ending this problem is to get women more involved with the development and creation of new technologies.

Wajcman addresses the lack of women in STEM fields in *TechnoFeminism*. The shortage of women in STEM fields contributes to the gendered development and creation of technologies like rape prevention devices. However, the rape prevention devices that I address in this project are unique because they are mainly created by women and for women. But some of these products, like Undercover Colors nail polish, are created by men for women. How does the

gender of the creators of these technologies impact their development and use? Wajcman also addresses the connection between control over technology and the domination of women by men. She says, "Western technology, like science, is deeply implicated in this masculine project of the domination and control of women and nature" (Wajcman 146). Control over technology and control over women are connected and invested in maintaining patriarchal power. Feminists question how women can use science and technology to dismantle patriarchy and end the oppression of women when science is so tied to the maintenance of patriarchal power. Wajcman insists that we question this connection between men and machines in order to learn how this connection came to be in our society. Wajcman also asserts that, "it is imperative that women are involved throughout the processes and practices of technological innovation" (Wajcman 150). This is important because of how masculinity and femininity are constructed in part by science and technology, which are big influences in our society. But this fact is also important because "gender relations can be thought of materialised in technology" (Wajcman 149). In order to change how technologies, like rape prevention devices, are developed and used in our society we must restructure the scientific and technological fields by encouraging women to participate in these fields and be an active part of shaping technologies. Wajcman suggests that this is one way that women can achieve lasting social change that impacts more than the scientific and technological fields. She writes, "A feminist politics of technology is thus key to achieving gender equality" (Wajcman 143). however, a feminist politics of technology requires more than just the participation of women in STEM fields.

Another interesting aspect of *TechnoFeminism* is its push back against the standardization that has become a part of the development of technologies. Some degree of standardization is necessary when marketing and selling products like rape prevention devices. However, people will not all use a particular device in the same way because not all people are the same. This is

how technologies become shaped and changed over time. Scientific and technological fields also need to change over time in order to meet the demands of consumers. Wajcman claims, "It involves a view of society as a doing rather than a being. The construction of technologies is also a moving, relational process achieved in daily social interactions..." (Wajcman 39). Another facet of the standardization process concerns the ways in which technologies are more often shaped to meet the needs of men rather than to meet the needs of women in our patriarchal society. "A central argument of feminist theory has been that men are set up as the norm against which women are measured and found wanting. This involves celebrating certain forms of masculinity over any form of femininity" (Wajcman 43). This idea can mean several different things in the context of rape prevention. For example, many rape prevention products function in a way that women see as neither practical nor effective because they do not fit with women's rape prevention needs. In *TechnoFeminism*, Wajcman explains how certain forms of technology become popular in our society, "Social studies of technology emphasize that machines work because they have been accepted by relevant social groups" (Wacjman 37). Many women, especially feminists, find certain rape prevention devices to be very problematic. Often these products are rejected by women because they are seen as an inadequate solution to the problem of rape. Wajcman explains, "Such approaches do not always recognize that the stabilization and standardization of technological systems necessarily involve negating the experience of those who are not standard" (Wajcman 42).

One last interesting feature that Wajcman points out in *TechnoFeminism* that can be applied to rape prevention products is their ever-changing nature. Since the meanings that surround all technologies are socially constructed, these meanings change as they are used and as society changes. Wajcman claims that it is specifically the users of technologies who have the power to alter the meanings behind certain technologies. She states, "consumers or users modify

the meanings and values of technologies in the practices of everyday life" (Wajcman 47). This process is relevant to the use and development of rape prevention devices. This concept is an important part of Wajcman's conception of TechnoFeminism, "This technofeminist approach brings together the interpretive flexibility or malleability in how artefacts are read symbolically, with an understanding of how they are physically shaped and remade" (Wajcman 48). All of these factors that Wajcman discusses in TechnoFeminism impact how rape prevention devices will be used and how they become part of women's daily routines (or not).

What do these products say about the treatment of rape victims and survivors in our society? What do these products indicate about the policing of female bodies? Foucault's theories also discuss the relation between the concept of docile bodies and strict time management. This relates to the expectation of women to live by a rape schedule, constantly policing their own behavior and their time. For this process to work, women must constantly live in fear of rape. The presence of "rape prevention" products on the market and the insistence that women need these things in order to protect themselves perpetuates this fear of stranger rape. Building on Foucault's concept of docile bodies, it is also important to note that these products imply it is women's responsibility to prevent rape. Docility is created when one must police and regulate their own bodies and behavior. In this sense, female bodies are indeed a "target of power." Patriarchal male power is exercised over female bodies by not only committing rape and sexual assault, but also by keeping women in constant fear and leading them to believe that it is their responsibility to prevent rape by using these products and living by a rape schedule. This is how female bodies become shaped and trained to fit into a world of male power. Products like Rapex condoms, rape prevention underwear, and drug-detecting color-changing nail polish are simply new technologies invented to help women maintain and monitor a rape schedule in order to meet with the suggestions of a patriarchal rape culture. The theories of Judith Butler are also

applicable to this process and these "rape prevention" products. Butler might assert that the gender binary itself is produced and reproduced through the discourses of rape prevention. Current rape prevention discourse does not recognize that gender is a fluid social construction. Rape prevention discourse in our society rarely distinguishes sex from gender. "The treatment of women's bodies as threatening because reducible to their (vulnerable) sexual anatomy revives treatment of women's sex as property that must be protected because it is capable of being trespassed upon." (Hall 2) The performance of femaleness now relies heavily on protecting oneself from rape and sexual assault. Women have to change the ways that they perform rape schedules in order to change the way femininity is viewed in our society.

