Asking For It: The Sexualized Violence of Jian Ghomeshi as Depicted by Four Traditional Journalistic Media Sources

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 4

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... 4

Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 5

Literature Review ............................................................................................................................... 7

  Activist Scholarship Regarding Rape Culture ................................................................................... 8

  Media and Language ......................................................................................................................... 11

Methods ............................................................................................................................................ 15

  Data Acquisition ............................................................................................................................... 16
    CBC data. ......................................................................................................................................... 17
    Dailies data. ...................................................................................................................................... 17
    The Toronto Star. ............................................................................................................................. 17
    The Globe and Mail ........................................................................................................................ 17
    The National Post .......................................................................................................................... 18

  Data Coding ..................................................................................................................................... 18

Results .............................................................................................................................................. 20

  Representative Language Regarding Perpetrator Involvement ....................................................... 20
    Ghomeshi’s Facebook statement ......................................................................................................... 20
    Analysis ........................................................................................................................................... 24
    Ghomeshi and the CBC: lawsuit and dismissal ............................................................................... 32

  Representative Language Regarding Victim Involvement ............................................................... 33
    Toronto Star exposé: “CBC Fires Ghomeshi Over Sex Allegations.” ......................................... 33
    Analysis .......................................................................................................................................... 35
    Case example honouring victims. ...................................................................................................... 39
Abstract

When the scandal surrounding ex-CBC broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi first broke in the fall of 2014, the subsequent outpouring of public opinion, and the ongoing tension between victim sympathy and legal due process as captured by the media, seemed to hinge on whether one perceived the case to be about violence or to be about rough sex. Given the literature linking the relevance of media coverage to public discourse and that this research was conducted prior to the first trial verdict, the following research question was posed: How does the language of journalistic media depicting victim and perpetrator involvement in the Jian Ghomeshi scandal reveal, expose, or distort perpetrators’ violence and victims’ responses and resistance? This question was addressed by analyzing pre-trial reporting from four major Canadian news sources and coding according to the four-discursive-operations of language framework by Coates and Wade (2007). The analysis revealed many ways in which public discourse about violence must be challenged if ultimate sexualized violence reform is ever to be possible.

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**Introduction**

In a case that was scheduled for two, single-judge trials in Toronto, Ontario Canada in 2016 (Shum, 2015) Jian Ghomeshi, former radio host of the “Q” with the Canadian Broadcasting Company (*CBC*), was charged with five counts of sexual assault and one count of overcoming resistance by choking for encounters between 2002 and 2008 (Brazao, 2015; Donovan & Hasham, 2015; Shum, 2015). Jian has since been acquitted of four of the five charges (*R. v. Ghomeshi*, 2016), with one of the assault charges yet to be litigated separately in June 2016. Originally charged for seven counts of sexual assault and one of choking, two charges were dropped prior to trial with the prosecution citing insufficient evidence to convict (Shum, 2015).

These charges, all of which Ghomeshi pled not guilty to, resulted from the police complaints filed by four women, most of whose identities were under a publication ban at the time of research, of the “more than 15 women (who) came forward with allegations of harassment, sexual assault and violence” (Donovan & Hasham, 2015), following the *CBC*’s firing of Ghomeshi, his subsequent written and litigious response to that dismissal, and associated journalist and criminal investigations.

Though a legal determination had yet to be made in the case at the time of this research, such judgments are not unbiased and factual accounts of historical events, but at best interpretations of events and a determiner of the associated legal consequences, in what Capps & Ochs called, “determining the official story” (as cited in Elrich, 2001, p. 37). The undecided nature of the case at the time of research and the subsequent acquittal regarding four of the charges, may legally preclude it from being considered an example of criminal violence, but the issue as contended in the media is not whether aggressive or even harmful acts occurred, but whether these acts were consented to, in what could be construed as a discourse of violence.
versus kink. While the parameters of Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, Sadism and Masochism (BDSM) and the definitions and indicators of sexual consent will contribute to any discussion of this topic, it is the phenomenon of how language is used to conceptualize the subject matter as violent or not that is of particular interest to this researcher.

The Ghomeshi scandal occurs at a time when national and international social sensitivities are heightened to the concepts of sexualized violence, rape culture, matters of consent and how these matters are addressed publically and legally. Connected issues and narratives include but are not limited to: the organizational violence as depicted in the subsequent investigation into the CBC (CBC News, 2015); similar cases in media from other countries, such as the allegations against Prince Andrew in the UK (BBC News, 2015), the Bill Cosby (R. Tucker, 2015) and Josh Duggar (Ohlheiser, 2015) scandals and even the reemergence of attention on the previous Bill Clinton (Bradner & Merica, 2015) scandal in the USA; the MP scandal (Wingrove, 2014) and the Dalhousie dentistry scandal (Taber, 2014) in Canada; the demand for increased discussion, education and policy regarding sexual assault and consent-related matters on North American college campuses (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Miller et al., 2011; Sawa & Ward, 2015; Woods 2015); final judgments regarding other sexualized violence cases both domestically and internationally, the many layers of complexity involved in matters of sexual consent especially in considering the practices of the BDSM community (Zanin, 2014), the nuances and limitations of provincial and federal law, and the associated social media storms such as those surrounding the hashtags #beenrapedneverreported (Boesveld, 2014b) and #ibelievesurvivors (Patel, 2016).

While all of these subjects provide contextual detail and attribute relevance, and with acknowledgement that the Ghomeshi scandal is neither a legally validated example of violence
nor a representative sample of sexualized violence, this study focuses on the following research question: How does the language of journalistic media depicting victim and perpetrator involvement in the Jian Ghomeshi scandal reveal, expose, or distort perpetrators’ violence and victims’ responses and resistance?

**Literature Review**

The process of addressing the research question responds, at least in part, to calls for action and/or more research:

- “…to assess the extent to which the four-discursive-operations (of language) appear in professional, academic and public discourse and to assess the influence of these operations where they do appear” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 521);

- “…into the way that language functions in maintaining this situation [the suppression of social context] which is in turn about maintaining specific power relations in our society” (Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 226);

- regarding, “the content of media coverage because of the media’s contribution to reinforcing the values that ignore or diminish women’s experiences, like that involving male sexual violence” (Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002, p. 4);

- involving, “…carefully considered use of language to represent the actions of perpetrators and victims in a more accurate and judicious manner” (Coates, Todd & Wade, 2003, p. 120), and

- to, “…look to all of our institutions to understand the nature of sexual assault in intimate relationships and the degree to which rape myths continue to inform us” (Lazar, 2010, p. 362).

The Methods and Results sections further incorporate a review of academic literature on these
 Activist Scholarship Regarding Rape Culture

I subscribe to the premise that violence is unilateral rather than mutual (Coates & Wade, 2004, 2007), adhere to the current interpretation of Canadian law that one cannot consent to being seriously hurt (Hasselback, 2014; Blackwell, 2014a) and that consent itself must be freely and affirmatively communicated (*R. v. Ewanchuck*, 1999), and locate the incidents of the Ghomeshi scandal in the context of a rape culture that normalizes sexualized violence and systemically blames victims (Prochuk as cited in Reynolds, 2014; Rubin, 2013; Swauger, Witham & Shinberg, 2013). By doing so, I acknowledge my bias in this case is in favor of the victims whom my professional ethic demands I attribute the right to be believed, since the legal right of the accused to a presumption of innocence (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 1982) often results in victims’ stories being held as false until (if ever) proven true. This is significant because, “while one-third of women in general experience sexualized assault, fewer than 1 percent of perpetrator charges will end with sentencing” (Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth; Reynolds as cited in Kinewesquao & Bonnah, 2015, p. 195). In such cases it is the victim rather than the perpetrator on trial judicially and journalistically (Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002, p. 4) as these systems, “are underpinned by homosocial cultures and relations that can marginalise and disrupt the truth claims of girls and women” (Salter, 2013). While the Ghomeshi scandal focuses primarily on female victims, it should also be noted that two male victims came forward claiming similar assaults. Regardless of victim gender though, in the quest by the courts, and subsequently the media, to determine guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, victims are often expected, instead, to remove all doubt.

As the rights of the accused in the Ghomeshi scandal have been legally and
journalistically maintained, and since this analysis has no expected legal bearing, I have forgone the rhetoric of suspended guilt by employing minimal use of qualifying words such as “alleged” or “supposed,” and by frequently referring to the accused as offender, assailant, or perpetrator, even though this analysis took place before trial judgments were issued. Similarly, though the combination of sexual and assault may be the commonly accepted legal and journalistic jargon, I have chosen to use the oxymoronic term “sexual assault” (Coates, Bavelas, & Gibson, 1994, p. 190) interchangeably with terms like rape, and sexualized violence, which expose the violence (Lazar, 2010, p. 334) of interactions rather than eroticizing assault. In doing so, I partner with analysts who do not believe in value-neutral scholarship or impartial accounts when it comes to analyzing language, as, “the meaning-giving, reality-creating power of discourse means that texts cannot be taken as neutral descriptions of events” (Coates, 1997, p. 281), but instead feel scholarship can and should interact with and transform the narrative (Coates & Wade, 2007; Elrich, 2001; Mayr & Machin, 2011).

I deem such a transformation necessary for several reasons, including: that even passively participating in every-day and uncorrected discourse reproduces social injustice (Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 26); that the extant research shows the social responses to victims of sexualized violence are often negative and frequently include culpability attributions, all of which add to victim distress (Miller, Amacker & King, 2011, p. 378); that “rape is the only crime in which the victim’s actions are judged to demonstrate the lack of consent” (Carlen, 1994; MacKinnon, 1993; 1987, cited by Madriz, 1997, as cited in Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002, p. 19), and that those responding are seldom witnesses to the acts themselves (Coates et al., 2003, p. 117).

While I have intentionally not privileged the perpetrator, I recognize that he has been
legally declared not guilty regarding four of the charges, is being held as innocent in regards to the fifth charge, could morally be innocent regardless of legal judgments or public opinions, and if guilty morally, ethically, legally or otherwise, is still more than the worst thing(s) he has ever done (Reynolds as cited in Reynolds, 2014). The othering and vilification of a perpetrator in reporting as solely criminal or sociopathic is a simplification, which separates an offender from social context according to the media value of Individualism (Jewkes as cited in Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 18). The use of such stereotypes colludes with rape mythology in portraying a perpetrator as monstrous, which relegates violence to an isolated incident rather than a societal or systemic issue (O’Hara, 2012, p. 256) and minimizes the complexity of violence by a known offender. Conversely, to excuse an offender’s violence by way of citing external attributions (e.g. an abusive childhood or insurmountable sexual impulse) divorces him from the choice and agency that would permit future change (Coates, 1997; Coates & Wade, 2004).

To combat such casting requires a social justice consciousness drawn upon a feminist-informed paradigm that calls to the forefront the social and contextual aspects of violence that are hidden by dominant (e.g. Colonial, patriarchal) discourses, and exposes the advantages and disadvantages for all involved, regardless of gender. In the case of rape culture, this means that one can consider the dignity and social context of both the men who commit violence and the women whom they are violent against. Reynolds (2014) speaks to this as managing tension, which is an important means of mitigating an either/or dyad approach to complex issues. Rubin (2013) cites Katz in accounting for this as calling men’s violence a men’s issue (and not just a women’s issue), so that we avoid perpetuating and/or being complicit, “…with a culture that naturalizes men’s violence against women in and through the normalization of coercive practices of heterosexuality (p. 103). It is not that accountability is not important; it is that it is not the
starting place as violence always occurs in context and is not invented by its perpetrator (Reynolds, 2014, p. 38).

To make the distinction explicit, there is a difference between holding someone accountable for an action and blaming them for it. While nuanced, this acknowledging the source of ideology is the difference between defining someone by their crime, and attributing dignity to an individual who is not divorced from his surroundings, influences and impact. The entire innocent/guilty dichotomy obscures the distinction between accountability and blame and does not emphasize the need for respect and positive social responses. It also conflates legal consequences with moral responsibility, which divides public sentiment and response and assumes a mythic alignment between public opinion and legal judgments. Clarity in this regard can only be accomplished by addressing the matter of resistance, how it is exposed and subverted, and how it can broaden a conversation beyond the parameters of a particular discourse. In the case of Jian Ghomeshi, such an approach could carve the path for reconciling the discrepancy between one known for professionally championing social justice causes and the despicable and contrary acts he was accused of committing, and could bridge the chasm between a controversial legal judgment citing a lack of evidentiary proof, and the public understanding that regardless of whether it can be criminally proven, there is no such thing as a perpetrator-less victim.

Media and Language

The Ghomeshi story is primed for journalistic selection and generating media revenue as it unfolds in the social context previously described, as well as at an intersection between several of Jewkes’ (2004) identified media values including: Threshold (occurring at a heightened level of importance), Simplification and Individualism (Villain vs. Victim), Sex, Celebrity (both of
Ghomeshi and the novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, to which he appeals for explanation), Proximity (to national news outlets), Violence, Spectacle, and Political Diversion (as cited in Mayr & Machin, 2011).

Atypical of common media coverage of sexualized violence, which excludes the most common type of rape for the more evocative stranger-rape, gang-rape, or unusual cases (Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002; O’Hara, 2012; Swauger et al., 2013), the Ghomeshi scandal, when treated as an example of sexualized violence, actually does circulate around instances of acquaintance rape, or rape by a known offender. This may be because of how the exceptional circumstances involving politics and celebrity add to the story’s mass media appeal (Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002), but regardless casts Ghomeshi as an identifiable face for what may be the most nebulous form of sexual assault (Kingston, 2014).

This unique reporting of the common acquaintance rape poses a linguistic challenge as there is a vocabulary gap for such circumstances which seem to fall between stranger rape and consensual sex (Coates et al., 1994) where the legal boundaries of sexual interaction are not as clear (Swauger, 2013, p. 632). As Swauger et al. (2013) suggest in their review of *The Line*, this form of rape is seldom recognized as rape (p. 630), which is only complicated as the perpetrator is humanized in a context which may combine acts which are consented to with acts which are coerced, forced, or employed as a form of resistance.

