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**Women Who Drink:
A Critical Consideration of Press Coverage
1978 - 1998**

By

Susan Ford, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of**

Master of Social Work

**School of Social Work
Carleton University**

Ottawa, Ontario

March 2000

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A Critical Consideration of Press Coverage, 1978-1998**

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT

Articles about women and drinking that appear in the daily press often focus more attention on their socially-constructed role of mother than on their physical or medical needs. This research involves statistical and content analyses of 149 newspaper articles about women and drinking that appeared in seven Canadian daily newspapers at various intervals between 1978 and 1998. The research explores the effect on the tone of the article of a number of variables, including: the sex of the journalist, the sex, race, employment and socio-economic status of the drinker, and the sources. Articles in the 1990s are generally sensationalized, as opposed to the more compassionate coverage of the 1970s. Articles are more likely to be negative than positive, and when the drinker is an Aboriginal woman the article is often patronizing and laden with moral judgement.

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This project represents a dream come true. I dedicate it to Neville, whose unfailing love and support helped me find the self-confidence to pursue my dream; to my children, Alyson and Adrian, who helped me realize that I had a dream; and to the clients and staff of Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre in Ottawa, who showed me the connection between theory and practice.

**WOMEN WHO DRINK:
A CRITICAL CONSIDERATION OF PRESS COVERAGE
1978-1998**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It was a story guaranteed to tug at one's emotional heart-strings: a young girl, apparently in the habit of playing this 'game' with her mother, climbs onto the back of her mother's car and waits to be driven slowly home. However, this time her mother is drunk, and unaware that her four year-old daughter is there, drives out onto the highway. The girl, wearing no coat, is saved by the driver of the car behind the mother's, who is able to make her understand that she needs to stop. When it's all over, tiny fingerprints left in the dirt on the back of the car remain as silent reminders of this near-tragedy.

I learned from this story, published in the *Ottawa Citizen* on December 8, 1998, that the woman was a single parent; had left two other children alone at the trailer they called home because she needed cigarettes; that her car was dirty; and that she had a male friend who came to drive her away upon her release from jail (she was charged with impaired driving). Buried at the end of the story is a quote from the woman's landlord, which put the situation into context for me: "She is a poor soul who does the best she can without barely anything" (Dimmock, 1998).

It is not my intention in this project to minimize in any way the consequences to family members of a parent's drinking - especially when those family members are minor children. On the continuum of families ranging from very nurturing to very troubled, families in which a parent drinks can be said to be closer to the 'very troubled' end (Satir, 1988). However, it appeared to me that the woman as person had all but disappeared

from the story, subsumed in her social status as mother. I wondered, had the drinker been a man, would the focus of the story been on his social status as a father? How was gender influencing the reporting of the story - the gender of the journalist, the gender of the drinker? Where was the information that might explain this woman's life - her social condition of single-parenting three young children, whether this was an isolated incident of poor judgement or whether she was a daily drinker, what options were available to help her change her situation? I realize that this would not lessen the consequences to this young girl, but it would perhaps generate compassion for the mother rather than harsh judgement. And as I pondered her situation, with a critical perspective on our structured society and the role of the media in maintaining those structures, I realized that this story was reported in a manner designed to tug at my emotional heart-strings - in effect, to generate blame rather than compassion. I wondered: is this the way women who drink are typically portrayed in the daily press?

From Girl to Woman

This project has its roots in a long-standing interest in the social conditions of women and the ways in which we cope as our girlhood dreams of romantic love and the lifelong support of a caring husband are transformed into the (sometimes) disillusion of adult reality. While there are certainly exceptions, the majority of us are socialized to be 'good' girls, quiet and submissive. We learn to take second place to our brothers, whose needs we come to understand are deemed more important than ours. Those of us who pursue a career are encouraged to choose something considered 'appropriate' for a

woman, like teaching, nursing or secretarial work (Johnson, 1982:95) - something to fill in the time while we wait for the 'right' man to come along [aptly described by Adrienne Rich as 'compulsory heterosexuality'] (Martindale, 1995:67). We learn that when this man comes along - rarely is it an if - it will be up to us to create and keep a happy home for him and our children because that's what women do. Despite advances made by the women's movement, the messages of our culture still operate to keep women from discovering our power and from reaching our full potential.

From Dream to Disillusion

For too many women, this romantic childhood dream turns into a depressing disillusion, if not a nightmare. A woman soon learns what those childhood messages really mean, as she arrives home exhausted from her low-paying job to face another, unpaid, shift at home (Hamilton, 1996:49). For some, the nightmare begins early in the form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, and many of these women, having had their self-esteem effectively destroyed in childhood, end up in relationships which continue the abuse (Duffy, 1995:157-159). Others do not identify with the ubiquitous message of heterosexual happiness and feel misunderstood and unheard all their lives (Smith, 1983). At the same time, powerful, profitable drug companies spend billions of dollars telling us that there is a medication for every kind of pain we might experience. This message is directed particularly toward women and the doctors who treat them. Even when men and women present the same symptoms to their physician, women are prescribed tranquillizers far more frequently than men are; a Saskatchewan study found that the rate was as much

as eight times higher (Armstrong, 1995:298). Since chlordiazepoxide (librium) and diazepam (Valium) were first introduced in the 1960s, women have consistently been prescribed these medications at a rate twice that of men. It has been argued that there are two reasons why women are more likely to be given these drugs: it helps them to cope with a life that would otherwise be intolerable, and allows them to continue their caring function of family members (Doyal, 1995: 182-186). Many women find that although these drugs may make it easier to face their daily routine, nothing really changes. And some women discover that the medications themselves add to their list of problems, yet they may find they have difficulty coping without them.

Some women turn to alcohol to medicate their pain, sometimes adding the alcohol to an already potent mix of prescription drugs. Eventually they may also become physically dependent on the alcohol. By the time a woman has reached this point, many areas of her life are in turmoil. Her health is probably poor, and she may suffer from gastrointestinal bleeding, ulcers, or a fatty liver. She may have frequent infections, particularly of the respiratory tract, as the alcohol takes its toll on her white blood cells. She may be exhausted, trying to keep up her responsibilities inside and outside the home while being unable to get a good night's sleep, another consequence of chronic alcohol use. She may have problems associated with her reproductive system, and perhaps have had a miscarriage (Kinney and Leaton, 1978:77-88). She may also be cross- addicted to a prescription or a non-prescription drug (Addictions Research Foundation, 1996:30). In addition to her physical problems, other areas of her life are no doubt negatively affected

by this time, often to the point of crisis: family relationships, finances, relationships at work.

Women's lives are not only negatively affected by their own drinking, but also by the drinking of others in their lives (Statistics Canada, 1993:5-6; Bepko, 1986:64-65). Men who drink alcohol to excess are more likely to commit a physical assault than men who do not drink or who drink very little. A study conducted by Scott et al. found the rate to be twice as high (1999). The 1993 Statistics Canada Violence Against Women Survey, which involved 12,300 women over the age of 18, reported that in over 40% of violent incidents against women, the attackers had been drinking. Alcohol's role in wife assault was even more pronounced: women currently living with men who drank at least four times per week were three times more likely to be assaulted than women living with men who did not drink. The rate of assault for women living with men who drank heavily (five or more drinks at one time) was six times as high (Statistics Canada, 1993:5-6).

Women who have grown up in alcoholic families are at risk of developing their own problems with alcohol; one women's treatment program found that their clients who grew up in such families were more likely to have a chemically dependent partner, and to be involved in a violent relationship, than their clients who did not come from families where alcohol was abused (Finkelstein, 1996:31). The link has been made between women's experience of violence in their lives, whether as children or as adults, and their subsequent development of alcoholism (Lightfoot et al., 1996:199; Forth-Finegan, 1991:25; Adrian and Kellner, 1996:xi; Miller, Downs and Gondoli, 1989:95).

Research findings from the past two decades indicate that many chemically dependent women are also survivors of childhood sexual abuse, inflicted by a male within or outside of the family (Simmons, Sack and Miller, 1996:17). Women who have been sexually abused in childhood are also high users of psychotropic drugs - prescribed and over-the-counter - such as tranquillizers and sleeping pills (Tabisz et al, 1996:153). However, women are more likely to seek help for the consequences of abuse, such as depression or alcoholism, rather than for the abuse itself (Simmons, Sack and Miller, 1996:18). Rather than address the root cause of women's distress, clinicians are more likely to prescribe chemicals, thus revictimizing them with inappropriate treatment (Tabisz et al, 1996:154).

The ideal woman as portrayed in the media is thin; the lead character on the current popular television show "Ally McBeal" is a prime example. A woman's view of her body has been linked with substance use. Bulimic women and women dependent on alcohol share many characteristics, including depression, anxiety, incidence of sexual violence in childhood and low self-esteem (Addictions Research Foundation, 1996:17).

Stereotypes and Labelling

As with virtually every other aspect of women's experience, the white middle- or upper-class woman is judged less harshly than women who may be doubly or triply discriminated against, marginalized in a society marked by ableism, heterosexism, class-bias, racism and white privilege (Morgan, 1998:107). For example, the dominant representation of woman as 'the good mother' - the one who cares for her children full-

time - has been reserved for white women of privilege. Economic necessity forced marginalized women into the paid labour force - usually as low-paid service and factory workers. Racist and discriminatory employment and compensation practices meant that they were denied the 'luxury' of being able to be 'good mothers' as defined by the dominant majority (Hamilton, 1996:165, 198). The idea of what constitutes 'proper' family life - one with mother at its centre - has been institutionalized through the school system since the early 1920s, following the efforts of British middle class women with working class immigrant women in Toronto. Alarmed by a growing number of hungry and ill-clad children in the wake of a serious depression in the city, they tried to enforce their standards on other women who had no choice but to seek paid work outside the home (Ng, 1991:19).

Societal concern with substance abuse, and the legislation adopted that pertains to it, has its roots in racial hostility and political expedience (Solomon and Usprich, 1991). In Canada, an amendment to the Indian Act in 1880 prohibited Natives from possessing alcohol. Possession of alcohol thus became a punishable offence on the basis of race. However, the concept of 'race' was fluid in terms of the needs of a capitalist economy and those who upheld that economy. Natives were "allowed" to sign away their status rights and be exempt from the legislation (Maracle, 1993:3). Natives learned from observing how whites were treated that extreme drunkenness seemed to excuse irresponsible behaviour. But when it came to their own drunkenness, a double standard prevailed (Ferguson, 1997:111-112). The adoption of the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act in 1920, under which 'aliens' convicted of drug trafficking could be deported, had more to do with

racial hostility toward the Chinese who had been brought into the country to build the railroad than with public concern about drug use (Cook, 1969:39-42).

Racist stereotypes regarding the overuse of alcohol and drugs persist. The 1991 Addictions Research Foundation (ARF) Video “Drugs in Black and White” demonstrates this in its discussion of how the media portrays drug and alcohol use in two neighbourhoods in Atlanta, Georgia - the predominantly-white, affluent Cobb County and one in the inner city, which is all black. Despite surveys that showed white youth in Cobb County used higher amounts of alcohol and cannabis than black youth, and double the amount of cocaine, media reports focussed on blacks being arrested at crack houses at gunpoint.

As ugly as are the racist stereotypes linking substance abuse with race, some of our society’s harshest criticism is reserved for the women within these cultures. Following a description of the demographics and social conditions of Canada’s indigenous population, Scott notes: “Within this context - which both contributes to addiction and is exacerbated by it - stands ‘citizen minus’: the indigenous woman” (1996:130). In 1989, Minnie Sutherland, a visually-impaired Cree woman who had been hit by a car, was dragged to the side of the road and left there by two members of the Hull police force, who assumed that the reason she was staggering in the middle of the road early on New Year’s Day was because she was drunk. Sutherland died ten days later in hospital (Ip, 1989).

Research Question

In a review of the literature on the psychopathology of alcoholism published in 1957, Edith Lisansky found that the research published to that date contained many inferences about female alcoholics drawn from studies conducted mainly with male alcoholics. Those inferences included: women alcoholics are much more abnormal than their male counterparts; women who drink show greater personality disorganization; women who drink are poorly adjusted to their social milieu; women are more difficult to treat; and women who drink are sexually promiscuous (Lisansky, 1957).

Lisansky disputed these conclusions, using a woman-centred approach to demonstrate the ways in which women's experience with alcohol differed from that of men's. Our knowledge of women's alcohol abuse has increased since Lisansky's study was first published. It is now recognized that there are significant differences in the patterns of men's and women's history of substance abuse and how this manifests itself (Lightfoot et al, 1995:187; Lundy, 1991; Bepko, 1986; Johnson, 1982). Yet women with drinking problems continue to be treated and described in ways that recall the myths and stereotypes dispelled by Lisansky in 1957. The tragic story of Minnie Sutherland, noted earlier, is one example, as is the story published in the *Ottawa Citizen* in December 1998.

The news media, part of what Dorothy Smith calls the 'relations of ruling', play an important role in our daily lives, simultaneously shaping our thinking as they reflect it. Smith notes that it is through various texts, including the daily press, that we receive images of how our homes and our lives should look, even how we should think (1990b:6). During the debates in the House of Commons in 1920 concerning proposed anti-drug

legislation, Mackenzie King relied heavily on newspaper clippings, which sensationalized and racialized the opium-trafficking 'dope fiend' (Cook, 1969:40). It has been argued that all news disseminated by the various media is essentially a "masculine narrative" in which women seldom have a role as speaking subjects (Rakow and Kranich, 1991).

My research question is: *How has women's alcohol use/overuse been reported in the print media over the past 20 years?*

A Feminist Approach to the Topic

A feminist approach to research begins with an understanding of the importance of gender, and the intersecting social relations of class, race and ability, in how a woman experiences her world. Feminism involves not only observing injustice within a theoretical context, it also involves a commitment to act to end oppression of all marginalized groups in society. The term 'oppression', however, captures neither the entirety of a woman's life, nor the range of possible solutions to the inequality she faces (Sherman, 1998:2-3).

As Sherman notes:

[Oppression] speaks only negatively about removing barriers. It reduces our view of the people who are oppressed to the circumstances of their oppression ... and excludes other important dimensions of their lives. ... The positive aspects of other ways of being may be overlooked when we focus only on the facts of oppression. The direction I want to be moving in is one that goes beyond the removal of barriers to consider also how to facilitate the development of empowering political and health care systems (1998:3-4).

The addictions treatment field is dominated by an androcentric medical model of care, which has traditionally been presented in a positive way by the male physicians who have described and defended it. In the 1960s, however, feminists and others critical of

encroaching medicalization in daily life began to expose how women in particular had not been well served by the model (Mitchinson, 1998:122). This is certainly true for women who have experienced drinking problems, yet there has been relatively little work from a feminist perspective on the issue. Ettorre notes: "... the field has been resistant both theoretically and methodologically to an approach which is sensitive to the needs of women as a social group" (1992:15), although some writers have taken a political approach to women's experiences with alcohol and subsequent treatment needs (Ettorre, 1989, 1986; Bepko, 1986; Schilit and Gomberg, 1987; Beckman, 1984; Babcock and Connor, 1981; Lundy, 1991).

It is thus my objective to add my voice to those of other feminists who seek to influence the field of addictions treatment in ways that will result in more and improved services for women, and perhaps, along the way, to reduce the level of resistance to a woman-centred approach to this topic.

Organization of the Thesis

The focus of the research is to determine how women who drink have been portrayed in the daily press between 1978 and 1998. The results will be analyzed within a political and economic context that reflects the impact on women of right-wing political attacks on the welfare state and the shift to a globalized economy. The political economy incorporates the institutions and relations of social, physical, ideological and cultural systems, as well as what are commonly understood as political and economic systems. Because it includes the formal economy as well as the contribution of households, the

political economy provides a more integrated approach to research (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1996:5).