Methods

For this content analysis, I analyzed twenty-four news articles that were available online that contained information about rape prevention devices. I sought articles from both news sources that are considered feminist and mainstream news sources that are not viewed as feminist. I did this in order to compare and contrast the information contained in the articles from both kinds of news outlets. I obtained these articles in several different ways. Some of the articles were available on the LexisNexis database that the University of Wisconsin libraries provide access to. I also used search engines like Google and Yahoo to find these articles so that I could examine the most recent publications about rape prevention articles. I also obtained articles through friends who knew I was working on this project and would email me a link to articles that would be of interest in my research project. In my search for media representations to analyze, I started searching with the term "rape prevention". However, many of the articles that were about rape prevention did not cover the products I was interested in. Narrowing my focus, I then searched for articles about "rape prevention devices" and "rape prevention products". Finally, I also searched for articles by using the specific names of the different products I wanted

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to investigate for this project like "AR Wear" and "Rapex condom". Once I found an article I wanted to analyze, I printed it out and stored it as a hard copy. I did this in case the article would be made inaccessible to me at a later date online. I felt that twenty-four articles would be sufficient to analyze for this project. I stopped gathering articles when I had reached a saturation point. No new or different themes were presented in the content of the articles. In fact, I noticed that many of the articles contained the same information and same quotes as the journalists had interviewed the same experts as well as the creators of the devices. Overall, I did not find that this topic got much media coverage. When this topic did get media coverage from a national or local newspaper, it was often located in a specific "women's" section on that paper's website. I was surprised to see that many large national newspapers covered this story at all and contained feminist sentiments about the topic.

Eleven of these articles were generated by large national newspapers like the New York Times, Washington Post, Newsweek, and Huffington Post. I also included eight articles from smaller newspapers like the Pittsburgh-Post Gazette, The Salt Lake Tribune, New York Daily News, and the Toronto Star. News stories that were available only online from websites like Jezebel, Feministing, Think Progress, and Girl's Globe often provided articles written from a specifically feminist perspective. I gathered five articles from online feminist sources. I broke the articles up into these three categories: articles from big, national news sources, articles from smaller news sources (usually state, city, or local), and online news sources. These articles were easily accessible online and I thought they would be the articles most likely to be read by the general public. Many English-speaking countries are represented in this collection of articles including: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Africa. Eighteen of the articles were published in the United States. Two of the rape prevention products I examined were created in the United States. Table 1 below shows the geographic locations of the

twenty four articles I gathered for this project.

Table 1:

Geographic Location of Articles
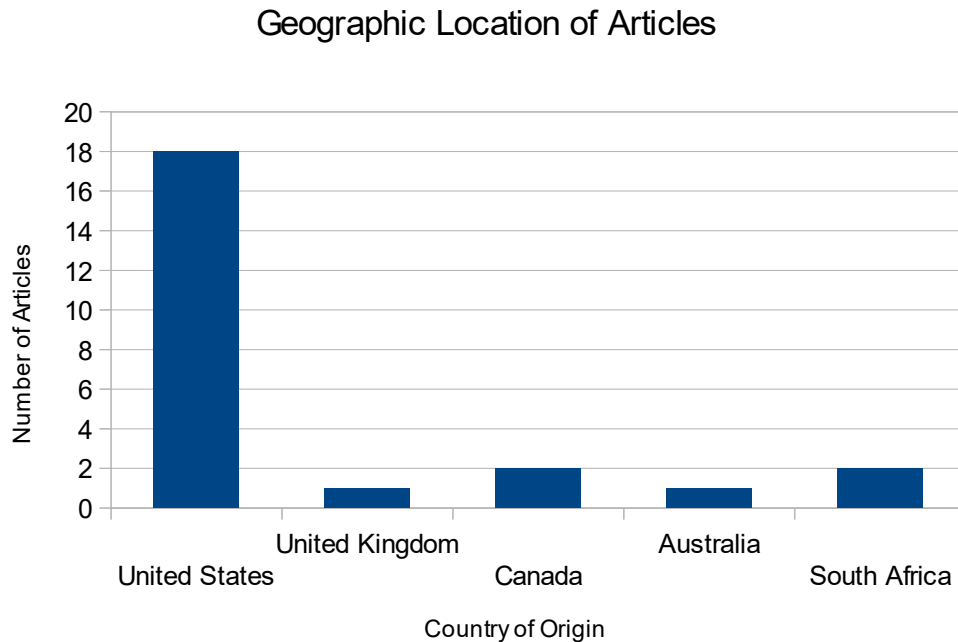
The majority of these articles that discuss rape prevention products are written by women journalists. Nineteen of these articles were written by women and five were written by men. However, I tried to ascertain the journalists' gender through their name or their photo so my numbers may be incorrect. I included articles that came specifically from news websites with feminist goals (like Jezebel or Feministing) alongside pieces from large news sources that do not necessarily share feminist aims. Some of these articles were featured in a designated "women's" section within a newspaper's website. The oldest article I used is from 2005 and the most recent is from 2015. The dates that the articles were written tend to coincide with the creation and release of the products the article was written about. This means that the older articles were written about the Rapex condom since this device was the first created out of the three I am