Observing how media structures treat violence is important as socio-contextual analysis of language can deepen our understanding of the structural impacts of language (Elrich, 2001, p. 2). Media is an ideological medium where the struggle to determine definitions of crime, deviance, blame, risk, victimhood and subsequent appropriate actions can take place (Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002; Mayr & Machin, 2011). Media is also subject to
access, power, political influences and misrepresentation, as language is the medium that 
transmits current cultural ideologies (Elrich, 2001, p. 4), shapes public opinion (O’Hara, 2012), 
influences social reality (Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 7), impacts social perceptions of problems 
(Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002, p. 3), “affects events and creates versions of 
reality” (Coates et al., 1994, p. 189), and constructs our world by using patterns of representation 
to shape our expectations (Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 52). Furthermore an analysis of this 
particular scandal in media is significant especially considering the “…obvious but 
underdeveloped affinity between discourse analysis and the practice of law” (Coates et al., 1994, p. 189) where the language of the media can legitimize, influence, and mirror the language of judicial systems. Consequently how victims and perpetrators are represented in such a context is important (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 512), particularly as linguistic description is often the only evidence in cases of acquaintance rape (Elrich, 2001, p. 38).

While direct statements from perpetrators and victims may seem a more appropriate 
source of data regarding matters of violence, such statements are rarely, if ever, available to the public in a raw, un-altered form and therefore are less likely to impact public opinion without being shaped through contact with law enforcement, media, public relations, or legal personnel. In the case of the Ghomeshi scandal, although the victims were consulted and sometimes quoted throughout various news articles, the words are ultimately the authors’ not the victims so, “…must be treated as representations that vary in accuracy” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 512; Coates & Wade 2004, p. 7) that are filtered through institutional ideologies (Elrich, 2001, p. 4), and produced in the context of the tentative nature with which publishers choose to approach these matters until a verdict has been passed, the palatability and marketability of the subject matter to a wide readership, and the fact that many of the victims and identifying information
about their accounts is anonymized. This is merely evidence that the socio-political context of journalistic media renders it a, “...selective and partial account of reality” (Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 21).

Similarly, while the level of influence and control in the case of offender language certainly differs, spin-factor is still possible in representations of language especially in written form. It is well known that Ghomeshi had public relations and legal staff supporting him in the first days of the scandal during which his Facebook statement and lawsuit language were crafted, for example,

One Vancouver-based crisis communications expert who did not wish to be identified but who is watching events, unfold from a distance, said the Ghomeshi declaration was almost certainly a group effort. "In my experience, there is typically a team of people involved [in such cases]. There are public relations advisors, lawyers and others, and they don't always agree on how to proceed." When consensus is reached, it's still up to the client to decide whether to act on the communications strategy. "The common rule is to try and be as credible as possible, and to be the first one to tell the story," says the Vancouver communications expert, which is why he gives come credit to Mr. Ghomeshi and those working for him (Hutchinson, 2014).

In short, while words in media may describe accounts, they are not the accounts themselves. This caution may especially apply to data reviewed from the CBC itself.

Therefore, an analyses of media language in the Jian Ghomeshi scandal not only speaks to an intersection of academic, social, and media issues regarding sexualized violence, but, in a sense, acts as a reply to Jian’s own question “…if I had engaged in non-consensual behavior why was the place to address this the media” (Ghomeshi as cited in Star Staff, 2014a)?
Methods

I engaged in a qualitative linguistic analysis of secondary data regarding the Ghomeshi scandal including texts from select traditional, written, Canadian journalistic media. These texts were extrapolated from news articles published between October 24, 2014 and January 9, 2015. This date range was selected based on the known scandal timeline incited on October 24, 2014 when Ghomeshi’s absence from employment at the CBC was first announced (E. Tucker, 2015) and, for the purposes of this project, concluded on January 9, 2015 when all known criminal charges had been filed (E. Tucker, 2015)—though some have since been dropped—and therefore, when presumably all known victim or complainant statements had been submitted either to police or media outlets. The time frame intentionally excluded reporting about the trials and other related and ongoing aspects of the scandal—such as the anticipated publication of a Ghomeshi expose (The Canadian Press, 2015) and, most notably, the March 24, 2016 verdict—and, instead, limited the focus to the initial reporting of offender and victim involvement.

Acknowledging that media ownership in Canada is a significant source of tension and change, and that, “…over 80 per cent of Canadian media is owned by a cartel of just five corporations: Shaw Media, Quebecor, Bell Media, Rogers Media and Torstar, each of which own dozens of different publications and networks under various subsidiaries and affiliates” (McCullough, 2015), articles were ascertained from the following four news outlets as a sample representation of available traditional written media:

1. *The Toronto Star* representing the media corporation Torstar and its Star Media Group subsidiaries. *The Toronto Star* is the most widely circulated Canadian local daily newspaper (Newspapers Canada, 2014) and is also credited with breaking the story about assault allegations against Ghomeshi (Donovan & Brown, 2014a).
2. *The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC)* website, www.cbc.ca/news, as both the Crown Corporation news source and as the company at the centre of the scandal as Ghomeshi’s former employer. Though primarily known for television and radio broadcasting, only the online written articles were considered for consistent comparison with other sources.


*The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*, considered to be Canada’s leading national daily newspapers, were both selected to offset the media generated by organizations directly involved in the scandal, and as their differences in reporting style, political bias, and audience demographic rendered neither to be mutually exclusive.

These sources were chosen over direct newswires, as the public facing linguistic representation of the stories held more relevance to the research question than how the source news information was originally acquired. Larger circulated sources were preferable to smaller or independent sources due to audience size, and presumably potential impact, and also due to the fact that smaller news outlets often acquire content from larger outlets and wires, making them redundant to this exercise. While social media factored heavily into this scandal, it was only considered so much as it was incorporated or quoted in the traditional reporting mediums, so as to limit the scope of the project.

**Data Acquisition**

Media was collected through the use of online searches. For each data set a Boolean search of full text English language articles was conducted using the keywords, “Ghomeshi and sex” within the prescribed date range of October 24, 2014 to January 9, 2015. The root word
‘sex’ was selected, as any account discussing sex, sexual assault, or sexualized violence would be captured while non-scandal related media was likely to be excluded. A subsequent Data Exclusion Protocol (see Appendix) was developed, tracked and consistently applied to ensure a manageable amount of relevant data.

**CBC data.** I performed a cbc.ca/news site-specific Boolean search via Google.com using the following keywords: “ghomeshi and sex site:cbc.ca/news,” and subsequently applied the tools feature to select the outlined date range. This method revealed 45 results. 35 results were gradually eliminated from further analysis according to the Data Exclusion Protocol (see Appendix). Excerpts from ten articles were subsequently analyzed in detail, though not all samples may be represented in the Results section.

**Dailies data.** The three newspaper sources were accessed using the Proquest database: Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies as made available through the University of Victoria library via http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/canadiannewsmajor/index?accountid =14846. The appropriate date range, key words, English language and media type were built in search features that were selected and applied to each news source in three discrete searches.

**The Toronto Star.** The above outlined search yielded 100 articles for review. In analyzing cross reporting, two additional articles meeting the criteria and containing significant samples of victim language were discovered to have been missed by this data capture and were subsequently included for a total of 102 articles. 78 results were gradually eliminated from further analysis according to the Data Exclusion Protocol (see Appendix). Excerpts from 14 articles were subsequently analyzed in detail, though not all samples may be represented in the Results section.

**The Globe and Mail.** The above outlined search yielded 29 articles for review. 24 results
were gradually eliminated from further analysis according to the Data Exclusion Protocol (see Appendix). Excerpts from five articles were subsequently analyzed in detail, though not all samples may be represented in the Results section.

**The National Post.** The above outlined search yielded 65 articles for review. In analyzing cross reporting, one additional article meeting the criteria and containing significant samples of victim language was discovered to have been missed by this data capture and subsequently included for a total of 66 articles. 46 results were gradually eliminated from further analysis according to the Data Exclusion Protocol (see Appendix). Excerpts from 20 articles were subsequently analyzed in detail, though not all samples may be represented in the Results section.

**Data Coding**

242 articles were reviewed in total; excerpts from 49 (approximately 20%) of which were subsequently included for in-depth analysis and substantially represented in the Results section.

Articles were reviewed in PDF format and segments were highlighted and colour coded to indicate terms of inclusion or exclusion, with relevant excerpts extrapolated into a word document for further coding and analysis. Language segments were subsequently coded in four stages:

1. broadly organized into two categories of: 1) language by or regarding victim involvement and 2) language by or regarding perpetrator involvement;
2. categorized according to discrete accounts on a by-victim / by-instance basis;
3. sorted by news source within the above victim/incident accounts;
4. re-organized thematically according to the four-discursive-operations of language.

Once grouped thematically, author citations replaced source data notes so that the thematic
analysis emphasized linguistic representation over media outlet bias.

The order of article retrieval, initial review, and in-depth analysis was randomized, but exclusion for redundancy was applied in an intentional order by media source: firstly with the *Toronto Star*, secondly with the *CBC*, thirdly with the *Globe and Mail*, and finally with the *National Post*. The *Toronto Star* and the *CBC* articles were analyzed for exclusion first due to the authoritative roles of each organization in the scandal, and the likelihood that subsequent media sources would be cross reporting from this content.

The approach to thematic analysis was informed by Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA), which aims to expose the subtle and strategic nuances of how reporting shapes discourse (Elrich, 2001; Mayr & Machin, 2011) rather than just observe how media represents a story. This approach locates language in context of its use and shows discourse to be a way of speaking that is socially and culturally organized (Mayr & Machin, 2011).

As previously stated, I considered the acts in question to be violent, and so, hand coded article texts by employing the four-discursive-operations of language framework by Coates and Wade (2007) whereby,

- language can be used to conceal violence, obscure and mitigate offenders’ responsibility, conceal victims’ resistance, and blame or pathologize victims. Alternatively, language can be used to expose violence, clarify offenders’ responsibility, elucidate and honor victims’ resistance, and contest the blaming and pathologizing of victims (p. 513).

This approach is one of the six tenants of Coates and Wade’s (2007) Interactional and Discursive View of Violence, and the others—violence is social and unilateral, violence is deliberate, resistance is ubiquitous, misrepresentation, fitting words to deeds (p. 513)—have been referenced throughout analysis.
Results

The broader content of all articles reviewed undoubtedly influenced the analytic process and subsequent findings, but the language represented directly here are quotes or descriptions that pertain specifically to victim or perpetrator involvement in acts of violence.

Representative Language Regarding Perpetrator Involvement

**Ghomeshi’s Facebook statement.** Dear everyone, I am writing today because I want you to be the first to know some news. This has been the hardest time of my life. I am reeling from the loss of my father. I am in deep personal pain and worried about my mom. And now my world has been rocked by so much more. Today, I was fired from the CBC. For almost 8 years I have been the host of a show I co-created on CBC called Q. It has been my pride and joy. My fantastic team on Q are super-talented and have helped build something beautiful. I have always operated on the principle of doing my best to maintain a dignity and a commitment to openness and truth, both on and off the air. I have conducted major interviews, supported Canadian talent, and spoken out loudly in my audio essays about ideas, issues, and my love for this country. All of that is available for anyone to hear or watch. I have known, of course, that not everyone always agrees with my opinions or my style, but I’ve never been anything but honest. I have doggedly defended the CBC and embraced public broadcasting. This is a brand I’ve been honoured to help grow. All this has now changed. Today I was fired from the company where I’ve been working for almost 14 years — stripped from my show, barred from the building and separated from my colleagues. I was given the choice to walk away quietly and to publicly suggest that this was my decision. But I am not going to do that. Because that would be untrue. Because I’ve been fired. And because I’ve done nothing wrong. I’ve
been fired from the CBC because of the risk of my private sex life being made public as a result of a campaign of false allegations pursued by a jilted ex girlfriend and a freelance writer. As friends and family of mine, you are owed the truth. I have commenced legal proceedings against the CBC, what’s important to me is that you know what happened and why. Forgive me if what follows may be shocking to some. I have always been interested in a variety of activities in the bedroom but I only participate in sexual practices that are mutually agreed upon, consensual, and exciting for both partners. About two years ago I started seeing a woman in her late 20s. Our relationship was affectionate, casual and passionate. We saw each other on and off over the period of a year and began engaging in adventurous forms of sex that included role-play, dominance and submission. We discussed our interests at length before engaging in rough sex (forms of BDSM). We talked about using safe words and regularly checked in with each other about our comfort levels. She encouraged our role-play and often was the initiator. We joked about our relations being like a mild form of Fifty Shades of Grey or a story from Lynn Coady’s Giller-Prize winning book last year. I don’t wish to get into any more detail because it is truly not anyone’s business what two consenting adults do. I have never discussed my private life before. Sexual preferences are a human right.