Chapter 2 is divided into three sections. The first explores the process by which social problems come to be defined as such. With alcohol as its focus, the discussion centres on who defines the problem, whose behaviour is deemed problematic, how this process occurs and who benefits from it. The second section discusses the implications of these socially-constructed definitions of deviant behaviour for women who drink. The third section explores the role of the media in mediating and maintaining cultural messages about social problems, using a critical model of analysis.

In Chapter 3 the topic of women and substance use is explored in more detail. It is also divided into three sections, the first of which explores how deviant drinking has been constructed along gender, class and racial lines. The second section discusses the factors involved in women's use of substances, and proposes that the overuse of alcohol and other substances is considered most problematic for women when it interferes with their socially constructed reproductive roles. The final section discusses intervention methods and how women are served by the dominant medical model.

Chapter 4 describes feminist standpoint theory, the epistemological approach that grounds this research. This chapter also provides a detailed account of the research process as well as the method used to categorize newspaper articles into six general subject areas: drinking and the law (drinking and driving; drinking and women as perpetrators of violence); drinking and street people; drinking and women's issues (mothering, hidden drinking, women's health); drinking and pregnancy; drinking and

rehabilitation; and drinking and other issues (the workplace, the elderly, sports and media personalities, general health). Through a feminist lens, statistical and content analyses are used to analyze articles about women and drinking that appeared in daily newspapers in five Canadian cities (Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver) at various points between 1978 and 1998.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the results of the research and is divided into three sections. It begins with an overview of all articles in the sample, providing statistical and descriptive information on the sample size, length of the articles and their location in the paper; and on how race, socio-economic status and disability of drinkers is reported. The second section presents an analysis of the subject and tone of the articles, the sources cited, and information on women and drinking that is not reported. The concluding section summarizes how women's drinking has been reported over the comparative time period.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 6, noting implications for social work practice.

A Note on Terminology

In exploring the portrayal by the daily press of women who drink, it has been difficult to avoid the use of terms such as 'addiction', 'alcoholism' and 'treatment.' I use them reluctantly, however, since I do not presume to judge what constitutes an addiction, who should be labelled 'alcoholic', or how an addiction should be 'treated'. Preferred, less judgemental phraseology is 'women who use substances,' which incorporates an

understanding of the complex interplay of the social conditions confronting women in an industrialized society (Ettorre, 1994).

However, alcoholism was recognized as a disease by the American Medical Association in 1956, and the underpinning of Alcoholics Anonymous, founded in 1935, is also the medical model (Fox, 1999). It is extremely difficult to discuss this topic without resorting to the medical terminology, which dominates the field.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING ALCOHOL AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Alcohol and how to control or regulate its sale and consumption have been issues of concern for policy makers for over one hundred years. At various times throughout history, especially since the rise of industrial capitalism in the 19th century, different groups in society have sought to raise public awareness of the 'liquor problem', from the Temperance movement of the late 19th century to Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) in the 1980s. This attention, however, has not been directed at the serious health problems that result from the over-consumption of alcohol. Economists and social policy analysts have discussed the social costs of alcohol (Sindelar, 1998; Kenkel, 1998), and addiction researchers have asked questions such as "Is alcoholism caused by heredity or by environment? Is it a cause or a result of mental illness?" (Vaillant, 1995:1). The focus is clearly on the individual moral or behavioural issues associated with so-called 'deviant drinking', yet there has been little critical examination of global social, political and economic forces that may be involved, nor of the gendered and racialized social divisions within a patriarchal capitalist system (Ettorre, 1989:594).

The definition of what constitutes a social problem or deviant behaviour changes over time, independent of the behaviour associated with it: a social problem exists only when it is defined as such (Reinarman, 1988; Figueira-McDonough & Sarri, 1987; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977; Davis, 1975). This process is inherently political; certain people assess other people's behaviour with the aim of having it defined as deviant. Power is a crucial

factor in determining which and whose assessments will be dominant (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998; Morgan, 1981; Schur, 1980:xi). For example, as noted earlier, legislative action against and criminalization of those who used opium in the early 1900s, as well as Aboriginal people who possessed and used alcohol, had more to do with racism and political expediency than with concerns for public health (Solomon and Usprich, 1991). This chapter explores who defines the problem, whose behaviour is deemed problematic, how this process occurs and who benefits from the process. With alcohol as its focus, the discussion will move from a general consideration of theories of social problem definition to an introductory discussion of the implications for women of these definitions of social problems or deviant behaviour.

The subject of women and alcohol and definitions of deviance will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three. Perceptions and reactions to a particular behaviour depend on what is important socially. The same behaviour may be defined and responded to differently, not only by different people but also at different periods in time (Schur, 1984:5; Davis and Anderson, 1983; Becker, 1963:11-14). Consideration of the ways women have been defined as deviant must be undertaken within the context of cultural definitions of femininity, which shape beliefs about how women 'should' act, what women 'should' and 'should not' do, what women need and deserve. Deviant behaviour is that which departs in some way from what is 'normal', and 'normal' is commonly defined through social stereotypes. If a 'normal' woman is therefore supposed to be virtuous, passive and maternal, then any woman who is not seen to have these characteristics is by definition deviant (Pollock, 1995:3-4). This has particular significance for women who

overuse alcohol. Societal norms around drinking are different for men and for women, with greater social stigma and judgement attaching to women (Adrian and Kellner, 1996:xi; Ettorre, 1986:517).

The images and concepts that stereotypically define women in our society are mediated and maintained in a number of ways. Once the image of 'normal' woman becomes dominant, it becomes part of the way that social policy is formulated and implemented, in addition to shaping interactions between and among individuals (Figueira-McDonough and Sarri, 1987:15). The role of the daily press in this process will therefore also be considered in this chapter, for newspapers are integral to mediating and maintaining messages about women. In today's age of instant communication, the mass media have the means and the power not only to identify problems but to determine how such problems are perceived by the reading public. For example, the image of the woman who is the subject of a newspaper article that screams: "Drunk mom's baby froze"¹ is quite different from that of the woman in the article with the headline "White wine, tranquillizers made her life a nightmare"².

Social Structure and the Definition of Social Problems

Over the past century, there have been a number of theories about how social problems come to be defined as such, as well as a number of ways in which social problems have been studied. Early theories of social problems were largely concerned

¹*Montreal Star*, December 8, 1977, A16.

²*Toronto Star*, May 6, 1978, G1.

with criminality and ways in which deviant behaviour departed from institutionalized norms; much of the focus was on activity that broke the law - homosexuality, drug abuse, prostitution and abortion, for example. The individual was considered to be the source of the problem (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998; Davis, 1980:198; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977). This is certainly the case with the issue of drinking and drunkenness. It has long been held - for men, at least - to be an unfortunate fact of life, a “folk crime”, and was considered to be a social problem only in certain circumstances³. Drunkenness has been celebrated in song, poetry and legend - again, by men, about men. The issue of women and alcohol is more complex, however, and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Since the 1970s, the field of social problem theory has been dominated by theories that acknowledge the impact on individual and group behaviour of the way society is structured. Labelling theory was the first of these theories, emerging in the 1950s but gaining popularity in the 1970s. This theory, along with three other perspectives, will be explored here. Critical theory, which also emerged in the 1970s but dates back to work originating in the 1930s, draws on the Marxian view of capitalist society and focuses on the state and the power of the dominant class within the state. The social constructionist perspective focuses on how a social problem becomes defined as such through the activities of certain social groups defined as claims-makers (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:30-31; Kitsuse and Spector, 1977:73-75). The third additional theory to be discussed is Jamrozik and Nocella’s theory of residualist conversion, which argues that

³See Park (1983) for an excellent discussion on the political economy of drink and drinking problems; see Reinerman (1988) for a discussion of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and the social control of alcohol.

social problems are logical, not deviant, by-products when economic, political and social systems are dominated by a small, exclusive group (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:200).

The theory of residualist conversion draws on historical materialism, which describes the social relations of production and reproduction in a capitalist economy:

... how that production is carried out, what social relations exist in order for that production to proceed and how the human labour involved is itself socially reproduced in order to engage in productive activity (Leonard, 1984:27).

Jamrozik and Nocella's theory can therefore be classed with other recent social problem theories which acknowledge the power imbalances in a structured society.

Labelling Theory

The process by which behaviour moves from being characterized as 'normal' to 'deviant' is termed labelling and forms the basis of an approach to the study of deviance that moved the focus away from the 'deviant' individual. Labelling theory entered the debate on social problems in the 1950s and considered the process by which dominant groups in society condemned the behaviour of members of social groups which were lower in the hierarchy of power (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:27-28; Davis and Stasz, 1990:46; Davis, 1980:198; Schur, 1980:3). Labelling theorists argued that:

social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label (Becker, 1963:9)

Labelling theory has been called the “standard-bearer of the social definitional approach ” to the study of deviance (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:60). Proponents of labelling theory argued that institutional norms had to be considered in the context of social meaning and the subtle ways in which stereotypes and public attitudes about behaviour shaped the process (Davis, 1980:210; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:60-61). They rejected the then dominant approach to deviance which differentiated between those who committed deviant acts and those who did not, and argued that individual characteristics could not account for the difference (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:61).

The labelling perspective led to a distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ deviance. ‘Primary’ deviant acts arose from a variety of social, cultural, psychological and physiological factors; ‘secondary’ deviance referred to the socially defined response the social actor made to the fact of her deviance. In this way, a prostitute (engaged in ‘primary’ deviant behaviour) did not define herself as ‘immoral’ until others defined her so (‘secondary’ deviance), through formal or informal control measures (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:27-28; Davis, 1980:206). This raised the issue of the ‘hierarchy of credibility’, in that the meaning of social conduct would vary according to the perspective of the labeller (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:28).

Critics of labelling theory noted that, although insightful and imaginative, this perspective promoted “... a sociology of the segmental, the exotic, and the bizarre...” (Davis, 1980:206) through its reliance on the concept of stigma as the process by which the definition of deviant was created and perpetuated. By stigmatizing persons who engaged in deviant behaviour, social control was maintained. Labelling theory called

deviance a “master status”, both cause and effect of a sequence of personal adjustments. Critics argued that the interactive nature of the stigmatizing process and social control was rarely studied, however (Davis, 1980:207). Women experience social control, through formal and informal social institutions, differently from men. For example, men and women immigrate to Canada under different terms and conditions; the majority of third world women enter either as domestic workers on temporary work permits or as the economic dependent of the head of the household (Ng, 1991:18). Women who go out alone, accept a drink from a man, and who are then assaulted are often considered to have deserved what happens to them. Rape trials still focus on the victim rather than the offender, despite the existence of rape shield laws. Women offenders who are mothers will be treated differently by the court if they are viewed as bad mothers as opposed to good mothers (Pollock, 1995, 4-5).

Critical Theory

Critical theory traces its origins to the 1930s and the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, where scholars such as Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse applied Marxian theories of capitalism to the analysis of social relations within that system. The theory is a critique of the capitalist economic system, arguing that in order to find solutions to social problems, power structures must change (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:29). Feminist critiques of Marx noted that the relations of capital and class alone could not explain women’s oppression in a capitalist system (Hamilton, 1996:17-19). They expanded on critical theory by incorporating a female perspective: that the study of issues pertinent to

women must include a consideration of the ways in which women have been controlled by formal and informal social structures. Pollock notes:

Efforts to control women's reproductive function, leading to incarceration for promiscuity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, are concerns that in the 1980s and 1990s have been reflected in fetal abuse statutes and in the criminalization of maternal drug use (1995:3).

Because of their focus on social structures rather than on the individuals and groups within that structure, critical theorists argue that study of social problems should be conducted at a high level of abstraction. Only in this way could the structural basis of problems be identified (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:29). Morgan argues, however, that this highly abstract analysis prevents the acknowledgement of how the state, through its management of social problems, depoliticizes political questions (1981:21). This is achieved through the processes of bureaucratization, professionalization and individualization. Bureaucratization deflects political demands into those that are considered as social; through the process of individualization, structural issues are narrowed into single ones; bureaucratization then permits the removal of class relations and single problems can be reconstituted as a mass of individuals. Through professionalization, the ability to determine one's own health, safety and welfare is relinquished to the state (Morgan:1981:18-19).

Like feminist researchers, proponents of critical theory dispute the assumption that social research is value-free or value-neutral. The study of social problems is seen as a political act, not because of the way a particular subject is interpreted, but the choice of what to study intrinsically means that certain issues will be brought to public attention,

while others will not (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:30). As noted earlier, women's drinking has also been described in political terms: Gomberg states: "drug and alcohol abuse among women is a political issue, linked to gender roles, power, ambivalence, and hidden angers and fears" (1982:21).

Social Constructionism

The social constructionist perspective on social problems emerged in the 1970s and elaborated on labelling theory. Its theoretical assumption is that social phenomena do not exist separately from the perception and interpretation of the observer. The focus is not on the social condition itself, but on the activities of those who claim that a particular condition constitutes a social problem - 'claims-makers' and their 'claims-making activities' (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:73-96).

Claims-making activities are integral features of social and political life:

... claims-making consists of demanding services, filling out forms, lodging complaints, filing lawsuits, calling press conferences, writing letters of protest, passing resolutions, publishing exposes, placing ads in newspapers, supporting or opposing some governmental practice or policy, setting up picket lines or boycotts ... claims are a common sense category, understood by members of a society and often associated with such terms as demands, complaints, gripes and requests (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:78-79).

Social constructionism acknowledges that the explanations given by claims-makers in support of their claims are not value-free, but are expressed within the framework of a particular morality. In the same manner, those who study social problems must themselves be aware of their values, motives and interests since they are an integral part of the condition they are attempting to explain (Kitsuse and Spector, 1977:93-96).

This theory argues that more powerful groups in society, those with more members, greater influence, more money and better organization, will be more effective in having their claims defined as a social problem than those groups in society that do not (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:143). Spector and Kitsuse hypothesize that the process of making claims has a 'natural history', which they present as a four-stage model. Stage 1 involves a group's attempts to define the existence of a particular condition as offensive, harmful, or undesirable and to stimulate controversy by calling for public or political action. The media plays an important role in the eventual definition of a certain condition as harmful. Stage 2 involves the recognition by an official organization or agency of the legitimacy of the group's claim. In Stage 3, the group re-presents its claim, often expressing dissatisfaction with the way the official organization or agency is handling the complaint. The process concludes with Stage 4, in which the complainant group rejects the official response - sometimes lack of response - and develops activities designed to create alternative, parallel or counter-institutions (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:140-143). The process by which fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) has come to public awareness fits remarkably well into this model, and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

The strength of social constructionism, its focus on the power structures within society, has also been suggested as its weakness:

The weakness lies in its focus on the social actors in social problems and on the processes of their claims-making activities, but relatively little if any attention is given to the causal links of the social problem with the structural arrangements in society (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:31).

In addition, the term 'common sense' has been criticized as a term that defines only the dominant ideology:

... common sense is accretional, and being unthought out it leaves plenty of room for contradictions, myths, guesses and rumours. It is therefore by no means a unified body of knowledge ... The general direction of its movement as such comes from common socio-economic and cultural practices which, in turn, common sense helps to organize (Bannerji, 1995:44-45).

Nevertheless, the constructionist perspective is now widely applied to the study of social relations, not specifically to social problems.