analyzing. The only article from 2005 was the oldest I could find specifically about these particular rape prevention products. AR Wear and Undercover Colors nail polish are newer inventions and the articles about these two products are mostly from 2013 and 2014. The interest in these three devices seems to be a recent phenomenon only appearing in news stories from within the past ten years or so. Tables 2 and 3 below show the types of news sources the articles came from and the year these articles were published.
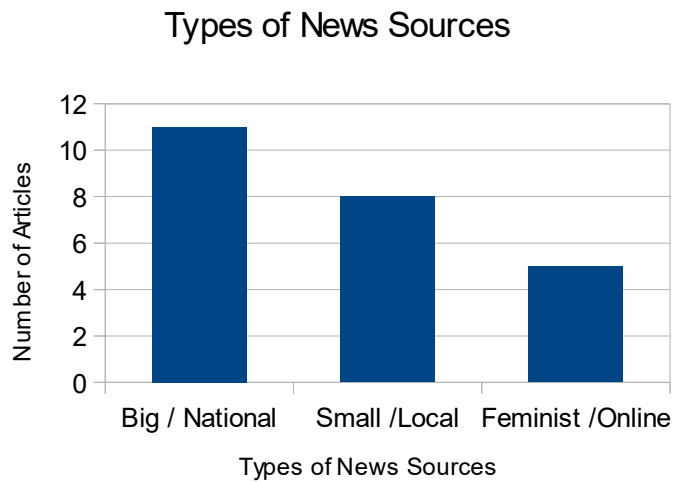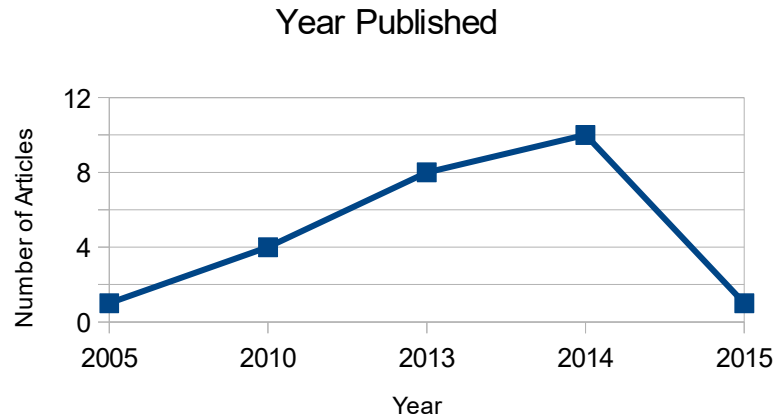
Table 2:

Types of News Sources

Table 3:

Year Published

Twenty-one of these articles discussed one specific rape prevention device while three of these articles gave a broader overview of the different kinds of rape prevention technologies that are available. Most of the articles seemed to focus on just one rape prevention device in particular, however, some of the articles gave a brief overview of many rape prevention products before moving to focus solely on the features of one particular product. Seven of the articles featured AR Wear's anti-rape underwear. Six articles featured Sonette Ehlers' Rapex condom. Eight articles discussed Undercover Colors drug-detecting nail polish. Some of these articles took a more optimistic view of rape prevention technologies, while others review some of the more negative consequences associated with these devices and their implications within rape culture. I broke the articles down into even smaller groupings based on the kind of representation the products received in the article: a positive endorsement of the product or more critical reflections on the implications of rape prevention products within rape culture. Five of the pieces I examined gave positive endorsements of a rape prevention product. The majority of these positive reviews for rape prevention products came from large national news sources. However, many of the more critical pieces I reviewed also came from large national newspapers and

magazines. All of the feminist online news stories I reviewed provided a critical view of rape prevention devices. Four of the articles I inspected supplied both the positive and negative aspects of a particular rape prevention product.

I coded for themes based on how often certain phrases were mentioned across the collection of articles rather than focus on how many times a word or theme was mentioned within an article. Some of the themes I will discuss were based on how often these topics were not mentioned in the collection of the articles even though their inclusion would have been very important for a discussion of rape prevention discourse. For example, I found that men as the victims of rape, cultural context, and difference between women was not discussed very often in these articles. Only three articles acknowledge that these products are designed specifically for women as victims and men will not be able to use these products in the same ways. The pieces that discussed men as potential victims were all from smaller local newspapers and magazines. This fact was not discussed in pieces written for large national newspapers. The cultural context behind the creation of these devices was most mentioned in the articles written about the Rapex condom. Even when the cultural context was discussed it was only briefly and to mention that South Africa has a very high rape rate. However, statistics were rarely given in the article to explain rape rates in the United States when discussing products like AR Wear or Undercover Colors nail polish. The pieces that did not focus on the Rapex condom yet still discussed cultural context came from small local news sources or online feminist sources. Differences amongst women that would impact the use of rape prevention devices were also only discussed in small local newspapers or on feminist websites. These ideas did not appear in large national papers. I will elaborate on the consequences of these omissions in the next chapter. Silences within the media representations of rape prevention products shows much about what these journalists felt what information was important to include in these pieces. It also influences the information

received by the general public about rape prevention devices. These silences may mean that the general public is not getting the full picture about these products and will impact society's thoughts and feelings about rape prevention.

I was also particularly interested in the words chosen by journalists to describe rape prevention products and explain how they are meant to work. The idea that these products cannot actually prevent rape was central to several of these pieces. Specific words and phrases I chose to track through this collection of articles included "chastity belt", "innovative", "well-intentioned", and "false sense of security". These words and phrases occurred most often in the texts and reveal larger themes relevant to rape prevention devices. Rape prevention devices were referred to as "chastity-belts" four times throughout the articles from large, small, and online news sources. This phrase was most commonly used to refer to AR Wear which bears the most striking resemblance to a medieval chastity-belt. However, this phrase was also used to refer to the Rapex condom indicating that this phrase was not only used to describe the physical attributes of these devices but also to tell us something about the contexts behind their creation. "Well-meaning" and "well-intentioned" were used to describe rape prevention technologies a total of six times in the articles I collected across all three kind of news sources. Rape prevention products were referred to as "innovative" or "innovations" in large national and small local newspapers. Finally, the phrase "false sense of security" was used to describe rape prevention devices three times. This phrase was only used in articles from large national newspapers, however, I believe this phrase was representative of larger ideas that were contained in the majority of these piece about the inability of these tools to actually prevent rape. I will discuss these themes and commonalities more in the next chapter.