Despite a strong connection between us it became clear to me that our on-and-off dating was unlikely to grow into a larger relationship and I ended things in the beginning of this year. She was upset by this and sent me messages indicating her disappointment that I would not commit to more, and her anger that I was seeing others. After this, in the early spring there began a campaign of harassment, vengeance and demonization against me that would lead to months of anxiety. It came to light that a woman had begun anonymously reaching out to
people that I had dated (via Facebook) to tell them she had been a victim of abusive
relations with me. In other words, someone was reframing what had been an ongoing
consensual relationship as something nefarious. I learned — through one of my friends
who got in contact with this person — that someone had rifled through my phone on one
occasion and taken down the names of any woman I had seemed to have been dating in
recent years. This person had begun methodically contacting them to try to build a story
against me. Increasingly, female friends and ex-girlfriends of mine told me about these
attempts to smear me. Someone also began colluding with a freelance writer who was
known not to be a fan of mine and, together, they set out to try to find corroborators to
build a case to defame me. She found some sympathetic ears by painting herself as a
victim and turned this into a campaign. The writer boldly started contacting my friends,
aquaintances and even work colleagues — all of whom came to me to tell me this was
happening and all of whom recognized it as a trumped up way to attack me and
undermine my reputation. Everyone contacted would ask the same question, if I had
engaged in non-consensual behavior why was the place to address this the media? The
writer tried to peddle the story and, at one point, a major Canadian media publication did
due diligence but never printed a story. One assumes they recognized these attempts to
recast my sexual behaviour were fabrications. Still, the spectre of mud being flung onto
the Internet where online outrage can demonize someone before facts can refute false
allegations has been what I’ve had to live with. And this leads us to today and this
moment. I’ve lived with the threat that this stuff would be thrown out there to defame me.
And I would sue. But it would do the reputational damage to me it was intended to do
(the ex has even tried to contact me to say that she now wishes to refute any of these
categorically untrue allegations). But with me bringing it to light, in the coming days you will prospectively hear about how I engage in all kinds of unsavoury aggressive acts in the bedroom. And the implication may be made that this happens non-consensually. And that will be a lie. But it will be salacious gossip in a world driven by a hunger for “scandal”. And there will be those who choose to believe it and to hate me or to laugh at me. And there will be an attempt to pile on. And there will be the claim that there are a few women involved (those who colluded with my ex) in an attempt to show a “pattern of behaviour”. And it will be based in lies but damage will be done. But I am telling you this story in the hopes that the truth will, finally, conquer all. I have been open with the CBC about this since these categorically untrue allegations ramped up. I have never believed it was anyone’s business what I do in my private affairs but I wanted my bosses to be aware that this attempt to smear me was out there. CBC has been part of the team of friends and lawyers assembled to deal with this for months. On Thursday I voluntarily showed evidence that everything I have done has been consensual. I did this in good faith and because I know, as I have always known, that I have nothing to hide. This when the CBC decided to fire me. CBC execs confirmed that the information provided showed that there was consent. In fact, they later said to me and my team that there is no question in their minds that there has always been consent. They said they’re not concerned about the legal side. But then they said that this type of sexual behavior was unbecoming of a prominent host on the CBC. They said that I was being dismissed for “the risk of the perception that may come from a story that could come out.” To recap, I am being fired in my prime from the show I love and built and threw myself into for years because of what I do in my private life. Let me be the first to say that my tastes in the bedroom may
not be palatable to some folks. They may be strange, enticing, weird, normal, or outright offensive to others. We all have our secret life. But that is my private life. That is my personal life. And no one, and certainly no employer, should have dominion over what people do consensually in their private life. And so, with no formal allegations, no formal complaints, no complaints, not one, to the HR department at the CBC (they told us they’d done a thorough check and were satisfied), and no charges, I have lost my job based on a campaign of vengeance. Two weeks after the death of my beautiful father I have been fired from the CBC because of what I do in my private life. I have loved the CBC. The Q team are the best group of people in the land. My colleagues and producers and on-air talent at the CBC are unparalleled in being some of the best in the business. I have always tried to be a good soldier and do a good job for my country. I am still in shock. But I am telling this story to you so the truth is heard. And to bring an end to the nightmare.

**Analysis.** These are the lines that comprised a lengthy Facebook post by Jian Ghomeshi’s page on October 26, 2014—since removed—shortly after being fired by the CBC. Both full and partial versions of the statement have been republished by various media sources on multiple occasions, but it was analyzed here as part of reviewing *Toronto Star* data (Star Staff, 2014a) and serves as a significant data source for offender language.

While the methodology proposed for this research allowed inclusion of this social media piece as it was directly quoted or published in full by various traditional news sources, this seems a mere technicality since, as a veteran broadcaster and longtime employee of the CBC, any medium in which Ghomeshi chose to share his opinions, especially considering the date of publication, could arguably be construed as mainstream media or, at the very least, the product of one more able to circulate his views than others (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 511).
The full statement was published and titled in the *Toronto Star* as “Jian Ghomeshi’s full Facebook post: ‘a campaign of false allegations’ at fault” (Star Staff, 2014a). Such a title immediately primes the audience for the passive grammar constructions that are to follow.

The introductory lines form Jian’s self-description of his access to discursive space via his celebrity status, his access to media, public contributions to the national conversation, and the associated following of loyal fans, all of which privilege him “…to publicize (his) perspectives as more truthful or reasonable than others” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 511). The fact that a well-known broadcast journalist chose to publish such accounts via social media, could be seen as an attempt to subvert the aspects of his celebrity that would emphasize his privilege, while perpetuating the idea that such privilege was stripped away when he was fired, even though the accessibility and share-ability of his medium actually provided for unprecedented and widespread discursive dominance. Since in cases of sexualized violence social media is typically construed as a counter-public opportunity for victims and supporters to express contradictory information to that of main stream media (Salter, 2013), this media choice could also be interpreted as Ghomeshi’s attempt to control both the public and the counter-public mediums, which ostensibly would not leave room for alternate opinions and would obliterate the voices of the victims.

As the statement was written prior to his being publically accused of any violence, this entire passage can be interpreted as Ghomeshi’s anticipation of his victims’ resistance, which he aimed to conceal by ensuring his version of events was the first impression the public received. In fact any further statements we are to understand simply to be a malicious “smear” or reframe of his factual account.

Early and throughout his statement Ghomeshi casts himself as a creator, builder, and man
of talent, collaboration, and character in that he is “honest” to a fault, a loyal citizen (if not a “soldier”), a “defender” of journalistic integrity, and an advocate of truth and social justice. Such self-aggrandizement hints at the splendor he has achieved and sets up the trope of the jealous female(s) who would strip him of his success (A. Przygoda, personal communication, January 7, 2016), while increasing his social capital in order to weaken the position of his victims (Salter, 2013, p. 238). This personal account would not only have appealed to his fan base at the time, but also invokes the “character of the offender” (Coates et al., 1994, p. 195) as distinct from any criminal action, whereby Ghomeshi is, “…responsible for his good behaviour but not any problematic, violent behaviour” (Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 17). This was most likely a tactic to mitigate harsh judgment both in the public eye and in any future litigation as it took advantage of an audience’s difficulty reconciling the public persona with a private act of violence, and acted as an encouragement to ignore that “…where someone is or has committed acts of violence, public appearances cannot be taken as a reliable index of life behind the scenes” (Scott as cited in Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 7). It also introduces a paradox where we are to both believe that Ghomeshi’s public life has a prevailing impact on his private life (honest, law-abiding, integral), but are to dismiss the notion that his private life should have any bearing on his public role (“I am being fired for what I do in my private life”).

A similar paradox lies in the fact that we are, by this account, both to trust CBC’s Human Resources staff to have done a “thorough” check that revealed no “formal” complaints, but also to mistrust their dismissal of Jian. By arguing that he was given the choice to walk away, a point later disputed by the CBC (Kamlani & Subramaniam, 2014), Jian also primes us to doubt the CBC’s taking violence seriously as we are left to assume a petty employer dispute rather than a response to violence. This way, if we do ever interpret Jian’s actions as violence, we are already
partially blaming the *CBC* for avoiding it rather than Jian for instigating it. The fact that Jian chose to highlight that there had (at the time) been no formal or legal complaints about his behaviour (since discredited) is a further claim to his character and appeal to privilege that bestows legitimacy upon formal processes and assumes guilt of those who do not trust them.

Ghomeshi preemptively created the lexical field (Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 28) and characterized explicitly any violence of which he expected to be accused as “sexual” rather than violent, “mutually agreed upon” rather than forced, and participatory rather than unilateral. By qualifying that these are the only types of (many possible) sexual practices he participates in, Ghomeshi not only obscures his responsibility for anything proximal to abuse, but engages a premise that there is no such thing as abuse or rape so much as non-mutually consensual sex, and that such sex is an option he has declined. This perpetuates a common rape myth that, “there is no such thing as rape because if a woman didn’t want to have sex she could easily avoid it” (Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002, p. 6). Such a method of using the same language to discuss both consensual practice and assault increases the likelihood that the two will become indistinguishable (Coates et al., 2014, p. 194) and exemplifies Spender’s (1980) idea of monopolizing the naming process and therefore the bias implicit in both the stated and unstated (as cited in Elrich, 2001, p. 12). Similarly by conflating abuse with sex that is “rough,” “adventurous,” and negotiated in the lingo of BDSM in the context of a “passionate” (yet “casual”) and even “affectionate” relationship, Jian further conceals and mutualizes the violence and mitigates any personal responsibility for harm that ensued.

The all-encompassing means by which Ghomeshi describes sex and consent—particularly that he claims to have shared evidence of consent, as if it is a fixed, moment-in-time, process—conceals the variable nature of sexual consent which is not a static advanced
permission that applies to all subsequent behaviours, but an ongoing negotiative process that is vulnerable to violation. Such decontextualization and misrepresentation (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 519) is common in perpetrator characterizations of acquaintance rape where consent is purported to be continual based on similar consensual acts and not actually a woman’s wishes at the time (Lazar, 2010, p. 361). Later discovered statements by Ghomeshi’s lawyer that he does, “not engage in non-consensual role play or sex and any suggestion of the contrary is defamatory, wrongly suggests criminal conduct by our client and is actionable” (Rabinovitch as cited in Donovan & Gallant, 2014), not only blames and threatens his victims, but also sweeps over consent as if a pre-determination by a potential perpetrator is enough to ensure future abstention in a weak “I won’t; therefore, I don’t” defence.

This approach to consent, “…illustrates the fine line women are expected to walk between their sexual desires and their sexual desirability” (Swauger et al., 2013, p. 630), but does not account for the fact that previous encounters, violations, or coercions, “…significantly (wear) away at women’s capacity to consent” (Rubin, 2013, p. 102). Neither does this notion of consent allow for the possibility of a woman acquiescing, rather than consenting, as an act of resistance (Coates et al., 1994, p. 195) or as the result of having her resistance overpowered (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 519). Furthermore, even in the context of consensual acts, to state that a woman consented to or asked for something that she calls assault, is to maintain the rape myth that women desire rape (Burt, 1980, p. 217). Ghomeshi actually went further in not only claiming that his victim(s) consented, but that she was the initiator, so that he is left to be received as the willing participant rather than the aggressor (A. Przygoda, personal communication, January 7, 2016). As the mere recipient of sex, if we do construct it as violent or coerced, we are now left to contemplate whether or not it is Ghomeshi who is actually the wounded party.
Jian appeals to then-current, popular literature by naming E. L. James’ (2011) *Fifty Shades of Grey* and alluding to Lynn Coady’s (2013) *Hellgoing* to ensure erotic imagery of a paradoxically mystical-yet-accessible—and possibly entertaining—nature, all of which he is entitled to by right. He then preempts any potential victim resistance via public critique of his argument by concluding that any further details would be an affront to his privacy. As early sentences frame the statement as a type of reluctant confession, readers, or “friends and family,” should actually feel honoured to have been provided with any details at all by the brave man permitting us into his bedroom. The abuse, now BDSM, is therefore innocent enough to be “joked about,” foundational enough to be a “right,” but deviant enough to be private and beyond our understanding or provocation. Any evidence, or lack thereof, of the positive or explicit agreement to engage sexually, as required by Canadian law (Lazar, 2010, p. 337), remains clouded under the same banner of privacy.

Ghomeshi shifts swiftly into victim blaming, pathologizing and othering, and in fact assumes the victim role himself in relation to his circumstances (the death of his father, the expected media circus to follow his firing), his employer (by whom he was “rocked,” “fired,” “stripped,” “barred,” all without “formal” complaint and seemingly then, any motive or rationale), and most prolifically his victim-ex-girlfriend. Her profession as a freelance writer is the only unique identifier of the statement so that we might infer there could be a professional advantage to her instigating a scandal, and, by association, a financial incentive for her and any others she is actively recruiting who would claim the same. In this context Jian is left an anxiety stricken, misunderstood man of passion who has been demonized and harassed by a malicious ex-girlfriend, or essentially the primary victim has been erased so that sexualized violence has victimized the perpetrator and not the victim (Elrich, 2001, p. 14). Any future victims’ accounts
of violence are now pre-assigned to a role in a vengeful “campaign” against him, by a woman who is devastated by the ending of a relationship for its lack of potential (rather than due to her successful resistance). This we are to understand reeks of overreaction to a relationship that was both casual and without a future—the “passionate” adjective relegated only to the risqué sex acts—so we are free to employ the mental imagery of the crazed ex-lover, who is a victim not of violence but of her own easily broken heart. His depiction of her disappointment further situates her as having consented to the activities of the relationship, and pre-disposes her to being considered pathological should any of his violence come to light, so that she is either the ex that could not move on, the sick woman who loved a man who beat her, or, at the very least, a sexual deviant not brave enough to disclose as he has.

Such characterizations by Jian invoke multiple rape myths and linguistic constructions which have been studied to contribute to blame attributions (Miller & King, 2011; Coates & Wade, 2004) a fact that Ghomeshi was likely counting on to justify his innocence. By vilifying or monsterizing his victim, Jian invokes the myth that “…women who claim they were raped are lying, have ulterior motives, or wanted sex at the time but changed their minds afterwards” (Franiuk et al., as cited in O’Hara, 2012, p. 288), and thereby denies her human agency, (Morrissey as cited in Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 117), which lowers her likelihood of public empathy (Miller et al., 2011, p. 378), and increases the likelihood that she will be held culpable for the assault as one who deviates from traditionally feminine behaviour (Ardovinie-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002, p. 6; Swauger, et al., 2013, p. 629).

Even when Ghomeshi acknowledges the woman’s claim to victimhood, it is only as a victim of “abusive relations,” a statement by which he continued his, “grammar of non-agency” (Elrich, 2001, p. 41) that passively removes him as an agent and reduces attributions of his
responsibility (Henley et al; Penelope as cited in Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 6) while nominalizing Abuse as the victimizer, and framing it as if abuse can be relational. There are no other victims of course, as any others who come forward are merely a sisterhood of pawns, and likely gold-diggers, employed by a villainous, jilted, and possibly ill woman.

And thus Jian, by using language that covers violence, mitigates his responsibility, anticipates resistance and pathologizes his victims, preemptively altered a forthcoming account of his violence into a narrative of a vengeful ex-lover strategically using a misunderstood practice of sexuality to tarnish her ex-boyfriend’s reputation; thereby, perpetuating rape mythology and androcentric ways of discussing sexualized violence (Cameron as cited in Elrich, 2001, p. 14). By anticipating public resistance, and forecasting what could reasonably be expected in any case of sexual assault allegations, Ghomeshi’s statement feigns transparency and prophecy, so that any predictions which subsequently “came true” prove to further secure his character of honesty.