Residualist Conversion

The residualist conversion theory of social problems, like critical theory and the historical materialist perspective, incorporates the power imbalances in a society structured along patriarchal capitalist lines, arguing that social problems are logical by-products of our society's structural and cultural arrangements (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:104). Jamrozik and Nocella define social problems as:

... social conditions arising out of structural and cultural arrangements in society that cause social and economic malfunctioning of those arrangements and that are perceived to be in some way a threat to the established order and power structure. These 'negative conditions' are by-products of the values and goals that a society, especially its dominant power structure, seeks to pursue and maintain: they constitute a logical 'negative residue' of the activities directed at the pursuit of such dominant values, interests and corresponding goals (1998:199-200).

This definition is reminiscent of historical materialism's concept of "involuntary subordinate marginality" which refers to the various social groups who are outside the productive and reproductive activities of a capitalist economy, such as the unemployed,

the disabled and the elderly (Leonard, 1984:181). In varying degrees, these groups are stigmatized in accordance with societal messages that reflect how individuals are defined as gendered, as belonging to a certain class, and how they relate to the reproduction of the social order (Leonard, 1984:181-182). By linking social problems with marginalization, they are thus depoliticized; the conflicts and contradictions that arise out of maintaining order can be kept separate from the relations of production (Morgan, 1981:20).

Residualist conversion argues that four related factors must be incorporated into the study of social problems: first, the dominant values and interests in society, and the way those values and interests are pursued through social structures and cultural means; second, the social 'problem' that is deemed to emerge from these pursuits; third, the methods of intervention used in an attempt to solve, control or mediate the condition; and fourth, the social actors involved in identifying and interpreting the condition, as well as those involved in applying the intervention methods (i.e., social workers and other health professionals) (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:79-80).

It is argued that social problems will be addressed in ways that legitimate the power structure and ensure the continued pursuit of dominant values (Morgan, 1981). Complementary methods are often used, and may include "... new legislation, which is then enforced by the police and the courts; an increase in some regulatory powers and corresponding activities ... or a public campaign through the media" (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:105). This theory thus is relevant to an exploration of the way alcohol has come to be defined as an individual medical problem rather than one of a moral nature. The historical development of this definition has involved powerful medical as well as

nonmedical groups, individuals and organizations, whose moral, political and/or professional interests have been served by this change (Conrad and Schneider, 1992:73). And while it may be argued that the change in definition from a moral weakness to a sickness is a progressive form of medicalization (Morgan, 1998:88), neither the moral nor the medical model address the issues facing women who use alcohol as a coping mechanism.

Relevance of These Theories to the Research

These theories inform my research because the consumption of alcohol in itself is not an illegal activity, yet its consumption is intricately linked to social, cultural, political and economic norms, especially for women. Alcohol plays an important role in a capitalist economy. A capitalist economic system requires that what is produced must be consumed, otherwise there is no profit. Markets are needed to take the always-expanding production to ensure rising consumption. Park has shown how the distribution of alcohol was systematically targeted to the lower and working classes, with the result that drunkenness - once acknowledged as problematic in the upper class - is now more commonly stereotypically associated with these social groups (1983:61-63). Sales of alcohol are not only important to alcohol producers, but also to the government which collects revenue in the form of sales and excise taxes. In the 1992/93 fiscal year, Canadian government revenue from the sale and production of alcohol amounted to \$4.2 billion (ARF, 1997). Modern capitalism relies heavily on advertising as a way to expand markets and increase consumption, and women have been particularly targeted by

advertisers of tobacco and alcohol products (Moog, 1991). Alcohol and tobacco producers have the highest advertising budgets of all producers of consumer goods. The Economist estimated in 1990 that the alcoholic beverage industry spends a billion dollars per year on point-of purchase advertising, consumer novelties and sponsored events (Saffer, 1998:781). The publication Leading National Advertisers reported that in 1994 alcohol producers spent over \$1 billion for advertisements placed in magazines, newspapers, on radio, television and outdoor signs.

An additional strength of these theories of social problem definition is that traditional research using deviance models can fail to capture the strengths and coping skills employed by women, as research with urban adolescent African-American mothers has demonstrated (Swigonski, 1994:391). In different ways each of these four theories argues that the ordered arrangement of basic social relations is taken for granted as part of the natural order and which therefore sets the limits within which social behaviour will occur (Davis and Anderson, 1983:31). In this way they are consistent with feminist perspectives of the study of women's issues.

Women, Deviance and Social Control

It is appropriate to begin this discussion of women, deviance and social control with a reminder that women, of course, are not a homogenous group. As noted earlier, white middle- or upper-class women are arguably subject to less social control than women who are marginalized in our society because they are judged less harshly (Morgan, 1998:107). The first-wave feminists who fought for their rights in the nineteenth century

were, for the most part, white, educated and from the middle and upper classes. It took some time before they were able to hear the voices of feminists of colour, whose viewpoints differed from white feminists in a number of areas. First, feminists of colour noted the failure of white feminists to address the state's racist practices. Second, they disagreed that the family was the site of women's oppression, arguing that the family was often a site of support and resistance for men, women and children of colour. Third, they demonstrated that every issue raised by earlier feminists needed to be re-thought in a way that included all women of colour (Hamilton, 1996:75-76).

Social inequality, existing simultaneously in a number of different spheres, underlies most social problems. In contemporary Western industrialized societies the power of a market economy drives the distribution of resources with the inevitable result of class inequality. Inequality occurs between as well as within classes, and a person who occupies a lower position within a class may nevertheless feel the advantages or disadvantages of the position of that class within the social structure. For example, the wife of a judge or a politician may experience an inferior position in her home, but will enjoy the a higher social position outside her home due to the advantage of her class (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:128-131).

A common theme of the theories of social problem definition noted earlier in this chapter is that definitions of social problems must be justified, reinforced and accepted. The primary purpose is one of social control of less powerful groups by more powerful groups within society.

Women have long been the subjects of control by a patriarchal social system. This system is so historically entrenched it functions as if it were natural, and gives males power over virtually every aspect of females' lives: economic, legal, political, religious, medical, familial and sexual (Seymour, 1998:416). Social control is exerted through informal and formal means. We learn at home that girls do the work that is unpaid and boys do the work that is (or will eventually be) paid. We learn that we must keep our clothes clean while our brothers are given the freedom to romp, perhaps tearing their clothes which we will then be taught how to mend. We learn through formal institutions like school, church and the law that we are second-class citizens in many ways (Pollock, 1995).

Women have traditionally been stereotyped into one of two categories - the Virgin or the Whore, and this dichotomy contributes to a confused reality for many. For example, a woman is either a mother/wife/virtuous woman or an evil/Eve/seductress. Under this categorization, "good" women don't drink or get raped; in addition, the rapist's crime may be viewed as worse than murder because he has stolen her virtue, sometimes valued more than her life (Pollock, 1995:4).

Women as a topic of research were virtually non-existent before the 1960s. Societal attitudes that "ladies don't drink" (Carter, 1997) continue to persist, and this attitude is reflected in the research on alcoholism. As of 1985, there had only been one study that addressed the clinical issues of women and alcoholism from a systemic viewpoint (Bepko, 1986:65). When female deviance was considered, it was explained in terms of her 'innate' inferiority resulting from biological sex differences. Freud described

women as incomplete human beings, lacking a penis and obsessed by their incompleteness (Figueira-McDonough and Sarri, 1987:17). In the 1930s, functionalists such as Kingsley Davis claimed that female deviants such as prostitutes provided a service that was needed to preserve social order (Davis and Stasz, 1990:216).

Schur notes that women's deviance is defined through gender norms. Gender norms can be viewed as a mechanism for the social control of women, and the transgression of any one of them could lead to a woman being labeled deviant. The gender norms which, when transgressed, bring the harshest social criticism of women are the norms around appearance, norms around maternity, and norms around sexuality. This is evident in press coverage of women who drink: more concern is usually paid to the fact that she is - or is about to become - a mother rather than to her own emotional or medical needs. Pregnant women who overuse alcohol are especially targeted, urged to have a 'responsible pregnancy' by abstaining from alcohol in order to avoid producing a baby suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome (Morgan, 1998:95).

The ideological construction of motherhood presents contradictory messages to women. Because it is presented as a highly valued social role for women, women experiencing motherhood for the first time experience not only social approval but also, for the most part, an individual sense of having achieved an important goal. On the other hand, because motherhood is a socially constructed feminine role, it involves several problematic requirements. For example, a mother is expected to subordinate her needs, not only to those of her newborn baby but also to other family members. The contradiction between the ideological demands of motherhood and the physical, social and

spiritual needs of the individual woman is often managed through the denial of individual needs (Leonard, 1984:166).

Schur argues that social control of women is maintained through their stigmatization as women, and that womanhood has the characteristic of 'master status'. Women are first and foremost categorized as women, no matter what situation they are in or action they undertake (Schur, 1984:51-132; Figueira-McDonough and Sarri, 1987:15). While there is no doubt that men have also faced negative social sanctions as a result of their transgression of gender norms (for example, gay men and men who leave their jobs temporarily to care for their children full-time), women are often placed in a 'no-win' situation as a result of the contradictory messages they receive (Schur, 1984:12; Figueira-McDonough and Sarri, 1987:14). For example, bars may offer half-price drinks on "ladies' nights," but the woman who drinks to excess will be judged and stigmatized (Carter, 1997:475). It is through stigmatization that women become socialized into their disadvantaged position, at the same time as they are learning and incorporating the standards to which they will supposedly never measure up (Figueira-McDonough and Sarri, 1987:16). Women are often blamed as being the cause of social problems (e.g., illegitimacy, juvenile delinquency, wife assault, rape) which allows the state to avoid the real issue - the consequences for women of severe power imbalances in society (Davis and Stasz, 1993:226-227).

Women's joint efforts to redress power imbalances have, not surprisingly, consistently been met with resistance and backlash. Women who joined together at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848, demanding suffrage, birth control,

education, marital and property rights reform, were warned that education would make women barren, that independent women would be the cause of moral decay, and that women ought to be careful because, with the shortage of men, they would die alone (Pollock, 1995:10, citing Faludi, 1991). In April 1977, Weekend Magazine proclaimed the woman's movement dead, and featured a large funeral wreath on the cover (Hamilton, 1996:43). The women's movement has been said to 'cause' deviance in women - it causes mental illness and substance abuse; it raises women's expectations to an unrealistic level, leading to frustration and rebellion (Figueira-McDonough and Sarri, 1987; 25). In the 1990s messages of social control are still linked to women's biology: we are reminded about our "biological clock" and how we will 'naturally' mourn motherhood if we do not marry and have children (Pollock, 1995:4); newspaper headlines scream "Alcohol causes nightmarish birth defects".⁴

In an industrial society, one of the prime means of distributing these messages of social control is the mass media. Their role in this process will now be explored, focussing on the daily press.

The Daily Press and Its Portrayal of Social Problems

In 1978, two female researchers involved in the establishment of the Toronto Women's Health Clinic investigated women's health care practices in Canada. They found a number of things that shocked them, including the over-medication of women with mood-altering drugs, high rates of unnecessary surgery, and negligence and trivialization

⁴*Montreal Gazette*, August 18, 1989

of female rape victims by many emergency room doctors. The article they wrote and submitted to the *Globe and Mail*, then Canada's only national newspaper, was rejected because the editors decided that the subject matter was not timely and that women readers would not be able to understand the statistics (Morgan, 1998:83).

This is a perfect example of how women have been silenced by the 'relations of ruling' (Smith, 1990b). The media are part of our social relations of power; they help to shape the way we define and experience our lives. They help to produce the social, political and economic context in which they exist at the same time as they are also themselves the product of that context (Grossberg et al., 1998:xvi; Ashley and Olson, 1998). Through their power to define the 'audience' for a particular message, the media can create identities (Grossberg et al., 1998:205-212). For example, the *Montreal Gazette* did not pay any significant attention to the Mohawk barricade of the road leading to a local golf course until the conflict escalated, some four months after it began; subsequent coverage consistently linked natives and violence (Grenier, 1994).

Because they marginalize challenge, the mass media are an important means of reproducing the dominant ideology. Studies have shown that the majority of sources cited by newspaper journalists are from governments and institutions rather than local sources, supporting the contention that news "... 'reifies' the sociopolitical structure, therefore legitimating it" (Voakes et al, 1996:584). Further, the majority of sources journalists use are male, which results in a lack of critical analysis in stories affecting women (Rakow and Kranich, 1991:18). This is evident in my research sample, in which the voices of women who drink are most definitely in the minority.

A feminist view of the connections among the state, the press and the public would support the critical model of media analysis, which argues that the media constitute an important set of institutions through which elites exercise social control. As Ericson et al. note, "The media elite is not separate from the elites who control many of the government and corporate bureaucracies that are reported on" (1989:5). The critical model is contrasted with the liberal-pluralist model, which views the mass media as institutions through which social change can be formulated and actioned (Bennett and Lawrence, 1995:20-21).

Despite the fact that circulation figures have been steadily declining since 1990, a daily newspaper is still delivered to one out of every two Canadian households. A 1994 poll conducted in eight countries by the American-based Times Mirror Company reported that Canadians are the most likely to regard the newspaper as a good influence, helpful to democracy, and the best source for discovering why events occur (Miller, 1998:10-12). The daily newspaper is part of our 'textual reality', integral to co-ordinating activities among different levels of organizations and within the larger society. Through the use of language, this textual reality is mediated by the 'relations of ruling' built into the text (Smith, 1990:85-88). The way a story is presented by the journalist has the power to shape our perception of that story (Ashley and Olson, 1998:274). This mediated image of society can therefore be significant, bringing to the public's attention events they do not experience directly. Gusfield observed:

... 'social problems' constitute a constant and recurrent source of interest and, in popular culture, a basis for entertainment and even vicarious identification with evil. Crime, delinquency .. alcoholism make up a considerable part of news and

popular drama. These provide much of the imagery with which social problems are perceived and acted upon (1989:434, cited in Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:72).

When women do challenge the accepted social order, the media often attribute their behaviour to an essential personality fault; through this 'blame the victim' tactic, the perceived threat to society is thus contained (Rakow and Kranich, 1991:20-22). The portrayal of pregnant women - especially Aboriginal women - and substance use by the daily press provides a good example of the power of this medium. In the United States, the daily press has whipped up emotions on this issue to the level of 'hysteria.' One syndicated columnist suggested rounding up all drug-using pregnant women and confining them; this, he said, would prevent the emergence of a "bio-underclass". Much of the coverage targeted black women, who were cited as the main culprits behind inner city chaos and a "national crisis in newborn deaths". Yet there was no crisis in infant mortality; the rate was not rising (Faludi, 1991:427-428). Some American states now have legislation which makes it a crime for a pregnant woman to drink or take drugs. In 1996, the South Carolina Supreme Court upheld the State Appeal Court's guilty verdict and ruled that a woman who had taken drugs while pregnant could be prosecuted for child abuse⁵.

The Canadian Newspaper Index, an annual listing of articles appearing in a selection of daily newspapers across the country, first added the subject title "fetal alcohol syndrome" in 1988 (the Index published between 1978 and 1992). Over one-quarter of the articles from the 1980s and 1990s in my sample discuss this issue, and many of them

⁵"Mother charged with murder try in fetal alcohol syndrome case," *Montreal Gazette*, August 17, 1996.

do so in a sensationalized manner. Adjectives such as ‘nightmarish’, ‘deformed’, and ‘horrific’ are not uncommon. (The coverage of FAS in my research sample is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). In Canada, a Reform Party Member of Parliament recently sponsored a private member’s bill similar to legislation that exists in some American states, calling for criminal charges to be brought against a pregnant woman who consumes “excess” alcohol or drugs⁶.