Justification for Content Analysis Method

For this project, I chose the method of content analysis because I was interested in

investigating how these products are presented to the general public by the media. These representations of rape prevention devices could influence how people think about such products. If someone had never heard of rape prevention products before, these representations could be their first impression of these devices. Content analysis would be particularly useful in this context for exposing the social meanings, norms, and values written into the media representations of rape prevention devices. These hidden meanings could also show larger trends in society's treatment of rape culture in written forms of media.

As I began to read news stories about rape prevention devices, I noticed that different journalists and newspapers presented information about these products in very different ways. The articles broke down into two central categories: positive endorsements of the products and more critical reflections that did not endorse rape prevention devices. In my own reflecting, I considered how the articles that positively endorsed the rape prevention products may be enforcing the gender norms of the patriarchal societal structure. However, the other articles brought up many points about how the rape prevention products themselves were products of patriarchy and maintained patriarchy by asserting that it is the responsibility of women to prevent rape. This paper offers a feminist critique of rape prevention discourse and rape prevention devices. Many of the news articles I examined are written from a feminist perspective. Both the cultural artifacts (rape prevention devices) and the documents about them (news stories regarding rape prevention products) can be read and interpreted in a critical feminist way. Reinharz states that, "…feminists can read them (cultural artifacts and documents) in 'subversive ways' by constant rereading and looking for particular clues…" (Reinharz 149). In my analysis of these articles, I looked for these "clues" that Reinharz it referring to. These clues included the word choices made in the articles as well as the choice of topics to explore within the articles.

As much as I would have liked to interview women about their thoughts and feelings

about rape prevention devices, I was already examining the media representations of rape prevention products and could explore the topics I wanted to pursue using content analysis. Content analysis is particularly powerful because, "the operation of power within print news is both unacknowledged and subconscious. While print media do adhere to a certain definition of objectivity and unquestionable professionalism, it is also an accepted truth for many scholars that one of the primary functions of print media is to support and purvey dominant ideologies to readers" (Cuklanz and McIntosh 270). I chose to examine news stories about rape prevention devices because, I believe that these articles influence the general public's perceptions of rape prevention devices. In addition, those perceptions and realization about rape prevention devices have the power to alter our conceptions about rape prevention and gender in general. These products and the media representations of them say something about gender and rape culture in our society.

My aim was to address my questions about rape prevention products using a feminist frame. Reinharz describes, "feminist frame analysis as the 'study of the rules of society and experience that limit the opportunities, experience, and autonomy of women in everyday life'" (Reinharz 152). By examining media representations of rape prevention products, I hope to shed light on how rape prevention discourse "limits the opportunities" of women. Also, I hope to investigate the ways in which rape prevention discourse, through rape prevention products, defines "appropriate" gendered behaviors for women. In this way, I hope to, "challenge conventional knowledge…" that is central to rape prevention discourse and the social construction of gender (Reinharz 156). Content analysis is particularly useful in the examination of taken-for-granted or conventional knowledge. "On the surface, some types of knowledge and meaning might appear 'normal' or 'natural' in their construction and thus go without question" (Cuklanz and McIntosh 266). I seek to demonstrate the constructedness of the news articles I

analyze. Certain norms, beliefs, agendas, and goals go into the creation of these media representations and is captured in the language of each piece. Cuklanz and MacIntosh state, "The purpose of most analysis of print media, thus, is the elucidation and elaboration of how dominant ideologies are supported through patterns of repetition and omission" (Cuklanz and McIntosh 270). Reflecting dominant ideologies is not the purpose of all print media however. For example, the pieces from online feminist news sources that I analyze give voice to more marginalized positions. However, the mainstream news articles I analyze do often mirror dominant ideologies. I will use content analysis to explore both the "repetition and omission" and will use a poststructural theoretical framework to interpret what they might mean.

Through this project, I will discuss some of the problematic elements of current rape prevention discourse by examining what is said about rape prevention devices in news articles. I also seek to highlight the ways in which rape prevention discourse is produced and reproduced through rape prevention products, as well as how gender is produced and reproduced through rape prevention discourse and devices. This is yet another distinguishing feature of feminist content analysis as articulated by Holmes. "More specifically, critical discourse analysts aim to describe the ways in which power and dominance are produced and reproduced in social practice through the discourse structures of everyday interactions" (Lazar 31). It is important to analyze rape prevention discourse because of the "power and dominance" enacted through items such as rape prevention products.

<div align="center">**<u>Analysis</u>**</div>

How are the products themselves described?

In my content analysis of the written media representations of rape prevention devices, I want to pay special attention to the words used to describe the products themselves. These particular rape prevention products are not analyzed in previous literature. The choice of words in

<div align="center">48</div>

these articles reflects discourses and knowledge about the treatment of women's bodies.

Feminists have been responding to these rape prevention devices by pointing out the great deal of

cultural meaning behind the creation and development of these products. Whether the developers

of these products were aware of these underlying meanings or not, these kinds of critiques can

influence the ways rape prevention products are sold and used. The adjectives used to describe

rape prevention devices shed light on the attitudes that people hold towards these devices. I

tracked every word used to describe these devices in order to try to find trends in the descriptions

offered by journalists throughout the articles I collected. Some words used to describe rape

prevention devices included "interesting", "clever", and "archaic". However, the words most

often used to describe these products were "chastity-belt", "well-intentioned" or "well-meaning",

"false sense of security", and "innovative". I will briefly explore these four categories of

descriptions in order to understand what these media representations can tell us about the rape

prevention products themselves as well as rape prevention discourse within rape culture.