A brief subsequent Facebook post—"I want to thank you for your support and assure you that I intend to meet these allegations directly. I don’t intend to discuss this matter any further with the media" (CBC News, 2014c)—followed by the deletion of his profile, continued his silencing of contradicting narratives, while attempting to maintain the illusion of a strongly supported victim of allegations, who had attempted to be forthcoming. His lawyer would later echo the sentiment in response to filed charges,

Mr. Ghomeshi will be pleading not guilty. We will address these allegations fully and directly in the courtroom. It is not my practice to litigate my cases in the media. This one will be no different. We will say whatever we have to say in a court of law. We will not be making any further media statements, nor will Mr. Ghomeshi be making any further
media statements (Henein as cited in DiManno, 2014a).

though her insistence that she would not litigate this case in the media glossed over the fact that Jian himself already had.

**Ghomeshi and the CBC: lawsuit and dismissal.** Jian’s ensuing lawsuit—later withdrawn—against the CBC for wrongful dismissal and “violat(ing) the confidence” (Ghomeshi as cited in Donovan & Hasham, 2014b) contained similar claims as his Facebook post, namely that his behaviours with women had been mutual, on the “normal continuum of human sexual behaviours” (Ghomeshi as cited in Donovan & Hasham, 2014b) and that he was the victim of the biased “moral judgment” (Ghomeshi as cited in Donovan & Hasham, 2014b) of his formal employer. Such statements may have, “…evoked memories of an episode in which the CBC threatened to fire Sook-Yin Lee, host of CBC’s *Definitely Not The Opera*, for having actual sex on film for the 2006 movie *Shortbus*, but relented under public pressure” (Brean & Edmiston, 2014).

Later paraphrases of the employer/ee interactions that led to the dismissal take a similar tone:

- …The sources say Ghomeshi went to great lengths to explain that during what he termed "consensual BDSM sex" it was possible to leave bruises (Donovan & Gallant, 2014).
- In interviews with two former producers…it describes how Mr. Ghomeshi "broke down" and confessed to them while on location in Winnipeg last spring, saying he likes rough sex and an angry ex-girlfriend is "threatening to tell everybody." He said he was confident he had done nothing illegal. Later, Mr. Ghomeshi revealed to his producers that someone was posting allegations about him on Twitter under the name @BigEarsTeddy, which is a toy bear he uses for anxiety relief (Brean, 2014).
Ghomeshi has always insisted his activities were consensual. "He said, you know, that he had done a lot of soul-searching, that he'd gone back in his head of every single relationship he'd been in ... and he looked into my eyes, and he said 'I have never crossed any ethical or legal line'" (Kamlani & Subramaniam, 2014).

These further portray Ghomeshi’s claims of the behaviour as sexual and consensual casting contrary claims as defamatory. One depiction shows Ghomeshi clarifying that his behaviour was within legal and ethical constraints. This clarification carries with it an assumption that something must be illegal to be harmful, unwanted, or wrong.

### Representative Language Regarding Victim Involvement

**Toronto Star exposé: “CBC Fires Ghomeshi Over Sex Allegations.”** …Over the past few months the Star has approached Ghomeshi with allegations from three young women, all about 20 years his junior, who say he was physically violent to them without their consent during sexual encounters or in the lead-up to sexual encounters. Ghomeshi, through his lawyer, has said he "does not engage in non-consensual role play or sex and any suggestion of the contrary is defamatory."…The three women interviewed by the Star allege that Ghomeshi physically attacked them on dates without consent. They allege he struck them with a closed fist or open hand; bit them; choked them until they almost passed out; covered their nose and mouth so that they had difficulty breathing; and that they were verbally abused during and after sex. A fourth woman, who worked at CBC, said Ghomeshi told her at work: "I want to hate f--- you."…Early last summer, the Star began looking into allegations by young women of sexual abuse by Ghomeshi over the past two years. The Star conducted detailed interviews of the women, talking each woman several times. None of the women filed police complaints and none agreed to go
on the record. The reasons given for not coming forward publicly include the fear that they would be sued or would be the object of Internet retaliation. (A woman who wrote an account of an encounter with a Canadian radio host believed to be Ghomeshi was subjected to vicious Internet attacks by online readers who said they were supporters of the host.) … The Star had several detailed interviews with each of the three women, who said they experienced violence from Ghomeshi without consent, and with the former CBC employee, who complained of verbal and physical harassment in the workplace. The women now accusing Jian Ghomeshi of violence began as his fans. Two had very similar early experiences with him. After Ghomeshi met them at public events, which he had promoted on CBC Radio, he contacted them through Facebook and asked them on dates. They eagerly accepted. Each woman said she remembers Ghomeshi being initially sweet and flattering, then later suggesting or hinting at violent sex acts. When they failed to respond or expressed displeasure, they recalled Ghomeshi dismissing his remarks as "just fantasies," reassuring them he wouldn't ask them to do anything they weren't comfortable with. The women deny that "safe words" were employed in the relationship. In one woman's case, she visited Ghomeshi at his Toronto home and alleges as soon as she walked into his house he suddenly struck her hard with his open hand, then continued to hit her and choked her. The woman alleges Ghomeshi repeatedly beat her about the head and choked her. The Star's interviews of the women were lengthy. The women, all educated and employed, said Ghomeshi's actions shocked them. Another woman, who described a similar alleged attack, said that in the lead-up to their date Ghomeshi "warned me he would be aggressive." "I thought this meant he would want to pull my hair and have rough sex. He reassured me that I wouldn't be forced. (Later) he attacked me.
Choked me. Hit me like I didn't know men hit women. I submitted." None of the women has contacted police. When asked why by the Star, the women cited several reasons including fears that a police report would expose their names and worries that their consent or acceptance of fantasy role-play discussions in text or other messages with Ghomeshi would be used against them as evidence of consent to actual violence. Only one alleged victim worked at the CBC, and she never dated Ghomeshi. She alleges he approached her from behind and cupped her rear end in the Q studio, and that he quietly told her at a story meeting that he wanted to "hate f---" her. The woman said she complained about Ghomeshi’s behaviour to her union representative, who took the complaint to a Q producer. As the woman recalls, the producer asked her "what she could do to make this a less toxic workplace" for herself. No further action was taken by the CBC, and the woman left the broadcaster shortly thereafter. …Each of the women accusing Ghomeshi cite the case of Carla Ciccone as a reason why they desire anonymity. Last year Ciccone wrote an article for the website XOJane about a "bad date" with an unidentified, very popular Canadian radio host whom readers speculated to be Ghomeshi. In the days that followed, Ciccone received hundreds of abusive messages and threats. A video calling her a "scumbag of the Internet" has been viewed over 397,000 times. Ciccone's claims about the behaviour during her "bad date" were far less severe than the allegations of abuse from the women now accusing Ghomeshi, who fear the online backlash could be significantly worse for them if their names were made public (Donovan & Brown, 2014a).

**Analysis.** These are excerpts from what may be considered the most substantive counter-point to Jian Ghomeshi’s initial Facebook statement in the form of an exposé published by
Toronto Star prior to any arrest or charges being laid. In this and other Star articles, one published on the same day as the original exposé, the authors refute Ghomeshi’s claim on the narrative by stating the long-term nature of their research and interviews, and that they only delayed the publication of the exposé as an act of journalistic due diligence, as it would have been dismissed as inflammatory without Ghomeshi’s acknowledgement of the allegations (Cook, 2014; Star Staff, 2014b). The exposé served as a primary media source for other news outlets who cross reported much of its content.

Though the article takes an anti-offender tone and attempts to bring forward the perspective of the victims and the valid reasons why they were unidentified, the title itself is somewhat problematic and revealing of the media tone as it locates the scandal in a discussion of sex rather than rape or violence, a theme which emerges elsewhere in the article as well.

The first point of refute to Jian’s statement is that the authors refer to three victims, who would later be revealed as the first of many to come forward, whereas Jian only acknowledged one possible victim and an entourage of saboteurs. The victims are described as being 20 years younger than the offender, which may speak to the power differential, and certainly contrasts Ghomeshi’s description of a woman in her late 20’s without referencing his own age in relation.

There are examples in these lines where language is used to expose violence and clarify the offender’s responsibility (Coates & Wade, 2007). Ghomeshi is clearly identified as an active agent in several explicit violent scenarios where he: “attacked,” “struck,” “bit,” “choked,” “hit,” and was verbally abusive including telling one woman he wanted to “hate f---” her. Such statements are unilateral and explicit unlike the vague sensual and consensual language used in Ghomeshi’s account.

Still, whether or not it was due to the tentative nature of discourse surrounding a pre-
arrest case, or perhaps as part of “…participating in everyday, taken-for-granted discursive practices…” (Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 26), these authors use some language that obscures and distorts violence. For example, while a clear statement refuting the presence of consent is warranted and denies Ghomeshi’s statement, the linguistic pairing of the statements “he was physically violent to them,” and “Ghomeshi physically attacked them” with the qualifier “without their consent” plays on the assumption that violence and attacks could ever be consented to or that they have the option of being mutual. Similarly, by the authors describing the violence and abuse in the context of dates and sexual encounters, mutuality and some victim blaming are implied, as if some consent being present may negate that other consent was not present. Finally, describing the women as “employed and educated,” though this may be intentional to divorce them from a monsterized (Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 117), “mad woman” status and contest Jian’s claim that there is some professional advantage to their complaints, still subtly implies that if they were not so, that this behaviour would be justifiable; in other words, that unemployed and uneducated people are less truthful about or may even deserve the abuse that is inflicted on them.

Although without a direct victim account it cannot be known, it seems as if some of the violent acts are being downplayed or euphemized: “covered nose and mouth” rather than smothered or suffocated, “struck them with a closed fist or open hand” rather than punched or slapped, and even using the word “sex” which may have very well been rape, and at the very least could have here been depicted as intercourse or coitus. The statements also lack descriptions of victim resistance or of the harm or injury caused to the victims by Ghomeshi during these assaults other than that they “nearly passed out” or had “difficulty breathing” which could easily be associated with similar BDSM impacts. This falls
short of the language of one of the later criminal charges itself where the impact and resistance to choking are acknowledged:

   Every one who, with intent to enable or assist himself or another person to commit an indictable offence, a) attempts, by any means, to choke, suffocate or strangle another person, or by any means calculated to choke, suffocate or strangle, attempts to render another person insensible, unconscious or incapable of resistance (Criminal Code, 1985, s 246a).

   Omitting the language of violent impacts depicts the violations as if they are stand-alone actions without direct consequences. Because of this, consent becomes the object of violation rather than the victim. When the likely legal issue at hand is consent and the believability of whether or not the victim provided it, resistance descriptions, and clear violence-exposing and consequence-revealing language are critical to contesting that this was anything other than “rough sex.”

   From a victim support perspective, perhaps what is most useful in this particular article is the description of Ghomeshi’s luring tactics where he plays the jovial and mysterious gentleman who later turns on his victims. This is important to establish in these first victim accounts as it corroborates the public perception of Jian’s persona to date, thus providing a mirror for the shock of his fans to know of his behaviour, and it exposes the tactics Jian used to prevent and conceal victim resistance. The authors also locate the victims’ stories in the context of rape culture within Canada, where women are unlikely to be believed, and are unsafe with individuals and systems that assume their accounts are false. Just as Jian’s statement forecasts the deluge of complainants, this article counters that by implying that, as in all rape cases, the offender will cast doubt on the believability of his victims.
Case example honouring victims. In CBC’s Toronto office in 2012, the story goes, three people sat down for an interview. At least two of them knew that not long before, the interviewee allegedly has been thrown against a hotel room wall and fondled forcefully against her will. According to her statement to the Toronto Star, she performed fellatio “just to get out of there” and ended up leaving the hotel room crying. Then, sometime later — perhaps days, or a couple weeks — she sat across from the man she now accuses, along with his executive producer and interviewed for what was, or had been, her dream job. At least two of them in the interview knew, but somewhere else in the building, there had to be more who, at one time or another, suspected something was amiss (Urback, 2014)

Analysis. In just a few short lines Urback (2014) uses language to expose violence and honour resistance in context. Showing the context of a job interview with the perpetrator reveals some of the power Ghomeshi held in relation to this victim particularly as it pertains to his ability to positively or negatively impact her career. The assault is not framed sexually, but as violent, forceful, unwanted, and in the context of physical and political intimidation. The ensuing fellatio, an un-eroticized term—in contrast to other news portrayals of the account as “oral sex” (Donovan & Brown, 2014b)—is actually the victim’s resistance as it is both a survival and exit strategy aimed at minimizing the violence (Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998, p. 3). The subsequent job interview is now seen as intimidation by Ghomeshi to ensure his victim’s silence, or in its mildest interpretation, some sort of pay-off or bribe in exchange for a sexualized encounter. By honouring resistance Urback (2014) and the victim she quotes draw the distinction between compliance and consent.

Other Language Samples and the Four-Discursive-Operations
While the following language samples are categorized thematically according to a particular operation of language, many contain or involve more than one of the four-discursive-operations simultaneously, and have been categorized singularly to streamline analysis commentary. Accounts here may be segmented, but were reviewed in context before being broken into parts. Victim accounts, or segments thereof, may be included more than once and in various sections as the language used to frame the accounts differed depending on the news source, author, and date. This furthers Coates’ (1997) point that how cause is attributed in matters of violence demonstrates, “the power of language to construct radically different versions of the same events” (p. 292).

1.1 Conceal violence.

- Carleton University also issued a statement saying it was "aware of allegations about former CBC Radio host Jian Ghomeshi that may involve a Carleton journalism student or graduate (CBC News, 2014c).

- …students were cautioned against pursuing internships at Ghomeshi's popular CBC radio show due to concerns about "inappropriate" behaviour toward young women by the now-fired host raised by a graduate who had interned there (Gallant, Alamenciak & Benzie, 2014).

- Another woman has also come forward to speak to the CBC about an act of aggression by Jian Ghomeshi...(CBC News, 2014d).

- A third was allegedly inappropriately touched on several occasions, including during February 2008…The third charge relates an alleged sexual assault in 2008. The woman, who previously spoke to the Star, alleged that Ghomeshi sexually assaulted her by touching her inappropriately on several occasions (Hasham & Donovan, 2015).
• The email contained allegations of "non-consensual assault" from "a series of women." It also stated that there was "information indicating that inappropriate behaviour may have crossed over into the workplace" (Brown as cited in Kamlani & Subramaniam, 2014).