In this way, newspapers contribute to, and have the power to create, stereotypes of particular groups. The news media function as a social control agency, simultaneously policing life as well as significantly shaping it (Ericson et al., 1989:21). Stereotypes have been described as “pictures in our heads” (Grossberg et al., 1998:221, citing Walter Lippman, 1922) of the identity of other groups of people. Stereotypes can also be created in the absence of images of a particular group, but more often they involve the way a group is portrayed. Distortions of a group’s image have important consequences for the members of that group; the self-esteem of the stereotyped group can be affected, and the way other social groups think of and behave towards members of the group are influenced (Grossberg et al., 1998:220-224; Maracle, 1993:8). For instance, many Canadians identify alcohol with native people, in part due to the kinds of stories that attract media attention. Maracle notes that, given these limited images of native people, the stereotype of “the drunken Indian” is perhaps not surprising but it exacts a high price:

At the very least, the stereotype makes native people feel angry, defensive, ashamed or resigned - even if they don't drink. More importantly, the stereotype affects the way others think about us. Ultimately, public attitudes about “drunken

⁶“MP attempting to protect unborn,” *Vancouver Sun*, March 7, 1997.

Indians" affect government policies about all Indians and all native people
(1993:8)

One school of thought on how the media construct social identities is the essentialist view, which holds that each category (Black, Asian, White, Men, Women, etc) exists naturally in and of itself. To the essentialist, the role of the media is to portray the various identities accurately, avoiding stereotypes. The anti-essentialist view argues that social identities cannot be separated into distinct categories, but that they are culturally constructed. The anti-essentialist theory recognizes that there are differences between people, but that the communicative codes of a society determine which differences become important and visible (Grossberg et al., 1998:205-234).

Grenier posits four different theses to account for the negative portrayal in the press of certain social groups. The first, the audience thesis, argues that news is published on the basis of what consumers, or the audience, want to know, and that this news is impartial. The thesis argues further that the portrayal of a particular event or group is a true reflection of the event and is not a product of processes or operations internal to that medium. As Grenier notes, this thesis is problematic in that it ignores the activities of the medium itself on consumer interest (e.g., the decision to publish a certain number of articles and editorials) (1994:326-327). The second thesis is the activity thesis, which states that the primary factor determining the pattern of news coverage is the activity itself rather than consumer interest. Again, Grenier argues, this thesis ignores the interests of the newspaper, placing the focus instead on those whose activities are being covered (1994:328-329). The organizational thesis, which Grenier notes has some legitimacy,

argues that forces and interests within a particular newspaper organization determine the production and nature of news coverage. This thesis recognizes the role of editors and journalists in selecting and interpreting events in a way that can be understood by consumers, and also acknowledges that the process is determined to a large extent by internal organizational factors such as personnel availability and hierarchical priorities and demands (1994:330).

The fourth thesis recognizes that newspapers are primarily business enterprises and, as such, are connected to the variety of forces that drive a capitalist economy. The power structure thesis proposes that, as a business, newspapers must ensure that they develop, maintain and create, if necessary, the markets for their product. Most of a newspaper's revenue derives not from consumer subscription rates but from advertising. Advertisers pay for space not "... out of some deep concern to help newspapers survive as businesses or out of perhaps a deeper social concern with the democratic functions of newspapers in modern society" (Grenier, 1994:332) but to attract consumers for their products. The fact that a newspaper is a business enterprise also means that it must use, refine and develop marketing techniques to ensure that its product will continue to be purchased by the consuming public. Grenier notes: "It is well known that one selling technique traditionally employed by newspapers ... is the sensationalization of information" (1994:333). This is particularly relevant to the way women who drink have been portrayed in the press. Articles about women involved in activities in which they are a statistical minority in society (eg women as perpetrators of violence; women who drink and drive) more often have a sensational tone.

The staff of most daily newspapers is typically white and male; it is not even possible to conduct a statistically valid poll of Canadian journalists of colour because there are too few of them (Miller, 1998:34). However, a poll conducted by the largest organization of minority journalists in the United States, the National Association of Black Journalists, surveyed its members in 1995; 67 percent said that their newsroom managers were not committed to retaining or promoting persons of colour (ibid.). Although slightly under one-third of journalists are women, a 1993 Ryerson study found that women journalists have a much poorer chance of getting their stories onto their newspaper's front page, a traditional indicator of who is covering the topics considered most important (Miller, 1998:135). In the 20 years between 1974 and 1994, the number of women journalists employed by Canadian daily newspapers increased only seven percentage points, to 28% from 21% (Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1997:4).

Not surprisingly, this lack of diversity in the newsroom translates into coverage that is less than balanced. Miller cites a 1995 study conducted by sociologist Fleras:

Generally speaking, aboriginal and racial minorities exemplify a 'social problem' as far as the media are concerned. They are described in the context of having problems in need of solutions that expend an inordinate amount of political attention or a disproportionate slice of national resources ... The cumulative effect of constant negative messages may be to marginalize minorities as irrelevant or as a threat to society (Miller, 1998:137).

Such stereotypical treatments are not neutral or benign, but perpetuate a devalued status for marginalized groups, which becomes self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating (Davis and Stasz, 1990:239). Newspapers have been identified as one of the most important sources of information for most citizens on ethnic affairs. Stereotypical coverage thus has

the power to prevent minority groups from becoming fully accepted members of Canadian society; it strengthens prejudice and can impede the development of public policy initiatives designed to promote tolerance (Miller, 1998:138).

The way society's marginalized groups are represented in the media is the result of a complex interactive system of messages; an evaluation of their representation cannot be separated from other social roles and practices (Grossberg et al., 1998:233). As noted earlier, Smith has described the media as part of society's 'relations of ruling' (1990b:6). This phrase is particularly appropriate when one considers the ownership of the daily press in Canada, which will conclude this chapter.

Ownership of Canada's Daily Press

It was noted above that in an international poll conducted in 1994, Canadians were the most likely to state that they regarded the newspaper as a good influence, helpful to democracy, and the best source for discovering why events occur (Miller, 1998:10-12). However, their opinion of newspapers' actual performance was not as positive. Some 60% of Canadians stated that news organizations are not independent because they are influenced by the powerful, that newspaper reporting is not balanced, and that newspapers cannot be relied upon to get the facts straight (ibid.).

It is certainly true that Canadian newspapers are influenced by the powerful; a 1991 study of the content of six Canadian daily newspapers showed that between 87 and 96 percent of the stories reported public events staged for the media by "... powerful politicians, financiers, economists, lawyers and pressure groups" (Miller, 1998:51).

Hollinger International, Inc., with half of its common shares owned by Conrad Black, owns 58 of Canada's 105 daily newspapers, representing almost half of the total national circulation (Miller, 1998:61). Four of the six newspapers used in this research project (two dailies in Halifax due to technological change) are Hollinger papers: the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Calgary Herald*, the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Halifax Daily News*. Of the six newspapers, only the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, independently owned by the Dennis family in Halifax - and one of only 9 independent daily newspapers in Canada - is not part of a chain ownership (Miller, 1998:83). It is interesting to note that Canadian NewsDisc, the CD-ROM newspaper research database available since 1994, does not include the independent *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* but makes Hollinger's *Halifax Daily News* available.

Conrad Black is proudly right-wing and, since his takeover of the Southam newspaper chain in 1996, has shown that he is prepared to use his position as a newspaper owner to publicize his own views on politics, economics and society in general. Many of the columnists hired by Hollinger papers since 1996 have a decidedly conservative approach, and editors have less editorial freedom than they had under Southam ownership (Miller, 1998:60-85).

...Black is a man of decided views and immense power, and he had already signalled his desire to righten the editorial policies of the Ottawa Citizen and Montreal Gazette. If you think defiance might cost you your job, you tend to go along. As the Windsor Star's Jim Bruce told me: "If you want to be gainfully employed, you play the game. And if someone decides that a certain column deserves to be put on the Southam wire, you run it" (Miller, 1998, 72).

Miller notes that, more than any other news media, newspapers decide what the public will know (1998:114). They are the window through which we view our society. What newspapers do not report can be just as significant as what they do report, however, and on the subject of women and drinking, there is much that is not reported. This will be explored in a later chapter, following a closer examination of issues related to women, alcohol and social control.

Chapter 3

WOMEN AND ALCOHOL

There's nothing wrong with women drinking pints [of beer], but it's unladylike. Pints make women fat and ugly. (Montreal Star, June 2, 1977)

Something that forces women to be alcoholics has to do with feminism. (Calgary Herald, June 24, 1978)

It is such a shameful thing for a woman to be addicted to alcohol. People hate to see a drunk, but a female drunk ... (Toronto Star, March 18, 1989)

A pregnant woman who consumes excess alcohol, drugs or any other substance should be charged criminally for endangering her fetus, according to a private member's bill introduced in Parliament (Vancouver Sun, March 7, 1997)

This chapter will explore in more detail a topic raised in the previous chapter, women, alcohol and the social construction of deviant behaviour. It is divided into three sections. The first will briefly explore how deviant drinking has been constructed along gender, class and racial lines. The second section will discuss the factors involved in women's use of substances, and which aspects of this use are considered most problematic. The final section discusses intervention methods and how women are served by the medical model that dominates the addictions treatment field.

Constructing Alcohol Problems: Issues of Gender, Class and Race

Gender

Alcohol is the most commonly used (and abused) psychoactive drug. Its use is so pervasive that many people do not seriously consider ever *not* using it, although overall

alcohol consumption declined from 80% of the population in 1979 to 72% in 1994 (McKenzie and Single, 1996:19). The 1999 Canadian Profile, published by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, reports that nearly 10% of adult Canadians state they have a problem with their drinking (CCSA, 1999).

Drinking has long been associated with male virility. Workers in 18th and 19th century England depended on tavern keepers for employment, since they also acted as employment agencies. Some employers refused to hire workers who did not drink; those who could drink the most were considered to be the best workers (Park: 1983:59).

The same cannot be said about women, however. Somehow we know that women are not included in Gusfield's description of the prevalence of drinking in American life:

Drinking and drunkenness are a part of American life and have been a part of the leisure life of many people in many societies. As a part of social life, of taverns and parties, of solitude and isolation, drinking and drunkenness by no means always, or even usually, creates risks to the drinker or others (1996:43).

Women's relationship with alcohol is more complex and intricately linked to the roles constructed for them in a patriarchal society. Women are expected to be society's stabilizing force, good wives and mothers; women who drink excessively are judged far more harshly than men who are heavy drinkers (Ettorre, 1986:517). Research on alcohol and addiction has therefore focussed on the most 'socially visible' drinkers. Generated by men for men, this research also tends to uphold traditional patriarchal views of men and women in society (Ettorre, 1986:516). This is evident in the way newspapers report women and drinking, explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

Class

As alcohol and problem drinking has been associated with men, so has it also been stereotypically linked to the poor. There is a relationship between income and drinking problems; low-income Canadians are almost 2.5 times as likely as high-income earners to have a drinking problem (17.9% vs 7.9%) (McKenzie and Single, 1997:25). A critical consideration of this relationship between low-income earners and alcohol, however, is required in order to better interpret this statistic.

Alcohol marketers and distributors have a long tradition of targeting the poor as consumers of their product, dating back to the 1700s when landowners in England combined with distillers to convert a huge surplus of grain into gin. At the time, the transportation and communications systems were organized around the taverns. Workers were forced to get their wages from the tavern keeper, who was also the paymaster. He would often keep them waiting until the early hours of the morning, by which time they would owe much of their pay for drink (Park, 1983:62-67).

Taverns and saloons were frequently located where the poor lived, thus ensuring that few of the middle and upper classes would drink there. In 1890 approximately 1,200 saloons existed in the four combined poorest precincts in New York City (Riis, 1890). In one-industry towns the tavern often provided conveniences such as heating and hot water that did not exist in company-owned housing (Robinson, 1902).

The availability of treatment for a drinking problem is another factor to be considered when analyzing this statistic. In 1995, a one-month stay at a treatment centre in Minneapolis, Minnesota, cost US\$10,000. This effectively eliminates access to private

treatment for all but the wealthy. Employed Canadians may be able to get treatment for a substance abuse problem through an employee assistance program (EAP). However, only a minority of workers have access to these programs. EAPs are frequently implemented as a result of negotiations between the union and the employer at unionized workplaces. Only 34% of Canadian workers have union protection (Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997:viii). In addition, few jobs in the retail, fast-food and other parts of the service economy provide stable employment, promotional opportunities or health benefits. Yet this is where the majority of women, workers of colour and immigrants to Canada are employed (Krahn and Lowe, 1993:161). Finally, two decades of government health care funding cuts and cutbacks to social program funding since 1995 have ensured that waiting lists at community health providers are long. Among the changes introduced by Ontario Premier Mike Harris, first elected in 1995 on a platform that promised drastic cuts to social assistance, was the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSPA), part of the Social Assistance Reform Act passed in November 1997. The ODSPA removed eligibility for income support for persons dependent on or addicted to non-prescription drugs or alcohol (Government of Ontario, 1998). Previously, persons seeking treatment for a problem related to substance abuse were entitled to social assistance and rehabilitation in the form of employment re-training.

Park argues that 'problem drinking' is a creature of capitalism and that it is only described as such when it disrupts production (1983:71). Women's privatized, domestic labour - the work of reproduction - helps to sustain the capitalist economy (Hamilton,

1996:19; 1978). It is not surprising, therefore, that a woman's drinking is deemed most problematic when it disrupts her socially-constructed mothering and family responsibilities.

Race

When investigating newspaper articles on women and drinking, it is also important to consider how race is introduced into the discussion. The prevalence of media reporting on drug abuse by African-Americans in the United States was noted earlier. In Canada, it is Aboriginals who are the targets of sensationalized media reporting of substance abuse problems. In this research sample, some two-thirds of articles that describe an Aboriginal drinker do so in a negative manner (see Appendix B for a definition of 'positive' and 'negative').

About 3 percent of the Canadian population is native, just over half (50.9%) of whom are female (Scott, 1996:129). There is no doubt that alcohol, introduced to the natives by invading Europeans, has had a devastating impact on this population. It is estimated that as many as one-third of the adult Indian population in the Yukon and Saskatchewan has a drinking population. Alcohol abuse and its tragic consequences have permeated generations of native people, resulting in the loss of language, religion, pride and dignity. Family values, social patterns and political structures and stewardship over the land have also been lost (Maracle, 1993:8-12). Yet, as Maracle notes:

"... alcohol or alcoholism is not the problem. Neither is it the greatest problem facing native people today. Alcoholism is just a symptom of the fundamental problems facing native people - problems that cannot be solved by half-measures in isolation (1993:2) [emphasis in original]."

Analysis of natives and drinking must be conducted within the context of the social conditions in which this population lives. Many live far away from Canada's major urban centres, on Indian reserves, in Metis communities and Inuit villages. Most of the natives who do live in cities eke out a marginalized existence in poverty, or are homeless (Maracle, 1993:7). They are thus, for all intents and purposes, invisible to mainstream middle-class Canadians, many of whom look to newspapers for information about other cultures (Miller, 1998:138).

Native community unemployment can be as high as 98 percent; over 50 percent of households have no central heating and 40 percent have no indoor bathroom. As many as 70 percent of indigenous respondents to the Census reported education levels of less than high school. In Saskatchewan, alcohol and drug overdose is a common form of suicide for native women; the suicide rate for this population is 14.5 times that for non-native women in Saskatchewan (Scott, 1996:130-132). Despite the prevalence of stereotypes around this population and alcohol, Scott notes that our knowledge of how to empower and help addicted native women is "pathetically limited" (Scott, 1996:142).