AR Wear, anti-rape undergarments, in particular are often described as "chastity-belts" or

"chastity-belt-like" in the media representations of rape prevention devices. Rape prevention

devices are referred to as chastity belts or chastity belt-like four times throughout this collection

of articles. While this may seem like a small number, only certain descriptors were repeated at all

throughout these twenty-four articles. These articles also explain the features of AR Wear

including tiny locks and fabric that cannot be ripped or torn. Many people are familiar with the

image of the chastity-belt as a medieval rape prevention device, but one that is not commonly

used today. However, many are unfamiliar with chastity belts as a way for husbands to prevent

their wives from having consensual affairs while they were away. In this way, AR Wear and

chastity belts are different, however, this term was still used by journalists to describe this

product. The authors of these articles that use the image of AR Wear as chastity belt are asserting

that the idea of anti-rape undergarments is out of date for modern women. Using the term "chastity-belt" also reflects the idea that there is patriarchal power at play in the creation and use of these devices. The relation of rape prevention products to the chastity belt also emphasizes the individuality and the control of the disciplinary power of rape prevention. The disciplinary power of rape prevention defines how women must use and interact with rape prevention products. The image of AR Wear as a chastity belt is often used in connection with the words "archaic" or "prosaic" suggesting that this kind of rape prevention belongs in a different time and place. For example, AR Wear is referred to as "prosaic" (Simons) and rape prevention discourse itself is referred to as "archaic" (Govere). In relation to a critical reflection on this product, Govere says, "Plus there's nothing wrong with a little safe fun, and it seems kind of archaic to suggest women wear locked undergarments to prevent themselves from willfully having sex" (Govere 3-4). Here, Govere suggests that AR Wear itself is "archaic" but so is the rape prevention idea that women cannot go out and have fun without these shorts to protect them. However, "archaic" is also used in other articles to describe other rape prevention devices as well. This fact then suggests that the ideas behind rape prevention devices, specifically that it is the responsibility of women to "prevent" rape using tools and devices, is what belongs in another time and place.

Rape prevention devices and their creators are referred to as well-intentioned or well-meaning a total of six times in this collection of twenty-four articles. The terms "well-intentioned" or "well-meaning" are also often accompanied by "misguided". For example, Mackenize Carpenter's article for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that refers to drug detecting nail polish as "well-intentioned" is titled "Nail Polish Date Rape Test Called Misguided". The authors of these articles often explain the motivations that the creators of these devices have for developing these rape prevention products. The creators of all three of these devices that I have examined do indeed have noble intentions behind the invention of these products. The creators of

AR Wear have personal experiences with sexual assault. Dr. Ehlers was inspired to create something that would help the patients she saw that experienced the trauma of rape and sexual assault. The young men who created Undercover Colors were thinking of their female friends and relatives who had experienced sexual assault when they were developing their product. The descriptions of these people as "well-meaning" is usually in the same section of the article that explains the inventors' histories that inspired the creation of these devices. This description also helps to show both sides of a story and humanize the creators of these devices. However, the description of these products as "well-intentioned" is also with a "but". This suggests that the authors view these devices as somehow missing the mark. The journalists that view rape prevention products as "well-intentioned but..." seem to believe that rape prevention products are not the best solution for ending the larger problem of rape culture. For example, Tara Culp-Ressler refers to drug detecting nail polish as, "well-meaning but ultimately misguided" (Culp-Ressler 2). Emma Gray for the Huffington Post states, "Honestly, we'd prefer not to strap our vaginas into protective undergarments, no matter how well-intentioned they are" (Gray 2). No matter how "well-meaning" the creators of these devices are, all of them reinscribe patriarchal relations. The disciplinary power of rape prevention influences our society's constructions of femininity. However, if women were to disrupt their repetitions of rape prevention routines, this may be a may to break down gender constructions and challenge heterosexual norms. I was surprised to find that feminist ideas, like discussions about how the creation of these products is misguided, was often included in mainstream news sources. Altering the construction of gender may ultimately be a way to end rape culture. Many rape prevention products also inherently enforce ideas behind a patriarchal social structure from which men will benefit. Men also often benefit financially from the sale of these products.

Rape prevention devices are described as providing a "false sense of security" three times

in the media representations of rape prevention products. While this particular phrase is only mentioned three times, the fact that it was mentioned by multiple journalists still seemed significant and I chose it to be the title of this paper. In the media representations of rape prevention devices as a "false sense of security", journalists seem concerned that rape prevention products do not really prevent rape. David Freeman quotes Victoria Kajja saying that the Rapex condom, "... not only presents victims with a false sense of security, but also psychological trauma" (Freeman 2). The use of this phrase points to larger theme that runs throughout the majority of the articles I collected. Rape "prevention" devices do nothing to actually prevent rape but merely circumvent rape or prevent rape completion. These rape prevention products do not address rape culture and cannot provide a long-lasting solution to prevent all of the manifestations of rape and sexual violence. In fact, all three of these products leave women vulnerable to physical assault and violence. However, only three of these media representations then present an alternative solution for preventing rape such as educational classes for men about rape culture or self-defense classes for women. In this way, rape prevention products indeed represent a "false sense of security". By using this particular quote from Kajja, Freeman is able to explain how rape prevention devices do nothing to help women in the aftermath of an assault, and in fact, keep women fearful and always monitoring their own behavior. In doing so, rape prevention products do nothing to problematize rape culture.

This is an industry that relies on women's fear of rape and there is a profit to be made in this case by keeping women fearful. This fear of rape clearly functions as a method of social control, even if rape prevention discourse does not necessarily acknowledge that fact. Contemporary rape prevention discourse includes many suggestions for how women might protect themselves and "prevent rape". However, this same discourse may also imply that if a woman fails to comply with rape prevention suggestions, that being the victim of rape is

somehow her fault. Many women not only fear rape, but the kind of stigmatization that rape victims and survivors face often in the aftermath of sexual violence. The existence of "rape prevention" devices only exacerbates this problem. Not carrying a weapon or some kind or a rape prevention device is just one added mistake that could potentially cast the blame for rape onto a female victim. Ultimately, by not discussion alternatives to using rape prevention devices, the majority of these articles serve to normalize and maintain rape culture. Rape culture is perpetuated when it is normalized and certain behaviors are repeated. Only discussing the products and not the alternatives like self-defense classes limits the possibilities to transform rape culture. It is important to be critical of these suggestions as a feminist but it also crucial to realize that we cannot simply ask women to give up more traditional rape avoidance routines if these practices make them feel safe (or at least safer) interacting in the public sphere. Blindly supporting rape prevention products without any critical analysis of why these devices exist does not explore the possibility of a world where such products would not be necessary at all.