• Eight women from across Canada now accuse former CBC host Jian Ghomeshi of abusive behaviour ranging from allegations of beating and choking without consent, to workplace sexual harassment…Generally, the stories the women have told the Star describe a man obsessed with his image and power, and someone who they say has little or no respect for barriers. (Donovan & Brown, 2014b)

• The Toronto Star had been investigating allegations from women who claim Ghomeshi was physically violent to them without their consent since last spring and published an online version of its report on Oct. 26 (Roumeliotis, 2014).

• Four days after he was fired, at least nine women had made allegations against Mr. Ghomeshi, most of them recounting that he beat and abused them without warning, sometimes during sex (Bradshaw & McArthur, 2014).

• “Since his dismissal, nine women have come forward in the media with allegations that Ghomeshi sexually or physically assaulted them” (Loriggio, 2014).

• Two men the Star has spoken to describe incidents where Ghomeshi fondled their genitals in a public place without consent (Donovan, 2014b).

• He then allegedly demanded she kneel in a constrained position, allegedly grabbed her by the neck and hit her in the face hard, and allegedly engaged her in fellatio, forcefully (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

**Analysis.** Whether directly quoting, paraphrasing, or contextualizing, media authors frequently conceal, lessen, or disappear violent acts by using euphemizing or “minimizing terms”
such as “inappropriate”, “abusive,” “aggression,” or the tentative language of suspended guilt (alleged, suggested, accused, may have).

Similarly, the authors’ distinguishing sexual assault from physical assault (as if a sexual assault is not physical) sets sexual assault as being distinct from violence (Coates et al., 1994, p. 194). This is done, in the above and throughout the results, both directly—such as Loriggio’s (2014) phrasing that Ghomeshi sexually OR physically assaulted women—and indirectly, where violations are couched in erotic or affectionate characterizations (Coates et al., 1994, p. 191). For example the concept of, “fondling without consent” as depicted by Donovan (2014b) though attributed to the perpetrator and clearly indicating a boundary transgression, fails to convey the violent and assaultive nature of such an act and employs a word that can just as easily be construed as erotic rather than a more violent word such as groped, or grabbed. Similar patterns emerge in subsequent results where terms like kissing, sex, oral sex, and intercourse are used both to describe consensual sexual situations and violent situations where terms like groped, raped, and forced penetration/contact would be more accurate descriptors, and thereby “…reduces the offender’s responsibility by making him a participant in a non-violent, mutual act (Coates & Wade, 2004, p.12).

Even acts that were exposed as being violent were often mitigated by clarifications and contextualization as if consent, warning, non-sexual harm, or violence in a sexualized context, makes violence less problematic. Authors attempting to counter Ghomeshi’s “it was consensual” narrative often chose to repeatedly use non-consensual adjectives to qualify violent language. Though sometimes effective, this can also perform a minimizing rather than a validating function, especially if the stories were read as stand-alone pieces rather than in context of the ongoing scandal narrative. For example, perhaps the most striking minimizing structure above is
a media-authored term “non-consensual assault,” which constructs the idea that there is such a thing as consensual assault. While possibly aimed at disputing Ghomeshi’s claim, this actually corroborates casting the issue as victim believability rather than perpetrator responsibility.

1.2 Expose violence.

- "He told me to get on my knees, and then he proceeded to start hitting me hard on the side of my head," she said, her voice digitally disguised. "It crossed my mind that I could go to the police, but I was too afraid to do it" (Boesveld, 2014a)

- The woman told the Star that at the movie - their one and only meeting - he did not "hit, punch, choke or beat me." However, she said Ghomeshi "groped" her, attempted "aggressively to kiss me" and "relentlessly tried to put his hands on and near my inner thighs, crotch and rear, both inside and out of my pants." (Donovan, 2014b)

- …by June the Star sent the first of two letters to Ghomeshi…”The Toronto Star is investigating allegations from women who say that you have been physically and verbally abusive to them during sexual encounters…The women we have interviewed to date, from different parts of the country, tell similar stories. In brief, they say that you physically attack them, without consent." "The women allege that you strike them with a closed fist or open hand; choke them with your hands around their neck to the point that they almost pass out; cover their nose and mouth so that they have difficulty breathing; and that you verbally abuse them before, during, and after sex acts. The women have told us that they did not consent to this behaviour," the Star wrote in the letter (Donovan & Gallant, 2014).

- In other news, which emerged Wednesday, the Toronto Star reported on new allegations against Ghomeshi. Jim Hounslow says that more than 20 years ago, when he
was a student at York University in Toronto and Ghomeshi was the student federation president, Ghomeshi **grabbed his genitals** as they were waiting for the elevator (CBC News, 2014e).

- …Lucy DeCoutere…recalls an incident in 2003 when she alleges Ghomeshi, without warning or consent, **choked her to the point she could not breathe and then slapped her hard three times on the side of her head**. “He did not ask if I was into it. It was never a question. **It was shocking to me. The men I have spent time with are loving people…**” (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- In 2005, Ghomeshi, then 38, was at a music and dance event in a Toronto park. He ran into a woman he knew from the arts and culture scene. The woman, 34, had gone on a few dates with Ghomeshi but they had never been intimate. They went for a walk when the event was over and, according to the woman, Ghomeshi attacked her while they were sitting on a bench. He began kissing her forcefully and then **"put his hands around my neck and choked me."** "He smothered me," she said. She alleges Ghomeshi then grabbed her arms hard and "bit" her, then pushed her down on the park bench and "groped" her. "I pushed him away. **It really scared me. He was so aggressive,"** the woman said. The next day, she said Ghomeshi contacted her and "acted like nothing had happened." "**There was absolutely nothing consensual** about what happened to me," the woman said… (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- Ghomeshi invited her to visit him in Toronto at his house in Cabbagetown, she says, and she did. When she arrived at his house and greeted him, she says Ghomeshi answered the door and stared at her. Without speaking, she alleges that he **threw her against the wall** and demanded that she get on her knees and perform **fellatio**. She alleges that when she
kneeled down he struck her repeatedly about the head, "hard enough that (her) vision was blurred." She says he took his belt off, tied it tight around her neck, "yanked" it, and led her around by the belt. They had intercourse, she said, and during it she alleges he whipped her back with his belt and hit her about the head. She alleges he put his full body weight on her face during fellatio, to the point where she gagged, couldn't breathe and felt she would vomit. A subsequent encounter, she alleges, left her with deep bruising. She alleges that when she later confronted Ghomeshi and showed him pictures of her bruising, he told her that he found her bruises to be "hot." The woman told the Star that during this visit to his house she noticed he had a teddy bear in his room. She said he turned the teddy bear around so the it was facing away from them (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- …A woman who said she was physically abused twice by Mr. Ghomeshi about 10 years ago. She told host Carol Off the attacks came without warning. The first occurred at the end of a date, when Mr. Ghomeshi allegedly grabbed her hair and pulled her head back. Despite the incident, the woman, who was granted anonymity by CBC, said she saw Mr. Ghomeshi again. "I thought, maybe he's a little too rough and I can sort it out," she explained. But on the second date, the woman said she and Mr. Ghomeshi were in his living room when he "grabbed my hair again, but even harder, threw me in front of him on the ground, and started closed-fist pounding me in the head. Repeatedly, until my ears were ringing, and I started to cry." She told Ms. Off she did not struggle. "I was in shock. When you get hit in the head, everything rings and it's hard to do anything." She added: "He didn't ask me if I like to be hit. I wasn't expecting it, and he hit me repeatedly, on the head. On one side of my head, over and over. And I'm on the
floor, then I'm in tears. He said: 'You need to go.' "She added: "We were fully clothed. We weren't having sex." The woman said she did not go to the police. "It's too difficult to prove, it's embarrassing. In the moment itself, myself, I was so distraught, all I wanted to do was curl up in a corner," she said. "But when this came to light a few days ago, it gave me permission to speak, and I thought, maybe someone will listen to me now" (Houpt, 2014a).

- In the room, the woman alleged to the Star that Ghomeshi kissed her, squeezed her neck and then slapped her. She said Ghomeshi also shoved his fingers into her mouth roughly. (Hasham & Donovan, 2015)

- She alleges that in the stairwell, Ghomeshi slammed her against a cement wall and she dropped her belongings. When she knelt to pick them up, he choked her from behind and struck her across the head. He demanded that she stand, and he marched her up the stairs into her friend's empty dorm room. She says he demanded that she kneel, then hit her repeatedly about the head while she stared up in shock. She asked him about bruising, and he laughed and replied that he knew how to hit her so there wouldn't be any. (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- She says Ghomeshi bit her, leaving marks on her breasts, inner thighs and back (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

**Analysis.** These segments of text demonstrate in clear terms how Ghomeshi’s actions towards his victims were violent and caused harm and did not honour the variable nature of consent or legal standard of consensual activity. It is likely that more physical violence was exposed through media coverage of this case than other sexual assault cases, as Ghomeshi did not contest that his acts were violent, but instead asserted that the violence was consented to.
Because of this, statements that deny consent without minimizing violence, and language that communicates the impacts, injuries and consequences of violence are of particular value when what is being considered is the veracity of victim accounts.

Through these and other accounts we are provided with a list fitting words to deeds (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 513) and a description of a perpetrator who attacked and abused multiple victims over time, both verbally and physically on various occasions where he: forced women to their knees often demanding or forcing fellatio; hit, slapped, struck, and pounded women hard, usually in the head, with a closed fist or open hand, and often repeatedly; pushed, threw and slammed women and men onto hard surfaces; aggressively kissed, bit, shoved fingers roughly into a victim’s mouth or genitals, groped and relentlessly grabbed his or her genitalia; yanked her by the neck and whipped her on the back with his belt; grabbed and pulled various women’s hair on multiple occasions; choked (sometimes from behind), smothered, put his full body weight on her face, and squeezed her neck. These actions are causally linked to direct negative impacts for victims including fear, shock, lack of motor control (dropping belongings), crying, difficulty or impossibility in breathing and nearly fainting, choking, gagging, nausea, blurred vision, ears ringing, and deep marks and bruising across various body parts. These actions are construed as deliberate and unilateral (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 513) and are consistently framed as unwanted.

A phrase such as “they had intercourse” could be seen as a minimizing and mutualizing characterization of compliance in a violent context, but even if it was an accurate representation from a victim perspective, does not negate the victimization through other actions. Later analysis of victim resistance and perpetrator suppression demonstrates how clarity around consent can be known even within the nuance of sexual activity.
2.1 Obscure and mitigate offenders’ responsibility.

- “Some women — all except one anonymously — have claimed they were subjected to violence. None of the women have filed a complaint” (CBC News, 2014a)

- The charges listed in court documents give no details, but say the alleged incident that led to the charge happened in early February 2008 (Hasham & Donovan, 2015).

- And in almost every case, the women say they either ended up on their knees, or were forced down on them. (Urback, 2014)

- ‘A cracked rib’: The video that got Ghomeshi fired: CBC fired Q radio host Jian Ghomeshi after he showed them a video depicting bruising on a woman he had dated, apparently caused by a cracked rib, sources have told the Star…Sources say the video is of a woman Ghomeshi had dated in the past 10 years. It shows bruising to her body (she is partially covered in the video). And information provided to CBC that weekend, including text messages Ghomeshi had on his phone, refer to a "cracked rib." A large bruise could be seen on the side of her body…(Donovan, 2014a).

**Analysis.** While the authors of some of these captions or the articles they were contained in, clearly indicate some impacts of violence (forcing someone to their knees, a cracked rib, and bruising), there are several misleading causal attributions including nominalizations and agentless passives which misrepresent and obscure the agent or actor of violence (Coates & Wade, 2007 p. 519, Elrich 2011, p. 47, p. 52). For example, in studying the verb transitivity (Mayr & Machin, 2011) of these passages we see that women were “subjected to violence,” just like they “were forced down” or “ended up on their knees,” seemingly as victim-objects without a perpetrator-subject, or “done-to’s” without “doers” (Mayr & Machin, 2011). The cracked rib account is also described in the past tense, which casts the violence as being limited to the past
and/or having a morally instructional quality on present behaviour (“e.g. ‘learning from the past’”) (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 519). Also the Video is the agent which got Ghomeshi fired, rather than his own violence and harm to others, and, similarly, the woman’s bruising was linked causally to a cracked rib, as if it was cracked independently of a perpetrator.

It is not only the perpetrator who is erased from these scenarios, but often the victim as well. For example, an “alleged incident” led to charges, not the violent acts of a perpetrator or the brave responses of his victim filing charges. Elrich (2001) calls such statements, “…agentless allegations,” that allow, “…the women's role in the events to be eliminated which, in turn, functions to obscure the behaviour (i.e., sexual harassment) that resulted in the women's allegations. Even when the women's acts of reporting or laying charges is represented, it is without mention of the women” (p. 15).

While the videos and photographs depicting these injuries are discussed, this is never attributed to Ghomeshi’s actions nor are any elements of the woman’s resistance or Ghomeshi’s suppression of that resistance discussed, in fact they are instead framed in the context of a dating relationship.

Ghomeshi’s ability to attract and engage with prospective victims is accounted for in his own statements of the career and image he built, and it is this image that he uses against women who acquiesce to his superior reputation, “thus, extreme violence can continue undetected for many years while the perpetrator builds a reputation as a model citizen” (Coates & Wade, 2007, p. 512).

2.2 Clarify offenders’ responsibility.

- The women the Star interviewed, recently and over the summer, provide a very similar picture of Ghomeshi and how he methodically selects women, brings them to his home
and allegedly assaults them. In some cases there are allegations of assault in public...Young women say they were attracted by the stardom. Some who sought a career in broadcasting wanted a job at Q and applied. Others who were not interested in media careers say Ghomeshi selected them out of a crowd - at a music festival in one case, a book signing in other instances. Many said that at some point, Ghomeshi looked them in the eyes and told them, "You're the one." None of the women the Star has interviewed knew each other. They tell remarkably similar stories regarding how they were chosen (Donovan, 2014b).