Women and Substance Use

How Many Women Drink?

Most of what we know about chemical dependence comes from studies conducted on white males. There has been so little research on women and addiction that it has been described as a "non-field" (Ettorre, 1989:594, citing Kalant, 1980). In the 20-year period between 1952 and 1972, women comprised only 6.2% of the persons studied in 271

treatment programs, and in the period between 1972 and 1980, only 7.8% of those studied were women (Lundy, 1989). It has been noted, however, that women are more likely than men to abstain from drinking, to drink less often than men, to consume fewer drinks at a sitting, and that fewer women are alcoholics (Gomberg, 1986; Adrian and Kellner, 1996; Greaves, 1996:1; McKenzie and Single, 1997). Because women's drinking is more hidden than that of men, it is difficult to determine how many women may be alcoholic (Bepko, 1986:70). Data gathering methods employed in surveys of patterns of use are unsophisticated, making it impossible to make precise statements about consumption (McKenzie, Williams and Single, 1997:4). The 1997 Canadian Profile reports that 66.7% of women over the age of 15 are current drinkers, or 7.9 million women. Of this number, it is estimated that 6.2 percent, or approximately 489,800 women, have a drinking problem.

What little analysis that has been conducted on women and drinking has also been conducted within narrow racial and class boundaries. As Lundy notes:

We know little about drinking among women who are poor, non-white and rural and we know even less about alcohol use among elderly, lesbian or disabled women. The social analysis of alcohol and drug use in women's lives has not yet adequately considered the intersection of gender, class and race, as well as other significant factors (1991:63).

Factors in Women's Use of Alcohol

Feminist research, particularly since the 1960s, has increased our knowledge - although not necessarily unanimous acceptance - of the impact on women who grow up in a patriarchal society rife with racism, sexism, violence and misogynist messages. We

know, to quote the title of Doyal's book, that "what makes women sick" can be linked to their social and economic conditions, and unhealthy drinking is only one of the ways women cope with the stress of their daily lives (Doyal, 1995). Several writers have argued that the study of women's use of alcohol and other substances must be considered within the context of their socialization and social conditions (Addictions Research Foundation, 1996; Adrian and Kellner, 1996; Bepko, 1986; Carter, 1997; Ettorre, 1994, 1989, 1986; Fillmore, 1984; Forth-Finegan, 1991; Gomberg, 1986, 1984; Lundy, 1991; Smith, 1983).

The reality of life for the majority of women is that they have fewer economic and social advantages than men, and certainly far less power. In 1995, 57 per cent of all persons with low income were women (Day and Brodsky, 1998:6). Women's work in the home is unpaid; in addition, most women in the paid workforce occupy jobs over which they have little control and that provide little opportunity for advancement, no job security or benefits (Lundy, 1991) .

In addition, the re-structuring of work resulting from employers' adoption of 'lean and mean' downsizing policies has shifted more work from the workplace to the home. Garment sewing, data entry and even pizza order-taking is increasingly done at home. And in homework, as in the rest of the work force, women are most likely to be in the jobs with least control (Borowy and Johnson, 1995:31). Cutbacks to the Canadian health care system since the early 1980s have resulted in an increase of privatized care at home. Much of this work is performed for minimum wage by immigrant and visible minority women. As with other homeworkers, these workers have little control over their

environment and are often only paid for the actual time they spend doing a particular task (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1996:215).

Women are assumed to have an infinite capacity for mothering and caregiving. Even when they have paid employment, women are still expected to assume the responsibility of domestic work - the cooking, cleaning, childcare and the myriad of other daily chores that keeps a household together (Doyal, 1995: 27-28). Women have also been assigned the role of 'moral guardian,' and are expected to be the stabilizing influence in the family (Ettorre, 1992:37-38). Yet many women whose families constitute their full-time occupation have reported feelings of intense frustration, sadness and worthlessness. American researcher Jessie Bernard has described the 'housewife syndrome', whose symptoms are very real: "... nervousness, fainting, insomnia, trembling hands, nightmares, dizziness, heart palpitations, and other anxiety symptoms"(Doyal, 1995:37).

Lesbian women who have developed problems with alcohol describe how alcohol appeals to a need "... to dilut(e) our alienations, to our need for sexual fulfilment and for taking control of our lives.". Treatment often eludes them as they are uncomfortable with "... the prying questions of physicians we distrust due to their (usual) antagonistic sex, class position and sexuality" (Smith, 1983:131).

Women's lives are not only negatively affected by their own drinking, but also by the drinking of others in their lives (Bepko, 1986:64-65). Sexual assault has been shown to be more violent when the attacker has been drinking (Ullman et al., 1999). As noted earlier, women whose male partners drank regularly were more likely to be assaulted than women living with men who did not drink (Statistics Canada, 1993:5-6). Women are

more likely than men to drink heavily in response to psychological stress, and for women stress is very often linked to relationships (Ettorre, 1992:36).

The link has been made between women's experience of violence in their lives and their subsequent development of alcoholism (Lightfoot et al., 1996:199; Forth-Finegan, 1991:25; Adrian and Kellner, 1996:xi; Miller, Downs and Gondoli, 1989:95). Women who are living in a violent relationship often use drugs as a way to cope (Tabisz et al, 1996:154). Research findings from the past two decades indicate that many chemically dependent women are survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Tabisz et al, 1996:153). Studies of male perpetrators and female victims of sexual abuse show that alcohol involvement ranged from 30 to 50 percent of cases. Different reasons for this link between sexual abuse and female chemical dependency have been offered: perhaps they associate sexual contact with alcohol use, and so use alcohol to make themselves more comfortable. If the abuser provided the only source of close emotional contact, alcohol may become associated with nurturance, and women may use it to meet their own needs for nurturing.

Alcohol and other drugs may help the survivor to feel she is in control of her world, and to cope with flashbacks. In time, however, dependence on chemicals creates its own problems, worsening already existing conditions such as low self-esteem or depression. However, women are more likely to seek help for the consequences of sexual abuse, such as depression or alcoholism, rather than for the abuse itself (Simmons, Sack and Miller, 1996:18-21). Rather than address the root cause of women's distress, clinicians are more likely to prescribe chemicals, thus revictimizing them with

inappropriate treatment and continuing the silence that surrounds the issue of childhood sexual abuse (Tabisz et al, 1996:154).

Alcohol's Role in Maintaining Traditional Social Relations

Research on women and addiction has identified feelings that are common to the experience of many women: feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and worthlessness. Women live in a world in which they are defined as less powerful and less worthwhile than men, while social messages directed at men tell them they will lose their power if they identify with women (Bepko, 1986:68). Bepko argues that alcohol has a role, which she defines as 'functional utility', in maintaining traditional social relations. Because it is a psychoactive drug that shifts self-awareness, alcohol can 'correct' an individual's perception of self. Traditionally, women in our society are taught to be over-responsible, yet are accorded little power and authority. When her male partner drinks, she has no choice but to assume more power and authority, and he becomes more dependent upon her. When she is the one with the drinking problem, the alcohol gives her an excuse to express anger or outright rebellion against her lesser societal status, while he takes over some of the 'feminine' care-taking duties. In this way, the alcohol allows the heterosexual couple to maintain the sex role status quo (Bepko, 1986:68-72).

Women's socialization of over-responsibility has been pathologized as a medical condition: codependency. Some of the characteristics deemed to denote the condition are: "... think and feel responsible for other people ...; feel anxiety, pity, and guilt when other people have a problem; try to please others instead of themselves; feel safest when giving;

feel harried and pressured ..." (Beattie, 1987:37). Feminist researchers have noted that while a disease concept of dependency has helped those dependent on substances by reducing their level of guilt, it has had a reverse effect on spouses and on wives especially,

... imposing a stigma far more encompassing than the vicarious one and exacerbating guilt for them. In so doing, the term codependent rightly belongs in the class of semantic labels defined ... as 'symbols of the stigmatization.' (Harper and Capdevila, 1995:47)

While oppression is an important feature of a group's experience, it does not determine what that experience will be. Oppression restricts options, but the possibility of resistance usually remains (Sherwin, 1998:3; Chodorow and Contratto, 1982:69).

Alcohol is one of the ways women resist their oppression. It helps - temporarily, at least - to deaden painful feelings, to mask feelings of loneliness and isolation and to provide a sense of power, confidence and being in control. However, as noted earlier, when used long enough and in sufficient quantities - which vary according to each individual - alcohol dependence exacerbates the problems women may experience in their daily lives, through the creation of its own problems.

While alcohol may be seen as a way women self-medicate to cope with the reality of their lives, women have also been medicated on a systematic basis by an androcentric medical profession. This form of medication, however, has an entirely different public perception.

“Good” Dependent vs. “Bad” Dependent

One of the fundamental arguments of feminism is that women, more than men, are socialized to be dependent. Ettorre describes two faces of dependency: acceptable and unacceptable, and argues that an analysis of women and substance abuse needs to consider both (1989:596). Patriarchy and the dependency of females go hand in hand, as women are socialized to be, first, dutiful daughters and, later, obedient wives. This kind of dependency is not only acceptable, but a prescribed social norm (Ettorre, 1994:89-90). Broverman’s classic 1970 study of the attitudes of health professionals towards women provides evidence of how strong this norm is. The clinicians in the study equated healthy adult behaviour with that of the healthy adult male; healthy adult female behaviour was described as “... submissive, childlike, excitable and dependent.” (Carter, 1997:479). Within this context, women are considered to be sicker than men.

Through their care-giving role in the family, women are also the ones who purchase the drugs family members require, a role which has gone largely unnoted in the literature. This role has not gone unnoticed by pharmaceutical companies, however, who through their advertising campaigns often exploit women’s wish to take the best care of their families (McDonnell, 1986:3). Yet women and their physicians have also been the targets of pharmaceutical campaigns directed at women’s reproductive system; the result has been a range of hormonally based drugs used exclusively by women, many of which have been proven unsafe (e.g., thalidomide and diethyl stilboestrol [DES]) (McDonnell, 1986:4).

The male-dominated medical model has had some trouble understanding the cyclical nature of women's bodies, feminist researchers have argued, perhaps because male body patterns are, for the most part, homeostatic. The result has been the creation of a range of "female disorders" that are in reality the natural way a woman's body was designed to function.

Thus we have seen a male "norm" applied to the female system. And so the cyclic and fluctuating nature of women's bodies has come to be considered in some way in need of correction. ... Changes in mood that flow with our menstrual cycles (today called 'premenstrual tension') could be seen as normal, but instead have come to be regarded as "sick" and needing to be fixed (Ford, 1985:35).

Since it was first introduced in the 1960s, the psychotropic drug benzodiazepine (brand names include Librium, Valium, Ativan and Xanax) has consistently been prescribed to women at a rate that is twice that prescribed to men. It has been argued that these drugs are used more for social control than for medical necessity, and often prescribed to groups with relatively little power in society - women, the elderly and the poor. The fact that it is women who use these drugs more than men is not seen as a problem, however, despite the fact that these drugs help to keep a woman in a situation that may be damaging to her health (Ettorre and Riska, 1995:24-25; Doyal, 1995:183). This is the "good" dependence.

On the other hand, a woman who may self-medicate - either with alcohol or other mood-altering substances - is dependent in a "bad" way. Because her actions may destabilize her family, she therefore constitutes a threat to the established order. Women are not only expected to be in control of their own actions at all times, but in certain social

situations are expected to control their male partner's drinking as well (Ettorre, 1992:38).

Ettorre continues:

A woman alcoholic is seen to be in private a bad mother, uncaring for her children ... In public she is viewed as unforgivably out of control of her domestic and/or work situation or as an evil or loose woman who cannot be trusted (1992:39).

Drinking and Motherhood

As the newspaper article cited in Chapter 1 indicates, a woman's individual identity is often subsumed in her social identity of 'mother'. And it is when women are mothers, or about to become mothers, that their drinking is deemed most problematic and when interventions are most frequently made by institutions such as child welfare agencies.

Since the advent of capitalism, and the possibility of wealth from accumulated surplus production, men have wanted the assurance that their children were indeed their legitimate heirs. This was achieved, feminists have argued, through the control of reproduction and motherhood (Hamilton, 1996:17; O'Brien, 1981:8). As Swift notes, "Mothering is the 'means' for producing particular kinds of future adults needed by society's economic arrangements" (1995:120).

Motherhood has been socially constructed as normal, natural and the ideal for all women. North American ideas about motherhood and mothering are standardized in terms of white, middle-class heterosexuality with the biological mother as the most appropriate parent to provide constant care and attention to her children (Baker and Carson, 1999:348). These ideas have entered our everyday language in phrases that describe things in ways that are positive and natural: a 'motherhood' statement is one that

is self-evident, hardly needing argument or discussion; 'as American as Mom and apple pie' is another example. Mothers are expected to put aside their needs and wants for those of their children, no matter what social circumstances in which they may find themselves (Swift, 1995:111; Chodorow and Contratto, 1980:67).

Motherhood has also evolved as a legal institution, with the concepts of 'good' and 'bad' enshrined in various pieces of legislation. Yet the boundaries of what constitutes appropriate mothering have been criticized as demanding, conflicting and unattainable (Baker and Carson, 1999:348). A mother who finds that the responsibility of raising her children alone, in poverty, is just too much will find that she has few options. She cannot abandon her post, either figuratively, through the consumption of substances that temporarily ease her feelings of distress, or literally. She will be accused of neglect, characterized as someone who has failed at her duties. Her children may be taken from her. As Swift states:

We fear her taste of freedom, for she might find that life has other opportunities for her. Unlike her husband, who has long since deserted his post, pressure will be brought to bear in hopes of bringing her back to the tasks of caring (1995:117).

Substance-abusing mothers are foremost among those who have been labelled as unfit and targeted for disapproval. It is assumed that any use of substances makes mothers self-indulgent and negligent (Baker and Carson, 1999:348-349). Yet little has been written from the perspective of mothers who abuse substances. Baker and Carson's study of 17 substance-abusing mothers in a residential treatment centre has shown that the mothers understood the negative impact of their substance use on their children, yet they

did not necessarily consider themselves as bad mothers. Substance use, they said, helped them to deal with stressful situations calmly and to be better mothers. They described themselves as failing in their role as a socially acceptable mother when they put their children in danger, when they were unavailable for them and when they lacked control over them. They contended they were good mothers, however, when they took care of their children's practical needs, protected them from harm, and coped with everyday stress without losing their temper (Baker and Carson, 1999).

The control of motherhood begins when a woman is pregnant, and pregnant women who drink have come under particular attack from many segments of society - the media, the medical profession, legislators, family members, even strangers - who have no compunction in judging and criticizing their behaviour with respect to alcohol use (Morgan, 1998:95). In North America, the attack has taken the form of increasingly sensationalized media stories about fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and legislation that criminalizes women who allegedly endanger their fetus through the use of substances. The two processes - media sensationalization and subsequent legislation - are not unrelated (Gomez, 1997:27-33). Again, the identity of the woman is lost, subsumed into her socially constructed role of mother, this time as mother-to-be. Additionally, there are strong race and class overtones to the campaign against FAS; in the United States, low-income African-American women have been targeted (Reinarman and Levine, 1989; Faludi, 1991:427-430); in Canada, native women (Ferguson, 1997).