Rape prevention devices are described as "innovative" four times in the articles I chose to analyze. This seems, yet again, to be an attempt by these journalists to expose the more positive side of rape prevention devices. The word "innovative" is being used to show these three products to be new or different. Rape prevention strategies and devices are also shaped and changed over time in a way that involves "daily social interactions" like Wajcman describes in *TechnoFeminism*. However, other authors explain how some features of these products are not new or different at all. Miri Mogilevsky refers to drug detecting nail polish as an "innovation". Mogilevsky brings up a good point about rape prevention products being referred to as "innovations" or "innovative", "...rape is so commonplace and expected that people think they can make a lucrative startup to sell products to 'prevent' it. That it is easier to create this technological innovation than it is to alter human behaviors and expectations" (Mogilevsky 3).

There are also products other than Undercover Colors nail polish that can detect the presence of date rape drugs in a drink. There are also straws and coasters already on the market that serve the same purpose. AR Wear also did not strike all of the journalists as "innovative" when they could be seen as reminiscent of chastity belts. It seems contradictory that rape prevention devices can be described as both "archaic" and "innovative". Although it may be easier to create new technology instead of changing the culture, we must consider that rape culture and rape prevention products are mutually constructed. Ultimately, these products exist because society is suspicious of females who do nothing to protect their bodies from rape. Women who do not want to experience these stigmatization or ostracism or leave themselves unprotected rely on the demands of rape prevention discourse and often the aid of rape prevention products.

Contradictions and Controversy

However, this sort of contradiction may be part of the reason for the controversy surrounding rape prevention devices. The public, as well as the journalists who wrote the articles that inform public opinion about rape prevention devices, seem to have very split opinions on rape prevention devices. In this section, I will examine how the controversy surrounding rape prevention products are articulated in media representations. I found 5 articles that gave positive reviews and endorsements of rape prevention products, 15 articles that were critical of rape prevention products and questioned the connection of these products to rape culture, and 4 articles that presented both sides of the controversy and explored both the pros and cons of rape prevention devices. All five of the articles I collected from online news sources provided a more critical reflection on rape prevention devices and the motivations behind their creation. I analyzed eight articles from smaller newspapers usually available on state or local levels. These articles from smaller news sources were divided between positive reviews and critical reflections of rape prevention products. Lastly, I had eleven articles from large national news sources and

this kind of source provided the majority of the articles I analyzed for this project. Like the smaller, state-level papers, these articles displayed a mix of positive and negative representations of rape prevention devices. The differing news sources are all geared towards different audiences. Readers may be expecting a certain kind of information based on the type of news source they are reading from. For example, readers that regularly visit online feminist news sources might expect these websites to provide critical reflections on rape prevention devices in the first place. We must consider to what extent the authors of these articles wrote to fill the expectations of their audiences.

Lack of racial difference / cultural context

When reading through these articles, I was struck by the lack of consideration given to racial and cultural differences that would impact women's rape prevention routines. Often, the articles were a response by Western women to a products that was not necessarily designed for them, especially in the case of the Rapex condom. Sonette Ehlers created and designed this device specifically in a South African context for South African women, however, many of the pieces reacting to this device did not treat the Rapex condom as such. Some of the articles, which often included quotes from Ehlers herself, did address the incredibly high rates of rape and sexual assault in South Africa. For example, in an article for CBS News, David Freeman begins to explain how rape in South Africa may be different than rape in other cultural contexts by using quotes from Ehlers. Freeman writes, "Women take drastic measures to prevent rape in South Africa, Ehlers said. Some go so far as to insert razor blades wrapped in sponges in their private parts" (Freeman 2). The suggestion here is that women in other countries do not take the same measures to prevent rape. Ehlers created the Rapex condom as a safer alternative to the "drastic" measures that women were already taking in South Africa in their attempts to prevent rape.

One problem with most of these articles is the lack of this kind of information about the

social climate in South Africa, or other parts of the world where rape and sexual assault function differently than in the Westernized context of the United States or the United Kingdom. Most of the articles I examined are written as if these products, like the Rapex condom, are designed for women in the United States or the United Kingdom. In the majority of the articles, the authors do not address the fact that women located in different parts of the world will have different concerns when it comes to rape and sexual assault. This erasure of cultural differences is also a product of the standardization of technologies that Wajcman discusses in *TechnoFeminism*. Standardization would mean that these products are easier to produce but then there would be many people who would not or cannot use the standardized product because it does not meet their needs. By ignoring the differences in cultural context, the authors of these articles are homogenizing and universalizing women's bodies and the treatment they receive under rape culture in differing contexts. Also, when these articles ignore cultural difference, the authors are also avoiding a discussion about the problems that rape culture has created within their own society. The articles about rape prevention devices, then, do not reflect on why women might feel that they need these devices in the first place. If a woman does not fear rape or sexual assault she would probably not feel the need to purchase any one of these rape prevention products. This is an industry that relies on women's fear and women's need to act a certain way in public space. Rape prevention devices may not help a woman in a sexual assault situation at all depending on the situation. As a result, women do not feel that their needs are met by the current rape prevention offerings. Also, not all women experience the fear of rape and sexual assault in the same way and rape prevention technologies do not take this into account.