- By Wednesday, a total of eight women had come forward to claim that Ghomeshi had abused them in some way — by choking them, punching them or else laying a hand on them in any other number of unwelcome ways...It is this consistent pattern that, for me, gives credence to the accusers’ stories. Eight women, ostensibly strangers, echo the same chilling pattern. For many, it starts with the charm. Then, Ghomeshi offers an excuse to head back to his place — his contacts are bothering him, a tour of his new house, he needed to discuss something important — where he catches them off guard, they allege, with a fist, a slap or a hand around the neck. Two of the women reported Ghomeshi turning around his teddy bear, which he dubbed Big Ears Teddy, saying, “Big Ears Teddy shouldn’t see this” (Urback, 2014).

- Hi there Jian Ghomeshi. Remember louring me to ur house under false pretences?
  Bruises dont lie. Signed, every female Carleton U media grad (@BigEarsTeddy as cited in Donovan & Gallant, 2014).

- In early April, there was a Twitter blurt - 13 tweets - sent by, it appears, a female Carleton University student, who accused Ghomeshi of luring her to his house, punching...
her and, she suggested, keeping videos of his violent interactions with women (DiManno, 2014b).

- …someone on Twitter with the handle Big Ears Teddy was making very specific allegations of violence by Ghomeshi…The tweets included allegations of "punching," "bruises" and that Ghomeshi "chokes out" women…(Kamlani & Subramaniam, 2014).

- … Heather Conway, confirmed that the CBC saw on Oct. 23 "for the first time, graphic evidence that Jian had caused physical injury to a woman” (Donovan & Gallant, 2014).

**Analysis.** These captions are a sample of several media segments that outline Jian Ghomeshi’s rapacious tactics, many of which serve as examples of his anticipation of victim resistance in later analysis. There are also some clear statements involving the perpetrator and his causal action resulting in injury or manipulation of victims. Ghomeshi’s oft-cited action of turning his Teddy bear away, demonstrates his own acknowledgement that he was committing unseemly and shameful acts against women.

An original tweet by @BigEarsTeddy, that clearly exposed Ghomeshi’s violence and impacts (bruises for multiple women) as well as his tactics for suppressing resistance, was sometimes paraphrased to have a lesser impact. While Dimanno’s (2014b) paraphrase indicates violence, it does not specify the consequences of violence (bruising) and couches the language in tentative terms (appears, accused, suggested). Ghomeshi reportedly informed the CBC of the same or similar tweets and the rendering of that content, though also obscured as “allegations” shows how the violence is at Ghomeshi’s hands and further elaborates on impacts.

The CBC representative’s admittance of seeing evidence (Donovan & Gallant, 2014) is a clear perpetrator attribution. Unfortunately, though this quote was often repeated by various media sources, the "graphic evidence” was often cited more prominently than “Jian had caused
physical injury to a woman” demonstrating a media fascination with evidentiary content over causal attributions to a perpetrator.

3.1 Conceal victims’ resistance.

- The woman told the Star that Ghomeshi insisted she come to his hotel room because there were so many fans "swarming" him he couldn't leave the room for a planned date. (Hasham & Donovan, 2015)

- All of it was incredibly shocking and difficult to process. I was a naive small-town girl who had very limited experience with men. I thought I was going to a midday meeting about career management (Donovan, 2014b).

- In 2012, a fan of Ghomeshi's in her mid-20s came to his book event in a small city in Eastern Canada. She stood in line to get her copy of his memoir signed, and she recalls him being overwhelmingly friendly, asking her name and many questions about herself. The next day, she received a private Facebook message from him containing his phone number and an invitation to call him. The two corresponded online, and Ghomeshi allegedly introduced violent sexualized language into their conversation, assuring her it was all fantasy and encouraging her to participate through email, which she did. She says he invited her to visit him in Toronto (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- She first met Ghomeshi at a barbecue at a Banff television festival in 2003. They chatted and, in time, she visited Toronto and they had dinner at a restaurant on the Danforth. She recalls him telling her how famous he was and "how lucky you are to be with me." They went back to his house in Riverdale. DeCoutere said they began making out and then she alleges he pushed her against the wall, choked her with his hands around her neck and then slapped her three times. "That was something I had never experienced before,"
DeCoutere said. She left his house shortly after that in a taxi. "It did not escalate; it stopped," she said. (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- In 2012, a CBC producer in her mid-20s attended a book signing by Ghomeshi in Montreal. She waited in line to have her book signed, and once standing in front of Ghomeshi, she recalls telling him that her dream was to work on his radio show, Q. He asked her if she would like to join him and his friends for drinks after the event, she says. She agreed, and remembers meeting him at the lobby of the Opus Hotel, where he was staying. He arrived alone and embraced her, she says. "This isn't a professional meeting," she recalls Ghomeshi saying to her on the way to McKibbins Irish Pub. Seated in a booth, she says he rubbed her legs with both hands, explaining, "I have anxiety. Touching helps. "The two worlds can co-exist," she alleges he told her. "I've done it before" She remembers telling Ghomeshi, "I want to work for you, not date you." She said Ghomeshi kept complaining that his eyes were dry and he had to get his contact lenses out. They left the pub and went to Tim Hortons, where Ghomeshi bought a panini and later invited her to his hotel room, saying he had to take his contact lenses out. "I feel like a big moron now," said the woman, who is no longer with the CBC. "I should have seen it coming." In the hotel room, she recalls going to the bathroom and, as she was leaving it, discovering the lights were dimmed. She alleges Ghomeshi roughly threw her against the wall and kissed and fondled her forcefully (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- They started kissing consensually, but, she said, Ghomeshi soon became violent. "He did take me by the throat and press me against the wall and choke me," DeCoutere said. "And he did slap me across the face a couple of times" (CBC News, 2014c).

- A woman in her mid-20s says she had been on a few dates with Ghomeshi, in 2013, but
they never had sex. After they had been out of touch for weeks, she recalls being invited to his new house in Toronto's Beach area because he "needed" to see her to discuss something important. When she arrived, she says Ghomeshi sat her down for an intimate conversation. She says he told her that she might be "the one" for him, that he "didn't buy this big house to throw parties, but to raise a family." He then kissed her, she says, and while kissing he "pulled (her) hair so hard my neck flew backward, and when it did," she alleges, "he smacked me." She objected and asked why he did this. He laughed, she says, and explained to her that in order for him to build a future with her, he would need to see if they were sexually compatible, and she would have to "let (him) enjoy this the way (he) wants to." She says that he then turned his teddy bear around on his bed, telling her the bear "shouldn't see this." Ghomeshi began kissing her again, she says, and struck her in the face once more, harder than before. He pointed out his erection, she says, as proof that she was "the one" for him (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- She says Ghomeshi texted her soon after the encounter, when she had returned home, to say, "He was smitten with me, he adored me, he missed me, he was thinking of me."...She says Ghomeshi did tell her he had "these violent type of tendencies," but assured her it was "pure text fantasy" and that "none of it would happen in real life." "And so when he was violent with me without any talk of it ahead of time at his house, I didn’t see it coming. It blindsided me." She was too shocked, scared and star-struck to tell him to stop, she said. "I just allowed it to happen. I didn't know what else I was supposed to do," she said, describing it as "the biggest mistake of my life." (Brewer & MacKinnon, 2014).

- "I knocked on his door, he opened the door, and I was smiling, happy to see him, saying,
'Hello.' [I] expected to maybe have a tour of his house, have a 'hello' from him, have something to eat, 'How was your flight?' normal conversations," she said. Instead, "he pushed me against the wall immediately, started making out with me, and then he led me upstairs, told me to get on my knees, and then proceeded to hit me very hard across the head a few times to the point where I couldn’t see straight, my vision was blurred." She says that's when Ghomeshi took off his belt, put it around her neck and started leading her around the bedroom and down the hall, "pulling really hard." Then he removed the belt and started beating her on the back with it, she said. She says she didn't say anything to Ghomeshi. "I was in so much shock — and I’ve heard this from other women who are speaking as well — I did not know what to say. It totally threw me for a loop. I was speechless," she recalled. The alleged incident, which she says lasted about 30 minutes, only ended after they ended up having intercourse, she said. Afterwards, she says Ghomeshi was "nice and friendly and normal again," so she stayed the night. "It’s as though something switches when the violence starts and he changes, and then after that, he’s a normal guy," she said. Looking back, she says staying with him was a "bad decision." She says she let the fact that she looked up to him as a public figure cloud her judgment. The rest of her visit was normal, but "anytime anything got sexual, he started getting violent again," she said. "He would do stuff like hold his hand over my nose and mouth in front of a mirror to the point where I was blacking out" (Brewer & MacKinnon, 2014).

**Analysis.** These captions depict the precise, predetermined and predatory nature of Ghomeshi’s early interactions with his victims, demonstrating how he anticipated and suppressed their resistance. No sections are underlined, as it is all of the details in these glimpses of the
context of Ghomeshi’s victim accounts, which demonstrate the serial characteristics of his Modus Operandi (M.O.) in attracting, attacking and silencing his victims. These luring tactics are the consistent and pronounced means by which Ghomeshi anticipates and attempts to suppress his victims’ resistance. This, in addition to his lengthy Facebook post preemptively encouraging the public to disbelieve victims, demonstrates Ghomeshi’s sharpened ability to anticipate and prevent victim resistance. While resistance is largely overlooked in the media and legal systems, the above outlined measures verify victim agency, as “the most convincing evidence of the ubiquity and significance of victims’ resistance may be the perpetrators’ elaborate efforts to conceal and suppress it” (Scott, as cited in Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 6).

The pattern, cited here and in other segments, is quite consistent: Attract through charisma, intimidate through power, disarm and isolate through deception, shock and disorient through violence, humiliate through verbal and physical assaults, appease through flattery, and, when in doubt, blame. Within this pattern are likely other, unexposed suppression tactics hinted at when, for example, one woman returned from the bathroom to lights, which were already dimmed in preparation for an attack. Such sequences contradict Ghomeshi’s claims of consensual behaviour since legally,

No consent is obtained…where

(a) the agreement is expressed by the words or conduct of a person other than the complainant;

(b) the complainant is incapable of consenting to the activity;

(c) the accused induces the complainant to engage in the activity by abusing a position of trust, power or authority;

(d) the complainant expresses, by words or conduct, a lack of agreement to engage in the
activity; or

(e) the complainant, having consented to engage in sexual activity, expresses, by words or conduct, a lack of agreement to continue to engage in the activity (Criminal Code, 1985, s 273.1)

Since one cannot consent to being harmed if it is out of fear of force, (Criminal Code, 1985 s 246a) and one cannot consent to sex if the initiator is abusing a position of power (Criminal Code, 1985 s 273.1), then a thorough consideration of Ghomeshi’s suppression tactics as portrayed here would indicate that he did not obtain consent from his victims. This further emphasizes prior points about the sexualized and mutualized language (kissing, intercourse, oral sex) components of victim accounts where “using the language of love…rather than the language of violence…” (Elrich, 2001, p. 44) conceals victim resistance and mitigates offender culpability.

It is interesting to note that tentative terms, which question responsibility and truthfulness of interactions, are often employed by the authors only to statements that could imply violence, so that acts of flirting and inviting women on dates are stated factually where acts of violence are framed as being alleged. For example “the two corresponded online” is stated factually whereas, the subsequent introduction of violent language is framed as alleged.

While these segments are pulled from broader articles where, in some cases, resistance is at least partially honoured, there is often a lack of accounting for victim resistance. For example, here DeCoutere’s role as agent in the interactions is only mentioned in the context of what she did consent to, but not the ways she did not consent. This is consistent with Coates & Wade’s (2007) findings that,

…victims were portrayed as social agents only when their actions or apparent inactions could also be construed as negative or self-injurious. Such constructions of the passive or
submissive victim exposes victims to that particularly ugly form of social contempt that is reserved for individuals who, when faced with adversity, appear to knuckle under and do nothing on their own behalf (p. 519).

Such omissions are evident in portrayals and testimony of several women through these passages and others who are cited as feeling foolish, complicit, and as having done “nothing,” a type of self-blaming by victims which can stem from the fact their acts of resistance are not affirmed as they do not fall under the category of expected or “appropriate resistance” (Coates et al., 1994, p. 195).

3.2 Elucidate and honor victims’ resistance.

- She came, she says, but wouldn't stay at his house. They went out for dinner, then back to a dorm at the University of Toronto where she was staying in the room of a friend who was out of town. (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- He hit her again, and she stared in disbelief and shock. She remembers feeling that he then lost interest and left, hugging her on his way out of the building. She later sent him an accusatory email, and he responded by email (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- She doesn't recall telling him to stop but said her facial expression turned very serious and Ghomeshi was no longer violent after that. (CBC News, 2014c).

- After a few drinks we went back to his room where he proceeded to literally throw me on his bed, no buildup, no conversation, and started biting, pulling my hair and biting me all over." The woman told him to slow down." He said I was being weird and making him feel embarrassed. I immediately felt bad," the woman recalls…She said she was awakened by Ghomeshi biting her and pulling off her clothes. "It started to hurt so much that I pushed him away," said the woman, who was upset to see "marks" on her body.
from the bites. "I ran out of the hotel room." (Donovan, 2014b)

• "I said, 'What the f---.' I told him I have three brothers."  "Your loss," she recalls Ghomeshi saying. He drove off quickly and then called her, saying, "I am driving really fast on the highway and I am under a lot of stress right now and if I crash it will be your fault." The woman told him to calm down and drive safely. (Donovan, 2014b)

• He gave the impression I had sincerely offended him and I genuinely felt so bad about it at the time. I look back on this now as the tactic of a manipulator with a mandate," she told the Star…On a visit to his house, she said the following happened:  "We were standing in the kitchen overlooking his laptop when out of nowhere he pushed me into the fridge and snarled, 'I want to ravage your little body.' " (Other women report hearing Ghomeshi make a similar snarling sound.) During one of several intimate encounters they had, she said he took her into the washroom at her home and slapped her hard across the face. He asked if she liked choking. She said she had never done that. He tried to convince her but she said no. She and other women the Star talked to said BDSM was never mentioned.  "One time he hit me really hard, on my head and face, with an open hand. I pushed him back once and he grabbed my wrists and said he did not like that," she recalls. According to her account, she broke the relationship off after Ghomeshi pushed his finger between her legs as they entered the Sony Centre to see an Adele concert. "Then he put on his Jian Ghomeshi face to everyone and I felt like a piece of arm candy.  "I was not with him very long. This is not a story of strength or one I am very proud of," said the woman, who is still seeing a therapist. "I still struggle with self-blame on this since I still ... went back. I still wanted him to think something of me." (Donovan, 2014b)
A male former student at York University who worked for Jian Ghomeshi when Ghomeshi was student federation president alleges the disgraced CBC host “grabbed my genitals and fondled them.” Jim Hounslow, now the e-learning specialist at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, said Ghomeshi’s sudden attack while they waited for an elevator was part of a pattern of conduct towards fellow students.