The term 'fetal alcohol syndrome' (FAS) first appeared in 1973 in an article in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*. FAS describes a set of features observed in babies

born to women who are known heavy drinkers. These features include low birth weight, usually below the third percentile, and characteristic facial features such as a flattened bridge across the nose; an absent or indistinct philtrum (the ridges that form the valley between the nose and mouth); and a thin upper lip. In addition, the central nervous system is affected, which can have a number of results, including poor muscle tone, poor coordination and hyperactivity. FAS children are also often developmentally delayed (Little and Ervin, 1984:157-158).

Despite the fact that pregnant substance users are among the most stigmatized of those who drink, there has been little investigation into the social implications of FAS or any inquiry into the politics of the emergence of this medical condition. Medical opinion remains divided on how much alcohol will endanger the fetus, yet pregnant women are routinely told to abstain from all alcohol and other drugs. In contrast, however, there has been no campaign directed at men, who as a social group drink more heavily than women, warning them of the danger of testicular atrophy, another gendered by-product of heavy drinking. It is evident that women's sexuality is more controlled than men's (Ettorre, 1992:45-47).

There is no doubt that women who drink heavily (more than the equivalent of one absolute ounce of alcohol per day) have babies with a variety of medical problems (Ettorre, 1992:48; Little and Ervin, 1984). Yet this has been known since the 1800s; it is only within the past 20 years that it has been defined as a social problem (Ferguson, 1994:1; Ettorre, 1992:49). This has been a period marked by an increasing backlash against women, a general shift to the political right with its associated defense of so-called

'family' and 'fetal' rights, and the medicalization of many aspects of social life, pregnancy in particular (Morgan, 1998; Gomez, 1997; Faludi, 1991).

There is also no doubt that FAS has hit the native community extremely hard; Dorris calls it "the most destructive thing to hit Indians since the European diseases five hundred years ago" (1989:158, in Ferguson, 1994:2). Women who themselves have alcohol-related birth defects give birth to babies also affected, because FAS-related cognitive impairment prevents them from connecting the present with future consequences. FAS can therefore be seen as the legacy of colonial introduction of alcohol to the native population (Ferguson, 1994:3-4).

Intervention with substance-using pregnant women has focused almost exclusively on abstinence and the simplistic message that FAS is completely preventable, if women will only give up drinking. This ignores the complexities surrounding women's use of alcohol and other substances. It gives women the message that they cannot be responsible for their own bodies or their own behaviour. A woman-centred approach to FAS is required, one that addresses the political, economic and social inequalities of women. Women do not need more control, they need empowerment, to be given more social agency rather than having a conservative, androcentric moral agency imposed on them (Ettorre, 1992:49-50).

The media sensationalization that surrounds these stories acts to divert attention away from more effective and caring solutions that could be used, ones that respect women's dignity and real needs. Nancy Poole of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Commission (AADAC) has described the so-called solutions advocated by the press as “misguided or even counterproductive”. She notes further:

Action is most often taken against those who abuse solvents, even though there is much more evidence for damage to the fetus resulting from alcohol abuse. Women are being sent to jail, where they are unlikely to find a drug-free environment or treatment for substance abuse problems. Women ... are separated from their children, instead of being given the chance to learn to care for themselves and these children. Mother, child and society all lose as a result (1998:3).

Women as a social group generally seek medical help more frequently than men do, for a number of reasons that include a socialization process through which they view themselves as needing this medical attention (Doyal, 1995:11). When it comes to alcohol treatment, the situation is reversed, even allowing for the lower prevalence of problem drinking among women (Thom, 1986:777). Peele disputes this statement about women and treatment. Although he provides no supporting information, he notes:

Research has established that women with drinking problems are actually more likely to seek treatment than men, just as they seek more psychotherapy of every kind (1989:70).

Those who suggest women seek treatment for alcohol problems at a less frequent rate than men do cite three reasons for this delay: (1) the greater stigma attached to women's drinking than to men's; (2) other family members are less likely to seek help when a female member is drinking than when a male is drinking; and (3) women need to hide their drinking because of the more serious consequences to them, such as loss of children and loss of economic support (Bepko, 1986:74). It has also been argued that the lack of appropriate services for women is another reason (MacGregor, 1998:1). It is this subject that will now be explored.

Women and Alcohol Intervention

Just as research on alcohol and addiction has focussed on men, the most 'socially visible' drinkers, so has the treatment system, which is dominated by the medical model and a disease concept of addiction. It seldom addresses the differences between men and women associated with pre-existing factors, patterns of use and abuse, and differential consequences of abuse (Lightfoot et al, 1996:187). In a medical model of care, treatment and research priorities are determined by those who articulate the interests of the medical establishment and other politically and culturally dominant groups (Morgan, 1998:89). Women's abuse of alcohol is "generally viewed as being far more pathological than substance abuse by men" (Clarke, 1996:19). As noted above, when a woman's drinking does become problematic, more concern is usually paid to the fact that she is - or is about to become - a mother than to her own emotional or medical needs.

Medicalization of Problem Drinking - From Sin to Sickness

Many aspects of women's lives have become 'medicalized', which Lexchin describes as "the process of redefining the nature and/or cause of a problem to bring it under the umbrella of medicine ..." (1984:208). One only has to consider the variety of intersecting professional groups with whom a pregnant woman may come into contact (especially if she is white and middle or upper class):

... geneticists, embryologists, fetologists, endocrinologists, neuroscientists, prenatal technicians, radiologists, genetic counselors, fetal-imaging technologists, fetal surgeons, anaesthetists, obstetricians, neonatal surgeons, neonatal pediatricians, intensive-care technicians, obstetrical nurses, laboratory technicians, hospitals, insurance companies ... (Morgan, 1998:90).

The medicalization of alcohol treatment is virtually uncontested, in that there are few groups, organizations or individuals who do not support the status quo that is based on medical definition and intervention (Conrad, 1992:73). While it can be argued that the shift in definition of chronic drunkenness from moral weakness to illness is a progressive form of medicalization (Morgan, 1998:88), neither the medical nor the moral model has served women well. Historically, “women were viewed as naturally sickly”, expected to be unhealthy as a result of their perceived biological inadequacies. In addition, many medical practitioners viewed women solely in terms of their capacity to reproduce. There is thus a need to contextualize the process of medicalization and to understand that it has affected women differently than men (Clarke, 1996:15-16).

The danger in increased medicalization is that many aspects of ordinary life become camouflaged as apolitical, with resistance seen as irrational since health cannot reasonably be called into question (Morgan, 1998:86). As noted earlier, the natural cycle of women’s reproductive system has been redefined as a medical condition that needs to be fixed. The ‘disease’ becomes the focus, and any consideration of the social context of women’s lives is forgotten. This is particularly pertinent for women and alcohol treatment. As Gomberg has noted, “drug and alcohol abuse among women is a political issue, linked to gender roles, power, ambivalence, and hidden angers and fears” (1982:21).

The disease model of addiction has its roots in the late 18th century, when in 1785 Benjamin Rush argued that chronic drunkenness should be considered a medical problem rather than a problem of moral degeneracy. The 1790 edition of his work, entitled An Enquiry Into the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Body and Mind, argued that those

who had lost control over their drinking suffered from the “disease of inebriety” (Conrad and Schneider, 1992:79). The English physician Thomas Trotter elaborated further on Rush’s ideas, arguing in 1804 that drunkenness was a form of mental disease and that effective treatment of persons with this disease “... when accomplished, brings him entirely under our control” (Conrad and Schneider, 1992, 79-81).

There can be little argument that there are times when medical intervention in the drinking process is required, for example in cases of acute intoxication or alcohol poisoning. There are physiological, pharmacological and medical consequences that result from chronic, heavy drinking; severe alcohol withdrawal can be fatal without medical intervention. Conrad and Schneider refer to the control of the physiology of alcohol as the “uncontested medical model of alcohol” (1992:73). They note, however, that “it should not be forgotten that this uncontested jurisdiction is nevertheless political and that doctors have both been given and have taken control of these problems” (1992:74).

Conrad and Schneider argue that in addition to the uncontested medical model, there is a contested medical model, by which they mean

that the question of 'turf,' or jurisdiction, has not been settled with any general degree of consensus and that political negotiation continues about whether and to what extent deviant drinking should be defined and treated as a medical problem. ... we argue that the core proposition of these contested medical definitions of alcohol use is that drinking, if done in sufficient quantity and under certain circumstances, causes people in varying degrees to 'lose control' over their behavior (1992:75).

The end of Prohibition in the United States (1933) roughly coincided with an increased interest in science and scientific research. Although the drunken behaviour of some individuals was disruptive and sometimes required the intervention of authorities, the

chronic drunk was a mystery. Science and medicine seemed to hold an answer, however, and within a decade after the repeal of Prohibition the disease concept of chronic drunkenness was firmly established, in large part due to the work of the doctors and scientists who had researched the subject at the Research Council on Problems of Alcohol, a federal organization established shortly after Repeal. One member of this council was also the physician-director of the Laboratory of Applied Physiology at Yale University, instrumental in having a multidisciplinary Center of Alcohol Studies established at Yale, and in hiring E.M. Jellinek as its first director. The Yale Center and its laboratory became the intellectual core of research on alcohol in America. [It remained there until 1962, when it moved to Rutgers University in New Jersey.] (Conrad and Schneider, 1992:85-86)

The concept of alcoholism as disease was introduced at a summer session of the Yale Center in 1943, and grew out of the work of the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. This middle-class, volunteer committee was the forerunner to the National Council on Alcoholism, established in 1944 as the results of the efforts of an alcoholic, a journalist, and a psychiatrist, all women. The Council met with general appeal, not only because it offered what the physicians and scientists considered to be a plausible explanation of unexplainable behaviour, but also because of its moral and political appeal to the American criminal justice system, which was becoming more oriented towards the treatment of individuals (Conrad and Schneider, 1992:87).

Jellinek's work at the Yale Center was an integral factor in the acceptance by the medical community of the definition of alcoholism as a disease. His conception of the phase progression model of alcohol (pre-alcoholic, prodromal, crucial, chronic) became

the model around which most subsequent discussion of the issue centred. Acceptance was not universal, however. Social scientists argued that in order to understand a drinker, an understanding of the cultural definition of use was also needed (Conrad and Schneider, 1992:91-95). [It is important to remember that, as noted earlier, this research was conducted by men for men. It was not until 1957 when Lisansky's work was published that a woman-centred position on alcohol was taken.]

Implications of the Medical Model of Addictions Treatment for Women

It was noted earlier that the medical model has not served women and other marginalized groups well. Most addictions treatment programs have been designed by men, with men's needs in mind. Although most programs serve men and women, treatment effectiveness evaluations are often only conducted with men. When both sexes are included, evaluations tend not to distinguish between them, despite the increasing evidence that social and cultural factors result in different patterns of use for men and women. Treatment programs based on traditional theories of personality development will result in programs that specifically discriminate against women; Freud's 'penis envy' idea is one such example (Babcock and Connor, 1981:233-234). Programs that require clients to live in-residence for three weeks or a month (longer, in some cases) ignore the fact that women are the primary care-givers for their families, and assume that social supports are in place to allow them to leave these responsibilities easily. Most programs do not provide child care, educational counselling or legal assistance, which often are factors in women's use of mood-altering substances (Beckman, 1984).

The disease model is the foundation for Alcoholics Anonymous, arguably the most well-known individual recovery model, with over 89,000 groups in 141 countries in 1994 (AA, 1976:xxii). Despite its proven success for both men and women, some authors have suggested that AA's model of empowerment has limitations for women, in that the focus is on individual, rather than societal, change. The AA movement does not engage in advocacy. Further, as a one-issue movement, it fails to recognize the multi-dimensional nature of problem drinking in women (Lundy, 1991).

The Need for a Feminist Model of Addictions Services

Despite the fact that there is now an increased awareness of the differences in treatment needs of alcoholic men and women, programs that specifically address the needs of women constitute less than five per cent of all such programs (Adrian and Kellner, 1996:xi). Treatment programs are based on the assumption that what works for men will also work for women. Yet studies have shown significant differences between men and women alcoholics in terms of "life history, intrapsychic factors, interpersonal relations, and physiology" (Babcock and Connor, 1981:233). For women, problem drinking cannot be separated from the oppression they face as women. It has been argued that a critical examination of their circumstances is a necessary requirement in the empowerment process for oppressed groups (Lundy, 1991:59). Lundy notes further:

A feminist ideology recognizes inequalities, domination, and exploitation in society as sources of difficulties for women and as obstacles to overcome. The personal experience of women is connected to the larger political context. In this way the problem of alcohol dependence is shifted away from the individual to the social structure and ideology that oppresses women (1991:60).

Lundy notes that it has been shown that, when a choice is available, women seeking help for substance abuse problems choose agencies "... which have a higher proportion of female staff and which provide support services such as women's groups, legal help, educational counselling, childcare and programs for children" (1991:64, citing Beckman & Amaro, 1984).

Feminist addictions services make "direct links between the unequal position of women in society, the forms of violence against women and their substance use" (Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre, 1997:ii). Many women who seek help for an addictions problem have little vocational training to enable them to find employment that will keep them above the poverty line. They are also often alone to care for children, having been abandoned by their spouses (Babcock and Connor, 1981:237). Feminist addictions services are needed to advocate for these services in order to improve the chances, first, that a woman will seek help for a substance abuse problem and, second, that the help she is offered will meet her needs. An effective program is one with close ties to other community services for women and the broader women's movement (Lundy, 1991:65).

In conclusion, women's use of alcohol is integrally related to their position in a patriarchal capitalist economy. A complex weave of social, political and economic factors intersect to create conditions which lead some women to view alcohol as a way of coping with a difficult daily reality. Although mainstream social commentators would not look unfavourably on women who use medically prescribed substances, the same cannot be said when women choose to self-medicate with alcohol. Rather than direct additional

resources that might alleviate the worst effects of this reality - such as poverty and violence - the state has instead engaged in several rounds of cutbacks to health care and social services. Of the few services that are available to women with a drinking problem, the majority are designed by men and do not address women's treatment needs such as providing childcare and employment or re-employment training.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections: the first section discusses the epistemological approach that grounds this research, while the second describes the research process. Through a feminist lens, content and statistical analyses have been applied to articles about women and drinking that appeared in daily newspapers in five Canadian cities (Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver) at various points between 1978 and 1998.

The goal of this project is to answer my research question: *How has women's alcohol use/overuse been reported in the print media over the past 20 years?*

Epistemological Framework

Feminist researchers have noted the inseparability of epistemology, the theory of the method or grounds of knowledge, and politics (Hekman, 1997:399; Hawkesworth, 1989). As Hawkesworth (1989:534) notes:

The recognition that epistemological assumptions have political implications stimulates efforts to attain theoretical self-consciousness concerning the intellectual presuppositions of feminist analysis. Dissatisfaction with paternalistic politics ... sustains feminist epistemological challenges to men's claims to "know" women's nature or what constitutes "women's best interests".

Feminist ways of knowing begin with an understanding that the subject - the 'knower' - is situated in a particular point in place and time and that what she knows - the

'known' - results from a combined wisdom reflecting the interests of those who have generated that wisdom (Smith, 1990a:32-33). Such an understanding has been termed ideological and subjective, distorted by particular interests and therefore, neither objective nor "true". But as Smith notes, it is impossible to separate the knower from the known:

The practice of objectivity in the social sciences ... has very little to do with the pursuit of knowledge of society. The standpoint of women insists that we are always located in particular, actual places, knowing the society only from within. ... If to be situated as such entails ideology, then we can't escape it (1990a:33).