Eight of the articles I examined did give information about rape and sexual assault in the contexts in which these devices were created. Katy Kelleher, writing for Jezebel, also addressed some of the reactions and commentaries to rape prevention devices given by people in Western

countries. When addressing comments given by Williams in other media representations of rape prevention products, Kelleher states, "…she (Williams) raises some very good points about the disturbing prevalence of the *blame the victim* mentality that contributes so readily to rape culture – she displays an incredibly western-centric view of both the product and the crime that inspired it" (Kelleher 2). But there are other ways in which difference is left out of media representations of rape prevention devices. In response to the kickstarter page for AR wear, the new line of rape resistant underwear, Alexandra Brodsky asks, "Won't those people be more likely to be unable to afford magic anti-rape underwear, or have bodies, invisible or mocked in popular imagination, that don't fit into clothes designed for thin, able-bodied, cis women like your models?" (Brodsky 2). Brodsky raises several important points in one simple question that are not addressed in any of the other articles I examined for this project. First, it costs women money to buy rape prevention devices. Some products are more expensive than others. For example, AR wear, which Brodsky is addressing in this quote, is estimated to cost between fifty and sixty dollars for one pair of shorts. On the more affordable end, the Rapex condom costs around two dollars and are sometimes distributed for free at events like the World Cup. Brodsky suggests that the people who could benefit most from rape prevention devices are the ones who will not be able to afford these products. This fact insinuates that you must have money in order to avoid rape.

The second point that Brodsky makes within this question is that this product does not seem to be designed for a full range of women's bodies. The models on the kickstarter page for AR wear only represent one type of body: white, thin bodies. This fact may make women feel uncomfortable buying the product or wearing the product at all. Third, the advertising for the product also only includes able-bodied women. However, the kickstarter page for AR Wear does not take into consideration disability or the fact that not all women will be able to use this product. Lastly, the makers of AR Wear also do not account for trans women with this product.

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While trans women are still vulnerable to rape and sexual assault, this product does not account for the differing needs or trans and cis women and trans women are not represented in advertisements for AR Wear. A follow up question from Brodsky highlights why these factors matter, "Are these thin, able-bodied, cis women the only kind of people who deserve to not be raped?" (Brodsky 2). Brodsky's argument demonstrates the cisnormativity of rape prevention products and rape prevention discourse. Gender binaries are reproduced by excluding certain bodies from accessing rape prevention devices. We cannot ignore the ways in which power is enacted upon women's bodies under current rape prevention discourse through this connection with time but also through the use of rape prevention objects. While I do not believe that this was the intention of any of the makers of these devices, I can see where Brodsky is coming from with these questions. What can you do to protect yourself when none of these devices fit your needs or your body? However, in an attempt to address women's needs in regard to rape prevention, the creators of Undercover Colors nail polish stated that their goal was to incorporate rape prevention technology into, "…products women already use…" (Sullivan 1). This idea seems to miss the mark and gender binaries are reproduced through this suggestion. While this product may seem convenient, we know that not all women paint their nails! Rape prevention technologies are shaped and created within the context of patriarchy which impacts their development and use. However, rape prevention products also affect our culture and reflect socially constructed norms of femininity. Rape prevention products are particularly interesting because they were created as a response to a distinctly gendered and sexualized problem in society: rape. Hence, rape prevention products can never be free of their associations with sex and gender. It is important to consider differences among women and the impact difference will have on rape prevention strategies but most of the articles I examined did not address this issue at all in the context of rape prevention devices.

Men get raped too

Another area where I thought the discussions about the pros and cons of rape prevention devices were lacking was the inadequate discussion of the fact that men get raped too and these products are created for women only. While three of the articles mentioned this fact very briefly, it could have been examined more because of what this trend suggests about rape culture and rape prevention discourse. Mogilevsky was the only author to give this issue real attention in her article. She says, "We all should know that men get raped. We all should know it especially happens to men in vulnerable situations…" (Mogilevsky 6). Rape prevention devices are usually geared towards women's needs and women's bodies. This is certainly true with the three products I examine in this project. None of these three products were designed for cis men as the potential victims of rape. Mogilevsky goes on to say, "If you find yourself thinking about rape and rape prevention and it never occurs to you to wonder whether a significant portion of the survivors might not be women, that failure of imagination says a lot about how you think of women and how you think of men and how you think of rape" (Mogilevsky 6). While more women are still raped than men, these products ignore the fact that men are raped too.

Conclusion

The overlooking of men in rape prevention discourse, both as perpetrators and as potential victims, enforces the idea that rape prevention is the responsibility of women. Our society often casts rape as a problem of individual women with no collective solution. There is disciplinary power invested in this idea. Through this sense of individuality, women are shaped and trained to fit into the disciplinary power of rape prevention. Because of the mechanism individuality, women are too often blamed for rape. When a rape occurs, it is often seen as an individual failing of an individual to protect themselves. Women's actions are policed and scrutinized. Perhaps women will make corrections to their rape prevention routines in order to fit into the

requirements of rape prevention discourse that are enforced by the ones observing their behavior. In this way, behavior is "corrected" and women's bodies are trained to fit into this discourse and the workings of disciplinary power. Scholars such as Carol Withey and Rachel Hall also discuss the individuality of rape prevention and how this strategy does not change rape culture. "...The issue of how to reduce or prevent instances of rape is a micro problem; it rests on an introspective process as individuals must consider their *own* behavior" (Withey 803). Many recognize that telling individual women to police their bodies is not the way to prevent rape and insist that the solution for ending sexual assault is to educate young males about rape culture. However, this is still not the popular stance on rape prevention in our society. "Despite recent efforts to shift the target of interventions from women to men, mainstream America continues to assume that rape prevention is the responsibility of individual women." (Hall 12) Jill Filipovic also discusses society's position that women must be the ones to protect themselves from rape. "And yet it is women who are treated to 'suggestions' about how to protect themselves from public stranger assaults: go out with a friend, don't drink too much. Don't walk home alone, take a self-defense class. Well-meaning as they may be, such suggestions send the false message that women can prevent rape" (Filipovic 13). The sale of rape prevention products relies on this flawed logic that is a product of the disciplinary power of rape prevention discourse. So not only are womens' movements controlled under current rape prevention discourse, but even *how, where, and when* a woman moves is often governed by rape prevention discourse. In the case of rape prevention, public spaces are infused with patriarchal values. These patriarchal values seep into rape prevention discourse that dictates how women should interact with the public sphere. The values that are inherent in current rape prevention discourse influence the suggestions that women are treated to which guarantee the obedience to the rules of rape prevention of women who fear rape.