Hounslow just happened to be male. Hounslow said he and others at the campus viewed Ghomeshi as a “sexual predator.” He is not aware of other men who were victims. He did not file a complaint…“I recall him as being very charismatic and flattering,” said Hounslow. “It was exciting at first.” But one night after a student meeting at a pub, he and Ghomeshi were waiting for an elevator. “With no warning, he just reached over and grabbed my genitals (through Hounslow’s jeans) and started fondling them. I was completely shocked and I reacted,” Hounslow said. Hounslow, who is roughly the same height and build as Ghomeshi...said he grabbed Ghomeshi’s arm, pulled it behind his back and then pushed Ghomeshi hard against the elevator doors. “I told him, ‘You are never to do that again,’” Hounslow recalls. The next day, in the student federation office, Hounslow said, Ghomeshi accused him of being “macho, violent and homophobic.” Hounslow recalls Ghomeshi saying that he had just been “playing around.”...“I told him that what he did was sexual harassment, and that shut him up,” Hounslow said (Donovan & Hasham, 2014a).

She said that during the time they saw each other he was often violent with her, progressively more so each time, but then would be nice and charming, asking her to "cuddle" in bed. She stayed. On what was their last evening together she describes being led to the bedroom of his Sackville Ave. home. He pushed her down to a seating position...
on the hardwood floors. "He put his hands around my neck and started to press, increasing pressure, choking me. He had done this before. This time was worse. He was looking into my eyes. I couldn't breathe and I started to panic." She said she put her hands up to stop him and he did stop, then he put his hands over her nose and mouth. She felt herself starting to lose consciousness and wondered if she died whether anybody would know "what happened." Her eyes watered. She tried to move his hands but couldn't.

Then, she said, he struck her four times, "pounding the heels of his hands into my temples." She was upset, confused. She said he wanted to have sex and when they went to the bed he got on top of her and pushed her down. (She weighs just under 100 pounds.) When she resisted and got on top "he lost his erection." The woman went to the bathroom and texted her friend, who told her to leave. She did, and has not seen him since that time. Like all but three women who have raised allegations, she said she has no intention of going to the police (Donovan, 2014b).

- She states she performed fellatio on Ghomeshi "just to get out of there." "I was saying to him, "I don't want to do this, I want to work for you." As she was leaving the room crying, she says, she heard Ghomeshi say, "I'll talk with my executive producer about you." The next morning she received a text from Ghomeshi. "Happy Thursday," it read. She was shocked. She says she did receive an invitation to a job interview from Ghomeshi's executive producer shortly thereafter. In Toronto, she recalls, she was surprised to find Ghomeshi present at the interview. Immediately after she left the CBC building, she says Ghomeshi texted her to say she looked sexier than ever in the interview, and he invited her out that night for drinks. She declined. "I feel gross about the whole thing. I feel used," the woman said…(Donovan & Brown, 2014b).
• Later, Ghomeshi called her a degrading term. She objected, she says, and told him, "don't talk to me like that." She says Ghomeshi shrank away from her at that moment, sulking. "You're making me feel like a weirdo," she recalls him saying. He then said, "You need to go," and left the room. She dressed and walked downstairs, where she found Ghomeshi on his couch, absorbed in his computer screen, checking Twitter. She left the house, she says. He did not say goodbye. Months later, she confronted him in an email, suggesting that details of his behaviour might go public. "I'm shaking as I read this," he responded, "can we please talk?" (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

**Analysis.** The defendant in cases of spousal, partner, and, I would argue, acquaintance rape “…works to locate the act as being too intimate to be recognized by others and proven. It further constructs rape as sexual miscommunication or misinterpretation of personal and intimate codes rather than as criminal conduct—and as non-violent” (Lazar, 2010, p. 350). This is why recognition of victim responses is of paramount importance to highlight in a debate where consent (or lack thereof) is made the issue, and conduct is the primary criteria for that consent. Because “…resistance is a response to violence and cannot be encoded in the language of effects, impacts, consequences, or clinical sequelae” (Coates et al., 2003, p. 118), accurate renderings and honouring interpretations of victim accounts are often lacking. This has been made evident in these results where accounts of the same victim incidents are, in some places, reported as unilateral, violent and intentional, and, in others, as being mutual, erotic, or passive. Especially regarding a public medium of communication, “…the way that violence against women is linguistically encoded can affect individuals' interpretations of harm and responsibility” (Elrich, 2001, p. 61). Furthermore the recognition of these responses is what indicates whether or not the perpetrator can claim a belief in consent as a defence because,
It is not a defence to a charge...that the accused believed that the complainant consented to the activity that forms the subject-matter of the charge, where

(a) the accused’s belief arose from the accused’s

(i) self-induced intoxication, or

(ii) recklessness or wilful blindness; or

(b) the accused did not take reasonable steps, in the circumstances known to the accused at the time, to ascertain that the complainant was consenting. (*Criminal Code*, 1985, s 273.2)

The above underlined statements, as well as excerpts in other results sections, comprise an inventory of victim resistance, which is likely more limited in media transmission than it would be in actual accounts. This catalogue of responses discredits Ghomeshi’s position of having taken reasonable steps to secure consent, leaving us to presume him willfully blind to the evidence.

Throughout these passages readers can discover traditionally expected—or “appropriate” (Coates et al., 1994, p. 195)—forms of resistance such as, verbal commands and exclamations (slow down, what the f-?, calm down, no, never do that again, this is sexual harassment, I don’t want to do this, don’t talk to me like that), physical struggle (pushing back/away, putting hands up, getting on top, running away), and breaking off interactions. But in analysis of “...immediate and longer term responses to violence, many acts that were previously ignored or treated as negative effects become intelligible as forms of resistance” (Coates et al., 2003, p. 118), so that behaviours such as shock, surprise, staring, facial expressions, subsequent reflection, panic, internal wondering/planning to stay safe, self-awareness, eyes watering, crying, trying to move, seeking help during and after, sending subsequent emails, turning him off (getting on top), and
performing fellatio can also be interpreted as victim resistance. Unfortunately acts of resistance are often judged to be adequate by their success, or lack thereof, in subduing or evading an attack, rather than by their usefulness in surviving and processing it. This means that while victims seek a positive social response to the fact that they kept themselves safe, the language of sexual assault discourse constantly questions why they did not, instead, keep themselves pure.

4.1 Blame or pathologize victims.

- When in 2010 she revealed to Arif Noorani, the show's executive producer, that the host had said he wanted to "hate f-k" her, and had groped her buttocks, the manager suggested there was no point confronting Mr. Ghomeshi about his actions, the woman said. "Arif's comment to me was, 'He's never going to change, you're a malleable person, let's talk about how you can make this a less toxic work environment for you,'” the woman recalled (Blackwell, 2014b).

- Without specifying, she said the evidence showed a woman being injured." At that point it moved out of the realm of sex entirely and into an issue of violence against women," she told Mansbridge. But the CBC did not contact the police. When Off asked why, Conway said: "I think it's important to make the distinction that ... this is evidence from a year-long relationship that involved the rough sex that's referred to” (Ballingall, 2014).

- The Star has copies of the correspondence. "it IS about sex," wrote Ghomeshi in an email to the woman, asserting that she had consented, "it WAS ... that you've decided to turn this ugly is disappointing, i wish for good karma into 2013." (Donovan & Brown, 2014b).

- Afterward, when bruises developed, she says she sent Ghomeshi pictures of them to let him know he had physically hurt her. She says she also cautioned him, saying that if he
hurt any other women like that, someone was bound to report it to the police or the media. "He said, 'Do you live in the ghetto? What’s wrong with you? As if anything like that would happen.'" She says she told a friend about the alleged unwanted violence, who warned her it was a "red flag." A couple of other people advised her to go to the police, but she didn't. "I’m one girl — as far as I’m concerned at the time — who this has happened to," she said. "I thought it was an incident that was only geared toward me. I didn’t think he did this to anybody else. "I thought it was because I was small, he thought I had a weak mind. At the time, I thought I had a weak mind for submitting to it. And I felt the amount of notoriety and respect he has in Canada versus me, who’s essentially nobody compared to him, people will not believe my side" (Brewer & MacKinnon, 2014).

- Eight women have now come forward to multiple media outlets with stories of suffering aggression at the hands of former CBC host Jian Ghomeshi (Houpt, 2014a).
- None of the women CBC has interviewed has filed a complaint of any kind with police (Brewer & MacKinnon, 2014).
- None of the allegations against Ghomeshi have been tested in court (Donovan, 2014b).
- Vilified by anonymous accusers; No criminal charges, nor any complainants. “This story is so egregious: Not only are there are no criminal charges, there are not even any complainants, except to the crack team of Star reporters. (Blatchford, 2014)
- …Well, false allegations of rape and domestic violence by spurned or thwarted women are something I know from my research are far more prevalent than most people believe (Kay, 2014).
- Since then, eight women - only one of them revealing her identity - have spoken out
through stories in the Toronto Star, saying that Mr. Ghomeshi had punched, slapped or choked them during sex, without their consent (Blackwell, 2014b).

- The union has said Borel discussed Ghomeshi’s behaviour and attitude, but did not make an allegation of sexual harassment. She never filed an official complaint...Borel is not among accusers linked to the charges (CBC News, 2014b).

- She said she did not seek medical attention after the incidents because she wasn't bleeding. She did not file any official complaints. (CBC News, 2014d)

- She left within an hour and saw Ghomeshi two more times that weekend, but they did not discuss the incident, and no further violent incidents occurred. She said she had no physical marks on her body from the attack and did not seek medical attention or report it to the police, partially because she felt there were too many holes in her story (CBC News, 2014c).

**Analysis.** As Ghomeshi preemptively constructed victim statements as the workings of a vengeful ex-lover, and is often quoted by his victims as having blamed and pathologized them, it can hardly be surprising to see this trope corroborated by his former employer and in the media as,

historically and to the present day, it has been common for women and girls who accuse men of sexual violence to be viewed as vindictive and vengeful. The association of revenge with irrationality or emotionality is constructed in opposition to the ‘reasonable’, public discourses about crime and justice (Salter, 2013, p. 238).

Case in point, while the CBC spokesperson briefly exposes violence by seemingly removing the conversation of violence from the sex narrative, she then contextualizes the violence within a relationship, and clarifies that it was not reported because the victim was in relationship with the
perpetrator (Ballingall, 2014). Contextualizing assault in terms of a relationship both invokes the rape myth that women who claim rape are lying (Franiuk et al. 2008 as cited in O’Hara, 2012) and “incites a blaming ideology by the media” (Benedict 1992 as cited in Ar dovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002) by questioning the responsibility of the victim due to her role of engaging in relationship with the assailant. In other sources CBC producers are cited as having said that, “Jian's conduct in causing physical injury to a woman was inconsistent with the character of the public broadcaster” (Houpt, 2014b) or that, “what they saw, in their opinions, was far more aggressive and physical than anything they had been led to believe during months of discussions…” (Bradshaw & McArthur, 2014). While not overtly victim-blaming, these frames would have readers believe Jian’s acts to be a difference of opinion or on some kind of violence spectrum that was open to subjective interpretation, rather than as explicit and deliberate harm.

While it is to be expected that perpetrators and offender-enablers would engage in victim-blaming, it is less clear why the media, the public and, sometimes, the victims themselves, engage in language that insinuates victim culpability. While, as previously stated, this can be an extension of overlooking acts of resistance, other scholars link victim blaming to Learner’s (1980) “Just World Hypothesis,” a delusive concept that people deserve what they get, which, “…helps preserve the belief that the world is safe and fair” (as cited in Swauger et al., 2013, p. 629). From this vantage point, victim blaming can be seen as part of a meaning-making social response to violence that, while detrimental, has protective features. Regardless, this type of language achieves non-agency as “victimism, in turn, relies on the depiction of women as powerless and oppressed, which can function to deny their responsibility, culpability and even rationality” (Morrissey as cited in Mayr & Machin, 2011, p. 117), so that while victims may not
be seen as responsible for the assault, they are seen as being something not completely human.

Frequent emphasis across news sources that the women did not identify themselves, did not file a formal and/or legal complaint or charge, and that, once filed, the charges had not been legally proven, while statements of fact, were often placed so as to act as undermining qualifiers to victim statements. For example, DeCoutere was repeatedly referred to as the first victim to be publically identified (CBC News 2014c, Hopper 2014a, Boesveld 2014a, Boesveld 2014b, Urback 2014), which in some cases was exalted as a testament of victim bravery, but, in others, seemed to undermine the legitimacy of the other victims who did not release their names. These qualifiers mutualize violent behaviour, implying, “…that the victim is at least partly to blame and inevitably conceals the fact that violent behavior is unilateral and solely the responsibility of the offender” (Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 5), and shifts the scrutiny from the offender’s actions to the “victims’ (mis)behaviours” (Swauger et al., 2013, p. 630). The early conflation of “legal,” with, “legitimate,” sets up any resulting judicial processes as the ultimate deciders of truth, rather than determiners of criminal consequences.