It has been argued that perhaps the very definition of authority has been designed to institutionalize social hierarchies that exclude females and values associated with the feminine (Jones, 1988:119-120). The social location of the knower is also important, because it influences what is observed or allowed to be observed (Sherwin, 1998; Brown, 1994; Smith, 1990a). As Sherwin notes:

... statements about the nature and harms of addictions and appropriate preventative interventions may vary significantly depending on both the perspective of the "expert" speaking and the population being discussed (1998, 5).

Theories based on androcentric positions of privilege and power ignore women's experiences; this results in social work practice based on oppressive theories, which in turn oppress women. Even though most social workers and their clients are women, mainstream social work maintains the structural social oppression of women and marginalized groups. In order to transform the focus of social work from that of control to that of change, feminists have begun to confront the structure of knowledge in order to

address the challenges of diversity and inclusion in social work practice (Brown, 1994:33-36).

Feminist standpoint theory informs my research; for reasons which are outlined below, I believe it provides the most appropriate grounding for a project that involves the exploration of cultural messages about women who drink.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory takes the position that members of subordinate, less powerful groups in society experience a different reality because of their position in the social hierarchy. As a result, a better understanding of social relations will be obtained by conducting research from their standpoint (Swigonski, 1994:390).

The theory can be traced to Hegel's reflections on the master/slave relationship from the standpoint of the slave's life as opposed to that of the master; Marx, Engels and Lukacs later developed this idea into the 'standpoint of the proletariat' (Harding, 1993:53-54). Nancy Hartsock was the first feminist researcher to propose a "... novel epistemology that could ground research in the truth embodied in women's experience" (Hawkesworth, 1999:135).

Feminist standpoint theorists argue that class, race and gender structure an individual's understanding of reality and therefore inform all claims related to knowledge (Harding, 1993:54; Smith, 1987, 1990a; Hawkesworth, 1989:532; Haraway, 1988). In this way feminist standpoint reflects a materialist understanding of the way individuals connect to their social world, as described by Leonard:

The individual's life experience and personality structure are determined ... by a unique biography situated within a specific set of class, gender and ethnic relations. ... The individual connects to the social world through two kinds of interrelated experiences: of material relations and of ideology. The individual's material activities and exchanges ... are penetrated by meanings, definitions and 'common sense' assumptions which reflect the ideologies through which a class, gender, ethnic group or other collectivity ... makes sense of the world ... (1984:109).

Smith (1990b) has explored the way texts actively organize the social relations in which they are embedded. Incorporated into the 'relations of ruling' (Smith, 1990b:6), it is through various texts that we receive images of how our homes and our lives should look, even how we should think. Smith states:

The phrase 'relations of ruling' designates the complex of extra-local relations that provide in contemporary societies a specialization of organization, control, and initiative. They are those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization, and the media (ibid.).

Women have been excluded from the making of ideology, of knowledge and of culture, thus men's standpoint is represented as universal (Smith, 1987:17), or as a "default position" (Khayatt, 1998:5). This is not a trivial matter. As Smith notes:

We are talking about the consequences of a silence, an absence, a nonpresence. What is there - spoken, sung, written, made emblematic in art - and treated as general, universal, unrelated to a particular position or a particular sex as its source and standpoint, is in fact partial, limited, located in a particular position, and permeated by special interests and concerns (1987:20).

The basic tenet of the theory is that all knowledge is located in a particular place and situation (Smith, 1990:33, 62). Feminist standpoint theorists contend that socially situated knowledge strengthens the objectivity of research, in that knowledge can be produced for marginalized people rather than only for dominant groups who would use

their knowledge to administer and manage the lives of marginalized people (Harding, 1993:56-58).

Objectivity itself has been the subject of “complex and charged conversation” (Harding, 1993:49) among feminist researchers for almost two decades. It has been argued that objectivity is essentially political, and is a product of the relations of ruling because it prevents alternative interpretations of science (Smith, 1990:66-70). Standpoint theorists have reformulated the term, arguing that instead of searching for an elusive objectivity by attempting to remove bias from scientific research - which is impossible - it is far better to incorporate bias into the structure of the scientific method (Durham, 1998:127). This approach results in stronger standards for objectivity than the supposed value-free model of science (Durham, 1998: 127; Harding, 1993).

Bannerji has noted the racism and sexism inherent in “objective” knowledge. “Facts” and “information” are mediated in such a way that simultaneously draws on the dominant ideology and systematically presents it as normal (1995:63-65).

In response to critiques by postmodernists that standpoint theorists assume a certain superiority in their position, standpoint theorists argue that the lives of a particular group culture are not superior to any others as grounds for producing knowledge; rather, they argue that whether women identify with a liberal, radical, Marxist or Third World feminism, each and any one of these groups of women’s lives is a good starting point when the objective is to try to explain certain aspects of the social order. Thought that begins with the lives of marginalized people provides more critical questions about how

the social order works than it does by starting with the unexamined lives of dominant groups (Harding, 1993:56-62).

Feminist standpoint theory is an appropriate method for social work research and practice, for a number of reasons. Social work is based on humanitarian values and thus it is not logical that it be aligned with mainstream scientific thought, which purports to be value-free. Mainstream science sees the subject of the research as completely separate from the object of that research. Feminist standpoint, however, recognizes the reciprocal interaction of the researcher and the researched, which is consistent with social work practice (Swigonski, 1994:387-388). Finally, the inclusion of bias - standpoint - is consistent with social work's understanding not only of the individual in a social context but also of the need to incorporate diversity into any analysis of human behaviour (Swigonski, 1994:389).

It has also been argued that the profession of journalism has much to gain by adopting feminist standpoint theory. Durham argues:

Standpoint epistemology can advance journalism by compelling journalists to rethink themselves and their craft from the position of marginalized Others, thus uncovering unconscious ethnocentric, sexist, racist, and heterosexist biases that distort news production as it is governed by the dominant news paradigm (1998:132).

She notes that reporting the news in this way is a "radical shift" and would require a different kind of journalism training than is currently available; however, it would be a positive contribution to the profession.

Feminist standpoint theory has recently been criticized as being seriously flawed because, as Hawkesworth argues, it:

... entails a subjectivist approach to knowledge that privileges the experience of knowers as the source of knowledge without grappling with complex questions concerning the validity of particular knowledge claims. ... [it] also fails to do justice to the fallibility of human knowers, the multiplicity and diversity of women's experiences, and the theoretical constitution of experience (1999:135).

She argues that feminist standpoint theory should be used primarily as an analytical tool, to frame questions that need investigation, to identify problems that need clarification, and to provide concepts and hypotheses to guide research. As an analytical tool, feminist standpoint theory acknowledges that claims about society are mediated through a variety of theories, each constructed in accordance with a particular experience and reflecting particular interests (Hawkesworth, 1999:136-150).

For example, conflicting theories about employment equity and welfare reform have been postulated by women who identify with different ideologies, whether conservative, liberal feminist, socialist feminist, or postmodern feminist. By using standpoint theory as an analytical tool, the focus can be shifted from issues of epistemology to feminist politics. Reflecting on the divergency of the beliefs that ground the understanding of the different groups of women noted above, Hawkesworth argues that this divergency cannot be explained by "... particular characteristics of individual knowers or the class background of academic women" (1999:151). She goes on to state:

But a shift of focus from subjective knowers to analysis of the adequacy of divergent theoretical accounts of contemporary social life might help us to see how different theoretical frameworks structure perception ... and in so doing, help us to assess the comparative merits of competing claims" (ibid.)

The issue of women who drink has also been the subject of 'competing claims' and has been described as a political issue (Gomberg, 1982:21). The opinions of doctors,

psychologists, social workers, academics and the women who drink are as diverse as those who hold them. Hawkesworth's arguments about the validity of feminist standpoint theory as an analytical tool is therefore appropriate in an investigation of cultural messages about women who drink.

Content Analysis within a Feminist Framework

Content analysis fits comfortably with feminist and critical methodologies (Ashley and Olson, 1998; Neuman, 1997; Reinhartz, 1992). Feminist scholars tend not only to examine the text and production processes, but also to examine processes that prevent texts from being produced (Reinhartz, 1992:145).

Smith's comment about "a silence, an absence, a nonpresence" (1987:20), referring to the location of women in sociological knowledge, was noted above. My research into the topic of content analysis uncovered this information:

The first comprehensive series of content studies of mass communication was undertaken by Lasswell, Lerner and de Sola Pool in the early 1950s (Danielson and Lasorsa, 1997:103-104).

Yet in 1891, Ida Wells investigated the lynching of black men by analyzing the content of newspaper articles published on the issue. Wells, the daughter of freed slaves, researched the circumstances of 728 lynchings of black men, questioning whether they were lynched for raping white women, as was commonly believed, or for other reasons. She concluded that they were lynched because of racial hatred, rather than for any particular wrongdoing. When the results of her study were published in a newspaper article in 1892, a group of black women in New York came together for the first time to

raise funds so that Wells' findings could be published in pamphlet form (Reinharz, 1992:145-146).

Content analysis is grounded in the understanding that we live in a symbolic environment, and that what counts most to us is the environment of words and images and the meanings that surround us from the time we are born (Danielson and Lasorsa, 1997:103-104). The ways in which texts - including daily newspapers - are organized create a specific relationship between the reader and "what actually happened" (Smith, 1990a:89). Content analysis is particularly useful for generating cultural markers that indicate the state of beliefs, values and ideologies of a society. It has advantages over other research techniques, in that it operates directly upon text or transcripts of human communications, which are central aspects of social interaction, and it can incorporate both qualitative and quantitative operations, thus combining what are sometimes considered to be oppositional modes of analysis (Weber, 1990:10).

Content analysis was chosen as my research method because of its suitability to this project. First, content analysis is useful for three types of research problems: 1) working with large volumes of text; 2) working with historical documents; and 3) revealing messages in a text that are difficult to see with casual observation (Neuman, 1997:274). Second, feminist researchers see meaning as mediated, and when analyzing cultural texts such as newspapers examine both the text and the context within which the text was produced (Reinharz, 1992:145). Third, content analysis is an effective way to convey information about what is missing, an important facet of feminist research. The above-noted reference to Ida Wells is one example of how research can come to be

“missing”. Feminist research goes beyond what mainstream scholars refer to as “lacunae”, denoting something omitted that can be filled in later, to explore the ways in which certain topics come to be missing and what this implies (Reinharz, 1992:162).

Content analysis is a most appropriate method by which to explore the print media’s messages about women and alcohol. It has been shown that media messages about women and alcohol have conveyed information contrary to what is known statistically about this issue. For example, Andrews and Rootman found that, contrary to “media-based messages about the ubiquity of the alcoholic housewife whose drinking problem is hidden at home,” women with a drinking problem are more likely to be in the paid labour force (1989:184).

By choosing what to emphasize and what to ignore, the print medium has the power to organize our political world for us (Ashley and Olson, 1998:263). Ashley and Olson examined the use of framing techniques found in coverage of the women’s movement over a 20-year period by the *New York Times*, *Time* and *Newsweek*. They studied selected messages from women who organized to promote the movement (defined as ‘feminists’) and women who organized to deter the movement (defined as ‘anti-feminists’). Through an analysis that included the amount of coverage, the story topic, the placement of the article, and reporter gender, their study concluded that feminists were framed as less important than anti-feminists. They also studied framing techniques such as the use of quotation marks, comments on a woman’s appearance, undercounting, highlighting dissension at meetings, and emphasizing violence at rallies and demonstrations. They found that the media used framing techniques to delegitimize

feminists, but did not use the same techniques to delegitimize anti-feminists (Ashley and Olson, 1998:266-269).

One aspect of media content analysis I included in my study was a consideration of the sources cited by the journalist. It has been argued that, by citing governments and institutional sources rather than local sources, the news "... 'reifies' the sociopolitical structure, therefore legitimating it" (Voakes et al, 1996:584). By marginalizing challenge, the mass media are an important means of reproducing the dominant ideology through their tendency to transform public issues into personal problems. Research has shown that when the media report on the activities of groups whose goals differ from those of mainstream groups, the deviance and alleged illegitimacy of such groups are highlighted (Ashley and Olson:1998:263; Grenier, 1994).

Feminist content analysis is also compatible with structural social work, which focuses on ways in which individuals are oppressed by social structures and the power imbalances that are created as a result (Carniol, 1992:1-3). While not ignoring individual responsibility and the need for personal change, structural social work moves away from the individualism that has characterized the profession of social work since its beginnings (Lecomte, 1990:33) to focus on ways that individuals are shaped by the institutions that operate in a patriarchal/capitalist system. The daily press is a powerful institution within this system.

Research Design

Introduction

This project contributes to and builds on two areas of research: print medium content analysis and women and substance use. The work of several authors has informed my research design.

Like Ashley and Olson (1998), I was interested in learning how a certain group of women (women who drink) have been depicted in the daily press over a 20-year period. Like Voakes et al (1996), I was interested in whose ideas were being given voice in articles about women who drink. It was evident from my review of the articles in this sample that, in many of them, attention to a woman's mothering role took precedence over any discussion of her health or the social conditions in which she lived. Women who drink have been labelled as unfit and criticized for their failure to meet cultural standards for mothering, which in North America are based on a white, middle-class, heterosexual standard (Baker and Carson, 1999:348). Baker and Carson's study of substance-abusing mothers led to their conclusion that substance-addicted mothers are not always bad parents (1999).

The period between 1978 and 1998 has been a time of great political, economic and social change, not only in Canada but around the world. In Canada, political changes have included a shift to the right and widespread privatization of public services; our economy has become "globalized", with production internationalized and standards harmonized as capital moves freely among the countries of the world. Social changes have included the erosion of state-supported social services (Teeple, 1995). Economic

changes have also had an impact on the daily press in Canada during this time. The Hollinger/Southam group of companies, controlled by Conrad Black, owns 58 of Canada's 105 dailies, including all the newspapers in Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, as well as in six of the ten provincial capitals. The ownership of the press in Canada is the most concentrated in the western world (Miller, 1998:61). Since Black's Hollinger Corporation assumed ownership of the *Vancouver Sun* in 1997, the amount of coverage on poverty has declined, despite the fact that poverty is on the increase in Canada (Uzelman and Krause, 1999). I was interested to know how an increasingly corporate-dominated daily press reports on women who drink, since women are the largest recipients of non-contributory social benefits (Teeple, 1995:46), and recipients of social benefits are often vilified in the press.

Finally, Edith Lisansky's work published in 1957 has informed my research design. In a review of the literature on the psychopathology of alcoholism, she found that the research published to that date contained inferences about female alcoholics drawn from studies conducted primarily with male alcoholics. Among those inferences included a relationship between women and sexual promiscuity (Lisansky, 1957). Lisansky disputed this conclusion, using a woman-centred approach to demonstrate the ways in which women's experience with alcohol differed from that of men's. Our knowledge of women's alcohol abuse has increased since Lisansky's study was first published. It is now recognized that there are significant differences in the patterns of men's and women's history of substance abuse and how this manifests itself (Lightfoot et al, 1995:187; Lundy,

1991; Bepko, 1986; Johnson, 1982). I was interested in exploring the extent to which this information has been included in articles about women who drink.

Researching Daily Newspapers, 1978-1998

With the objective of strengthening the research results, I hoped to obtain articles from daily newspapers in several Canadian cities. Technological advances during this period have had an impact on this research project. The Canadian Newspaper Index (CNI), which began publication in 1977, was the first index listing newspaper articles published in a selection of Canadian newspapers. It published annually until 1992, listing by headline only all the articles that appeared in six Canadian daily newspapers: the *Montreal Star*, the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Calgary Herald* and the *Vancouver Sun*. In 1978 articles from the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* were added. Articles are organized into subject headings, which were changed and expanded from issue to issue. The subject heading "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome", for example, was first listed in 1988.