The only way to break the disciplinary power of rape prevention would be for men and

women to collectively organize. Without collective organization, rape culture is allowed to continue. Rape myths will also continue to flourish. This means that perpetrators will continue to get away with rape when the structural reasons for rape culture are not addressed. Also, when prevention efforts are misdirected, individuals will not learn effective ways to protect themselves from rape and sexual assault. With rape and sexual assault rates as high as they are, especially like in South Africa, women may not be as concerned with the victim-blaming mentality that rape prevention devices represent. However, there are immediate concerns for physical safety and perhaps rape prevention devices, like the Rapex condom, can provide women with some peace of mind in an affordable and time-saving way. When physical safety is on the line, perhaps symbolic messages behind these prevention devices does not matter as much to the women who would actually be buying and using them. In order to upset the balance of patriarchal power in our society, we need to change the dialogue about rape prevention and the ways this dialogue is constantly reproduced by our gendered performances. Buying these "rape prevention" products may seem like an almost natural thing for women to do to mitigate their fears of rape. However, not buying these products may ultimately be more empowering than purchasing them.

Conclusion

New rape prevention products are constantly being developed and released for sale to the general public. It is important to evaluate these devices on a product-by-product as they become available for purchase because of their relation to rape culture and rape prevention discourse. Media representations, like news articles, are just one way in which rape prevention products are initially evaluated. These representations also provide the general public with a first impression of a particular rape prevention device. Through this process, rape prevention discourse and rape prevention technologies are mutually constructed. This kind of research continues to be important in order to better understand the connections between rape culture and rape prevention discourse

and the material culture and media these phenomena inspire.

One of the main concerns addressed in the written media representations of rape prevention devices is that these products cannot and do not actually prevent rape. While these products and their creators are often referred to in news articles as "well-intentioned" or "well-meaning", calling these products "prevention" is a misnomer. Some suggest that perhaps "rape circumvention" or "rape avoidance" would more accurate descriptions for these products. These products have sparked debate over the best way to prevent rape in the first place. Many of the authors of these news stories assert that it should not be the responsibility of individual women to prevent rape. However, under the precepts of current rape prevention discourse, it is the duty of individual women to shape and train their routines and their bodies in a very specific manner in order to prevent and avoid rape. It must be recognized that rape prevention products are also developed to fit into the dictates of current rape prevention discourse that suggest it is a woman's obligation to defend her own body against rape.

There seems to be a divide in the way rape prevention devices are represented in news stories. Some authors chose to praise these devices and highlight their attributes, while on the other hand some authors chose to write more critical reviews of these products exploring how these products serve to reinforce rape prevention discourse and rape culture. Online feminist sources always provided a critical perspective on rape prevention devices while large national newspapers were more likely to provide a positive review of a particular product. Many of the authors of the media representations of rape prevention devices that these devices are not the best solution for preventing rape. However, many media representations of rape prevention products do not explore alternatives for preventing rape and sexual assault.

 In fact, there were several key ideas that were missing from these media representations. For example, discussions of male rape victims and the cultural context in which these devices

were created are present in some of the media representations I analyzed; however, these kind of discussions are not present in the majority of the articles I collected. Nonetheless, these topics are important because they demonstrate how these devices cannot feasibly be used by anyone seeking to protect themselves from rape. These conversations also display how these products could never prevent all rape and sexual assault simply because they are not accessible to all. The implication that can be read into this fact is that certain types of bodies are seen as deserving of rape.

In this project, I have only closely examined three different rape prevention products. Since I began this project, even more products have been invented or made available to the public. In future research, other products need to investigated, especially items that are seen as more commonplace like cell phones and pepper spray. As more products are created, there will also be more media representations about them to investigate. Also, in this project, I was only able to explore one type of media about these products. Television news broadcasts, blogs, kickstarter funding pages, and other forms of media also could provide ample information about this topic.

Although the current literature on rape prevention does not specifically address the products I examined for this project, the literature does tell us a great deal about how women's bodies are treated in our society under current rape prevention discourse. A poststructural theoretical perspective can also tell us much about the treatment of women's bodies but also about the construction of femininity in relation to this treatment in our society's rape culture. It is important to examine media representations of rape prevention products because of the influence these representations may have over the views and opinions of the general public when it comes to these products. By analyzing the media representations of rape prevention devices, we can see how rape prevention discourse is reflected in these products. However, rape prevention discourse

and rape prevention products are mutually constructed, meaning that the availability of these products also aid in keeping the rules of rape prevention alive. Many media representations of rape prevention devices suggest that using these devices does not actually prevent rape. In addition, these articles also discuss that seeing these devices as a solution to prevent rape still leaves the task of rape prevention the duty of women.

Like the authors of these news articles, women must question whether these products are the best way for women to "prevent" rape. There are other solutions that would be more effective at ending rape culture like self-defense classes for women and educational classes about rape culture for men. However, under current rape prevention discourse when rape is treated as a problem to be solved by individual women these alternatives may hardly seem feasible to many women dealing with the realities of rape culture on a daily basis.

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