4.2 Contest the blaming and pathologizing of victims.

- The women making abuse allegations against Jian Ghomeshi - there are now 15 - say he never raised the topic of BDSM or asked for consent…others…describe how, with no warning, Ghomeshi made guttural snarling noises, hit, slapped, bit, choked them and in some cases pulled their hair so hard they were yanked down to the floor or onto a bed… (Donovan, 2014b).
- …In 2002, Seth, then 26, met Ghomeshi when she was starting a new job at city hall and a masters program at Osgoode Hall Law School. Upon first meeting him at a grocery store, she found him “funny and charming,” and started seeing him casually. She writes
that over the course of a summer, they attended a couple of parties together and watched a movie at his house. “I was seeing other people and I’m pretty sure he was also.” Seth says she and Ghomeshi never discussed anything related to BDSM and had “only casually fooled around — a bit of kissing.” However, on one such evening, which “started out fine,” after they had a drink and smoked some marijuana, Ghomeshi’s behaviour suddenly changed, she writes. “Suddenly, it was like he became a different person,” she writes. “He was super angry, almost frenzied and disassociated. “Jian had his hands around my throat, had pulled down my pants and was aggressively and violently digitally penetrating me with his fingers,” Seth recounts. “When it was over, I got up and it was clear I was really angry. My sexual interactions until then had always been consensual, enjoyable and fun. “He gave me some weird lines about how he couldn’t tell if I was actually attracted to him or not,” she writes about what happened afterwards. “And somehow this was meant to explain his behaviour.” Seth says she called a cab and left right away, and Ghomeshi walked her to the door “like it was all totally normal.” She debated coming forward for fear of “judgment, online trolls, the questioning of all your other choices,” as well as possible assertions that her experience was not bad or happened too long ago. Seth also believed if she came forward, that she would be “eviscerated” because she had willingly gone to Ghomeshi’s house, drank and smoked marijuana with him, and had a sexual past. She had decided to not see Ghomeshi again, ignoring his calls and messages over the following weeks, and not to involve the police. Seth was moved to come forward with her story after hearing Lucy DeCoutere speaking on CBC’s The Current about her “remarkably similar experience” with Ghomeshi (Khandaker, 2014).
Toronto author and lawyer Reva Seth explained why she didn’t want to go to police. "I hadn't been raped. I had no interest in seeing him again or engaging the police in my life. I just wanted to continue on with my life as it was. And even if I had wanted to do something, as a lawyer, I well aware that the scenario was just a 'he said/she said' situation," she wrote. "I was aware that I, as a woman who had had a drink or two, shared a joint, had gone to his house willingly and had a sexual past, would be eviscerated. Cultural frameworks on this are powerful. Equally important, however, was that it also didn't feel like it was worth my effort" (Boesveld, 2014a).

"I went years without reporting the harassment because I feared for my job and my career ...," Kathryn Borel wrote in an article published Tuesday by theguardian.com. "If I quit, where else was there to go?"...“I blamed myself up until recently," Borel told CBC News in an interview. "I came out publicly talking about this and I had this fear that I wasn't right, that I wasn't trusting my experiences.” She wrote that Ghomeshi said in 2007 he wanted to "hate f--k" her to stop her yawning in a meeting. He also grabbed her from behind once "and claimed he couldn't control himself because of my skirt." "The maddening part is that his celebrity was a creation of the CBC — Canada's folksy, sweater-wearing public broadcaster and one of the most family friendly brands in the nation's history," Borel wrote (CBC News, 2014b).

At work, the former Q employee said the host would usher her into his office and talk about personal matters, leading her to think she was a friend and not just his colleague. But he would also play her off against another young, female producer, she said, treating one nicely and the other very unkindly one week, switching roles the next. She said she and the other employee would take turns crying in the privacy of a nearby disabled
washroom. Then during a script "readthrough" meeting when she kept yawning, Mr. Ghomeshi said quietly, "I want to hate f-k you to wake you up." Later he talked of wanting to "grudge f-k" her. Two years later in 2009, he reached out and groped her bottom as she passed his desk, saying, "I couldn't help myself." The woman said she put up with the unpleasant work environment for almost three years because she did not want to undermine her first real job. (Blackwell, 2014b).

- We still don’t have court-tested “proof,” of course. But what we do have is persuasive. You can hear it in the voice of the woman speaking to CBC host Carol Off, and see it in the small particulars — the texts, the recalled gestures, the details about Big Ears Teddy. It is a stretch to suggest that these women have meticulously plotted to take down the once-star, and further, that Lucy DeCoutere would lend her name and her reputation to the allegations…Various tweets, blogs and articles have come out since Ghomeshi’s termination that claim the radio star was, essentially, hiding in plain sight. An unnerving blog post written by Winnipeg Free Press reporter Melissa Martin, called “Do you know about Jian?” describes how women across the country would exchange warnings “tapped out in texts and Twitter direct messages between old friends, or between kindred spirits newly met” to be careful with Ghomeshi (Urback, 2014)

**Analysis.** Contesting Ghomeshi’s BDSM claim is contesting the mutualizing of the violence and his ultimate attempt at blaming his victims. As was evident in reviewing acts of resistance, there are several clear statements by victims in the above passages that they did not consent, that Ghomeshi did not seek their permission, that they did not discuss BDSM or the use of safe words, and that the victims were startled by the sudden acts of violence by a man who had previously and publically appeared charming. Some victims even contrast their experience
of violence with Ghomeshi against other, consensual experiences in order to show the disparity between two such instances. Here the victims are characterized as educated and employed, which dispels Ghomeshi’s inference that they have a professional advantage to being vengeful, and their independent but corroborative accounts similarly suggest that conspiracy is unlikely.

Though some of these particular language samples situationally display how Ghomeshi anticipated and concealed his victims’ resistance, the linguistic representation honours victim resistance by making the pattern of suppression evident. Exposing this pattern and speaking truth about rape culture in a Canadian context by listing the reasons they decided not to come forward, is a significant means of victims contesting blame and pathology, because it demonstrates how prevalently and systemically such disparagement extends. By illuminating all the reasons victims do not come forward, this language by these victims sets the stage for other complainants to engage in the discourse, and creates common ground for engaging public empathy, as observers are more likely to empathize when they perceive similarity with a victim (Miller et al., 2011, p. 378). Such declarations also aid other victims in assessing their level of safety in reporting, an act that, when recognized, can clarify discrepancies in victim statements over time.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

While several articles were eliminated from analysis due to the indirect nature of their references to the scandal or for a lack of victim/offender language content, it is worth noting that The Ghomeshi Scandal, sometimes called a *CBC* “sex scandal” (Ballingall, 2014), was cited often in connected media stories as the instigator of a national discussion about sexualized violence, the systems and structures that permit it, and the safety and ability for victims to report and seek help. This is especially true of reporting by *The National Post*, which, while mostly eliminated from text analysis as it engaged in cross reporting, provided social commentary on the
thematic relevance of the topic, for example by reporting on issues of consent and the concepts of trial-by-media and the court of public opinion. Several reporters linked Ghomeshi with similar offenders and scandals as was done in the Introduction and Literature Review sections. Though not depicting involvement in the interactions of the scandal itself, this locates Ghomeshi and his victims in the discourse of sexualized violence and rape culture, rather than in the discourse of BDSM or scandals involving sexual indiscretions but not violence.

However, while several articles depicted Jian’s attempt to invoke the whore and control the narrative as failed, and Jian himself as “fallen” (Moore, 2015), the fact that the reporting continually repeated the earliest concepts of “consensual violence” demonstrates just how powerful linguistic constructions and early reporting can be in shaping discourse. For example, *The Star*’s reporting, though arguably pro-victim, and in the business of refuting Jian’s statements, maintained consistent linguistic support of his construction of “consensual violence” even if only to say the violence was non-consensual. Even if this was not intended to promote violence, “the continued misrepresentation of violent acts fosters perpetration of those acts.” (Coates et al., 2003, p. 117). The resulting verdict validates this, and that, “…when speakers use language, they help constitute the reality they are trying to represent…” (Duranti as cited in Elrich, 2001, p. 36).

While social media was admittedly not the focus of this research, it is interesting to note the social responses that victims have both initiated and received online both pre and post verdict, and the lack of faith this understandably demonstrates in formal systems to administer justice or even accountability (Salter, 2013, p. 238).

Though both traditional and social media involvement in this scandal may have paved the way for future discussions about sexualized violence in Canada, it is not advisable to consider
the Ghomeshi scandal as a representative case, and in defending his victims, we must also be aware of how many victims remain voiceless because their assailant is not famous.

Likely in honour of publication bans and in the name of victim protection, the victim accounts in all of the news sources were often combined and separated in ways that made individual accounts difficult to ascertain and distinguish from each other, and, sometimes, seemed to produce conflicting details of victim accounts. While this may have provided the advantage of anonymity for the victims, and demonstrated how serial Jian’s patterns were, it risked blending victim accounts into a single story—both corroborating Jian’s single-victim claim and contributing to the silencing and voiceless-ness of victims of sexualized violence—and risked attributing less truthfulness to victim accounts due to media discrepancies.

In discussing violence that occurs in a sexualized context, consent cannot be understood merely as permission or agreement, but must dig deeper to the level of motivation and desire. This can only happen when we use language that permits actions to be exposed in their contexts, and when we create space for accounts of resistance that may not fit into a traditional paradigm of “fighting back.” A media culture that fears litigious responses to victim advocacy is unlikely to advance such a cause. As Ghomeshi claimed his victims consented to his violence, the media might have claimed that with an instigative Facebook statement, Ghomeshi asked for the ensuing onslaught of social and traditional media attention whether framed tentatively or not.

While the methodology of this research was not intended to causally link media coverage to a trial verdict, it is evident that offender responsibility and victim culpability are connected to linguistic representation of accounts in all written forms (Coates & Wade, 2004, p. 5). We must challenge a shift in language on these issues in day-to-day discourse, if we are ever to expect accountability in a judicial context.
Limitations

As previously stated, this analysis responds in part to Coates & Wade’s (2007) call for more research assessing the, “extent to which the four-discursive-operations appear in professional, academic and public discourse…” (p. 521); however, it was not designed to assess the influence and impact of such use.

The initial proposal for data collection outlined that articles would be searched and drawn directly from the news sources’ websites, but functional and resource related issues required slight alterations to the intended approach. The cbc.ca/news website search functionality lacked sophistication and was unreliable and inconsistent in its responsiveness to manual filtering that would ensure the correct date range, media type, and language, so the Google search was applied as an alternative. It was not possible to apply a similar Google protocol to the other three media data sources, as subscription and login requirements acted as firewalls that limited the results available with this approach. The outlined database was accessed in order to avoid further inconsistency in web search capabilities as well as to override subscription fee requirements.

The choices regarding data collection were also influenced by the available time, human, and financial resources of this researcher to ensure the project scope remained manageable. This meant that news data outside of the selected providers, data written in languages other than English, and information that was not available to the public at the time of data collection was not included. It is worth noting that all of the selected news sources are based out of the province of Ontario, which could be useful in representing an essentially provincial story, but may have inadvertently overlooked how the scandal was experienced nation-wide.

The use of keywords, while useful for maintaining manageable scope, could have eliminated relevant data. How metadata was tagged by the Proquest database was unclear as was
demonstrated in the three articles from the *Toronto Star* and *National Post* that were missed in the initial data capture, and was evident in seeing duplicate articles pulled from the same source.

The order of analysis, though intentional, dictated that earlier articles took precedence over later articles which may have been declared redundant as part of the Data Exclusion Protocol (see Appendix), meaning that some news sources were given comparatively limited representation.

Human error was likely a factor in data collection and analyses as the data was manually collected and hand coded, and done so in stages over time. For example, while language was reviewed in context of its articles, in working to make the data coding manageable, the publication of analysis often fragmented stories in an action that could have had a decontextualizing impact. Bias was also a likely factor especially considering the time of writing. Though a full review of the data was completed before the first trial verdict, and though this researcher avoided media consumption of the trial reporting during the results-writing phase, the subjectivity of analysis must be declared.

The choice to prioritize the analysis of Jian’s Facebook statement in this document was not intended to be an expression of support for his attempt to determine the narrative of the scandal, but rather to chronologically display how media outlets chose to corroborate or discredit his version of events. In analyzing language by and regarding both the perpetrator and the victims, a dyad is illuminated between the two, but it is worth noting that language by and regarding other involved parties (i.e. the *CBC*) was often the intended counterpoint.

Given the unique circumstances for media selection and promotion of this story, while it may reveal attitudes and influencing factors regarding rape culture, the scandal can certainly not be considered representative of media treatment of acquaintance rape cases, and is not
generalizable in that regard. Similarly, in the course of substantiating the merit of this study through reviewing the influence of media language on culture, and the influence of cultural language on legal proceedings, I do not purport this study to show a causal connection of how reporting influences trial judgments, though such an endeavor would indeed be of interest and value.

Should future researchers wish to explore this particular matter further, a broader data capture and mathematical analytic process that addresses these limitations may be enlightening. Such strategies may include noting the number of times certain words, quotes, phrases are used or eliminated comparatively across mediums. Similarly a comparative study between reporting on this and other similar scandals, such as those mentioned in the introduction, could illuminate a broader trend in sexualized violence reporting. Ultimately a similar analytic approach to the trial verdicts and transcripts could be useful in determining prospective areas for systemic reform.

Conflicts of interest. While biases have been acknowledged throughout the project, this researcher has no conflict of interest to declare.
References


allegations-made-against-jian-ghomeshi-1.2822962


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Appendix

Data Exclusion Protocol

1. **Incorrect media type**: Includes links to videos, social media feeds, photo reels, or other non-written and/or non-traditional media forms that do not occur in the context of a written article. Also includes public-authored content such as letters to the editor, rather than media-sourced content as intended by the exercise.

2. **Indirect reference**: Includes articles where the Ghomeshi scandal was not the primary story or was only referenced as a related issue. Examples include articles outlining sexual assault reporting trends since the scandal, and business news regarding the CBC’s organizational direction and the “q” rebranding. Such articles may be relevant to the scandal and possibly the trial, and may even hold thematic relevance, but were less likely to yield research question relevant information about the specific language used by or to depict offenders and victims in relation to violence, and were ultimately excluded in order to manage project scope.

3. **Repeated data**: Includes quotes by and references to perpetrator and victims that are duplicated from previous report(s) or quoted from news sources already referenced in the data collection. Examples include summative articles of the most popular news stories in 2014 or cross reporting where news outlets re-quote already analysed sources. While the nature of cross reporting is of interest, the analysis of this was deemed out of scope for this project.