In 1981, an expanded, electronic version of CNI became available, called Canadian Business and Current Affairs (CBCA). Still restricted to headline titles only, CBCA contains an index of all the articles published in the same seven daily newspapers as CNI (with the *Montreal Gazette* instead of the *Montreal Star*, which ceased operations during this time period), in addition to the *Financial Post*, the *Financial Times* and other business-related periodicals.

In 1994, a further technological advancement created the Canadian NewsDisc (CND). This is a CD-ROM database, containing the full text version of articles appearing in 11 daily newspapers: the *Calgary Herald*, the *Vancouver Province*, the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Halifax Daily News*, the *Hamilton Spectator*, the *Financial Post*, and the *Toronto Sun*. Also included are verbatim transcripts of selected national television news programs, such as *W5* and the *National*, as well as articles from the national news magazine *Maclean's*.

There are five Canadian cities common to the three databases: Halifax (the *Chronicle-Herald* in CNI, the *Halifax Daily News* in CND), Montreal (the *Star*, then the *Gazette*), Toronto (the *Star*), Calgary (the *Herald*), and Vancouver (the *Sun*). These seven daily newspapers became the data source.

Comparative Time Period

The choice of time frame was based on factors that include the availability and accessibility of the data, and events within the women's movement. First, as noted earlier, an index of daily newspaper articles became available in 1977, which was expanded to cover seven newspapers in 1978. It was beyond the scope of my resources to obtain data before that year. Second, within the past 20 years more women have been included in research projects that discuss women and alcohol treatment approaches (Greaves, 1996:1). It is perhaps not unreasonable to expect that, as a result, the stereotypes associated with women and alcohol, identified by Lisansky in 1957, may have

been dispelled to some degree. Third, the seeds planted by the second wave of feminists in the 1960s began to bear fruit in the 1970s, at least on paper.

The decade began with the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which set out four principles: the freedom of women to seek work outside the home; mothers, fathers and society at large should share responsibility for the care of children; women are owed special treatment as a result of their childbearing responsibilities; and special treatment should be allowed to overcome the adverse effects of discrimination. Women were making inroads in politics and in law: women were allowed to serve as jurors in Quebec for the first time in 1971; Rosemary Brown, the first Black woman to win a seat at the provincial level was elected in British Columbia in 1972; in 1973 Muriel Ferguson was appointed the first woman Speaker of the Canadian Senate; and in 1974, Pauline McGibbon became the first woman lieutenant-governor in Canada (Ontario). In 1977, women won the right to equal pay for work of equal value with the passage of the Canadian Human Rights Act (Whitla, 1995:339-342).

Data Collection

Within the 20-year period, I chose to examine articles that were published in 1978, 1979 and 1980 (the 1970s), 1988, 1989 and 1990 (the 1980s) and 1996, 1997, 1998 (the 1990s). Because I was interested in exploring trends and changes in how drinking women were portrayed, I used multi-year time spans within the overall time frame.

A three-step process was required to retrieve articles published in the 1970s and 1980s. First, possible items had to be identified by searching the CNI under various

subject headings; in order to find as many articles as possible, I searched under alcoholic beverages; alcoholism; child abuse; children; crime and criminals (drunk driving; homicide); drugs; fetal alcohol syndrome [after 1988]; Indians; native peoples; unborn children [after 1988] and women. Next, the appropriate microfilm was retrieved, loaded onto the reader and the article was located. Third, if the article was appropriate, it was photocopied and retained for coding.

Articles were deemed 'appropriate' for coding if they met my predetermined criteria: The article discusses an aspect of alcohol consumption and met the following additional two criteria: (1) the gender of the drinker/s is known (either specifically stated or by the use of example); and (2) the gender of the drinker/s is a woman. In addition, articles were also selected when, based on the headline, one would expect it to include women drinkers. For example, the headline of an article published in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* in December 1978 read: "Doctors begin program to help their colleagues". Further reading of the article reveals that no female doctors are mentioned or used as examples. This reinforces references made by feminist researchers to the non-presence of women in cultural texts (Smith, 1987) and to an androcentric "default position" (Khayatt, 1998:5). Feminist researchers have also noted the value of exploring what is missing, which Reinharz has termed the "sociology of the lack of knowledge" (Reinharz, 1992:163).

The search for articles in the 1990s was facilitated by the availability of Canadian NewsDisc, a CD-ROM database that provides the full-text of the article, downloadable to a computer diskette. A keyword search can be performed in the same way as one would

search CUBE (Carleton University Bibliographic Enquiry). I used the command: “(alcohol* or drunk*) in ti, lp” [translation: search for articles that have the word alcohol and extensions of alcohol (eg alcoholism) or drunk and extensions of drunk (e.g., drunkenness) in the title or lead paragraph].

The advantage of electronic research is that more results were produced in less time (see details below). The disadvantage is a loss of context - one does not see the actual page of the newspaper as when one is researching microfilm data. For example, in one week in 1978, the *Toronto Star* ran two short, compassionate⁷ articles by female journalists about drinkers⁸. Within two days of the second article, on March 4, 1978, another article appeared in the *Toronto Star*: “Living is Free on Metro’s Skid Road.” Written by Arnie Hakala, this story was nearly a full page long - longer than the average article in this survey and more than double the length of each of the previous two articles about drinking. From this article, one learns that Toronto’s homeless are “... among the luckiest in North America” because there are “... plenty of facilities that provide food, drink and a bed ...” and that these facilities aren’t bad places, “for someone who had nothing”. I had the sense that the editor said to himself: “Enough of these female bleeding heart stories; we need a man to do the ‘real’ story!”

⁷See Appendix B for a definition of the word ‘compassionate’ and an example of its use in this research.

⁸“Home Base gives shelter to the homeless,” by Trish Crawford, *Toronto Star*, February 25, 1978; “Metro’s elderly alcoholics drink away their loneliness,” by Lillian Newbery, *Toronto Star*, March 2, 1978.

Sample Size

I found 149 articles that met my stated criteria (Table 1). It will be noted that relatively few articles were located in the years 1980, 1988 and 1990. There could be more than one explanation for this low count. First, it is possible that despite my best efforts, articles that discussed women and drinking were missed. With only the headline available in CNI, this indeed could have occurred. However, I located and read 147 possible articles from these years yet ended up with only 25 articles that met my criteria. I therefore have confidence in the scope of my research. Second, the decade of the 1980s was characterized by a political shift to the right, cutbacks to social services and a generalized backlash against progressive thinking, including feminism (Teeple, 1995; Faludi, 1991). Sharon Howell has noted:

The women's movement has been called everything from an oxymoron to a communist plot. It is said to be the result of undersexed neurotics or oversexed fanatics. It is cited as the reason why families are falling apart ... derided and denied ... (1990:1).

The daily press in Canada is dominated by conservative interests (Uzelman and Krause, 1999; Miller, 1998:51). There are too few women journalists in positions senior enough to determine what newspapers will cover and how (Miller, 1998:136-137). It is perhaps not surprising to find fewer articles in this time period about women who drink. I do not view the relatively low count of articles in these years as an obstacle; rather, it presents an opportunity to explore not only the text that exists, but to explore the reasons why text may not exist (Reinharz, 1992:162-163).

Table 1 Sample Size	
Year	No. of Articles
1978	23
1979	14
1980	8
1988	8
1989	12
1990	9
1996	27
1997	21
1998	27
Total:	149

Method

Content analysis has been described as the study of "... a set of objects (i.e. cultural artifacts or events) systematically by counting them or interpreting the themes contained in them" (Reinharz, 1992:146). Definitions of content analysis often emphasize the quantitative nature of the research: "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Riffe et al., 1998:18, citing Berelson, 1952 [18]). However, content analysis is a method that is strengthened by the use of quantitative and qualitative analytical methods. Cultural documents, such as daily newspapers, reflect societal norms as well as shape them. By using a combination of interpretive and statistical procedures, researchers such as Itzin (study on ageism and sexism) and Ashley and Olson (feminists) have revealed the way newspapers stereotype

women and other marginalized groups in society (Reinharz, 1992:151; Ashley and Olson, 1998).

This project combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Following a review of the literature and a reading of the 149 articles selected for coding, I developed a questionnaire that was then systematically applied to each article (see Appendix A). Questions were developed related to the article - 24 questions - and to the drinker/s - 12 questions. Questions relating to the article included, for instance, the gender of the journalist, which sources were cited, the general tone of the article, and the focus of the article. In addition, I explored aspects relating to the way drinking in general was reported, such as whether the drinker's appearance and behaviour were noted, whether treatment availability or accessibility was noted, what treatment type was discussed, if any, and whether the article conveyed the idea that "ladies don't drink". Questions relating to the drinker/s included race, socio-economic status and gender. I also noted whether certain characteristics about the drinker/s were noted, such as marital status and number of children, occupational status, whether the drinker had experienced violence or abuse as a child or an adult, and whether the article conveyed the idea that the drinker was at fault.

The unit of analysis was the newspaper article. When identical or near-identical articles appeared in more than one newspaper (as happens, for instance, when the source of the story is a wire service such as Canadian Press), I used the article that appeared first. In instances where near-identical articles were published on the same date in different papers, I used the article that was longest.

To manage the data, I developed two databases: one using the software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 7.5) to handle the encoded answers to the questionnaire; and one using the software program Microsoft Access 2.0 to handle quotations from the articles to be used in qualitative analysis in support of the statistical material. Kirby and McKenna's (1989) description of a suggested process for preparing to analyze data informed my work; however, I found I was more comfortable with electronic databases than with file folders. Nevertheless, I believe the categories in my questionnaire could be said to correspond with their "... bibbits, properties and categories..." (135).

Not all of the variables in the SPSS database were supported by a corresponding variable in the Access database, since many of the questions were of a Yes/No design. This project is strengthened, however, through the use of qualitative material to support the quantitative data. It has therefore been possible not only to comment on the type of sources cited in the articles, but also on who said what. Other variables supported by Access include the type of behaviour attributed to the drinker; how the article describes effects on the drinker's family; and how a particular article conveys the thought that "ladies don't drink".

Tone of the Article

The variable that I have named 'tone', describing the tone of the article, is also supported by qualitative information. Even without statistical analysis, it was evident from reading the articles that the coverage in the 1970s differed from that of the 1990s. I

attempted to capture the essence of what I was reading by defining the tone of each article. I used seven categories: compassionate; warning; hopeful; hopeless; sensationalized; patronizing; and informative. Each category is defined by its dictionary definition, supported by an example of how the article supports that particular category rather than another (see Appendix B). In this way I have attempted not only to address the reliability of this study but also to make my research as objective as possible, although as feminist postmodernists would argue, “feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges” (Haraway, 1988:581). For purposes of further statistical analysis, these categories were later re-coded into “positive” (compassionate, hopeful), “negative” (warning, hopeless, sensationalized, patronizing) and “neutral” (informative). The fact that there are twice as many “negative” categories as “positive” reflects the nature of the newspaper coverage.

Focus of the Article

The data were divided into manageable portions through the variable I called ‘focus’ - the subject of each article. I read through all articles until I was satisfied with the categorization, which initially resulted in 14 different subject files. However, subsequent data analysis with SPSS involving cross-tabulations led to error messages due to the large number of categories. I therefore recoded the 14 original subjects into 6: drinking and the law (drinking and driving; drinking and women as perpetrators of violence); drinking and street people; drinking and women’s issues (mothering; hidden drinking; women’s health);

drinking and pregnancy; drinking and rehabilitation; drinking and other issues (the workplace; the elderly; sports and media personalities; general health).

Statistical Analyses

As noted earlier, SPSS was one of the software programs used to manage the data. Statistical analyses consisted mainly of descriptive tests such as frequency distributions and cross-tabulations. Cross-tabulations enabled me to determine how certain variables, such as the tone of the article, were affected by variables such as the gender of the journalist or the gender, race or SES of the drinker. More information on the statistical analyses is provided in the next chapter.

Conclusion

A research design has been defined as "... a plan for conducting research and as a response to some important methodological questions". It should be logical, advance knowledge about a problem, and should be feasible (Yegidis and Weinbach, 1996:109-111). My research design, comprising statistical and content analyses within a feminist epistemological framework, meets these suggested specifications and is appropriate to the project.

The results that emerged from the application of this research design to my data are presented and analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

“ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I READ IN THE PAPER”

There's a folk saying: “all I know is what I read in the paper”. I have not been able to trace its origin, but I have always understood it to mean a combination of two separate but related ideas: (1) I may not be too smart, but what I read in the paper makes sense to me; and (2) I trust what I read in the paper. Although one author has described newspapers as containing “... a lot of reliable information you didn't know you were looking for” (Miller, 1998:27), my research results show that, when the topic is women and drinking, the reliability of the information is questionable.

This chapter presents and analyzes the results of the research. It will begin with a general overview of the articles, providing statistical and descriptive information on the sample size, length of the articles and their location in the paper; and on how race, socio-economic status and disability of drinkers is reported. This will be followed by an analysis of the subject and tone of the articles, the sources cited, and information on women and drinking that is not reported. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the way women's drinking has been reported over the comparative time period.

General Overview of Articles

Sample Size

To begin the discussion, I believe it is appropriate to comment on the number of articles I was able to locate: a total of 149 over three, three-year periods. As my search

proceeded for articles that matched my criteria, particularly from the Canadian Newspaper Index in the pre-electronic 1970s and 1980s, I became concerned that I was missing whole pockets of information. I began with the expectation that I would find more articles than I needed, and that a sampling mechanism would be required in order to end up with a manageable total. However, on reflection, the paucity of articles is an indication of public attitudes towards women and drinking, which can be summarized in three words: nice women don't.

Jackie M., interviewed by the *Montreal Star* in late 1977 stated: "When I grew up in the Maritimes, women did not even go into a liquor commission to buy a bottle for a family celebration." She concludes the interview with this comment: "A drunken woman still faces more condemnation from society than a drunken man."⁹

Two female reporters, writing a story about discrimination following the passage of Human Rights legislation in 1977, were physically and verbally assaulted when they entered a male-only tavern and tried to buy a drink. In addition to derogatory sexual comments from unidentified patrons, one of the reporters was pushed off her chair when she tried to interview a group of off-duty policemen. "Get the hell outa here ... we don't want these whores sitting with us," shouted one of the officers.¹⁰ These attitudes persisted into the 1980s. Ernie M., interviewed at Canada's first Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Convention in 1988, said: "A streetwalker would be held in higher esteem than a

⁹"Aid for alcoholic women," *Montreal Star*, December 15, 1977.

¹⁰"Stupid broads' get shove from male-only taverns," *Vancouver Sun*, October 3, 1978.

woman alcoholic not too many years ago.”¹¹ A story on gender differences and alcoholism published in the *Calgary Herald* in 1989 reported: “It is, at least for some people, socially acceptable for a man to be drunk, but a woman faces a lot of disapproval.”¹²

Gender of the Journalist

I tracked the gender of the journalist (variable: author) in order to see if gender influenced the way stories were reported. Sixty-three articles were written by female journalists, 39 articles were written by males, and in 47 articles the journalist’s gender is not stated, reflecting a story distributed by a wire service such as Canadian Press which often carries no by-line. Two-thirds of the articles written by male journalists were negative (26 of 39), as opposed to 41 percent of articles written by female journalists. Female journalists wrote twice as many positive articles as male journalists (29 or 46 percent as opposed to 9 or 23 percent). [The descriptor ‘negative’ includes the following tones: hopeless, warning, patronizing, or sensationalized; the descriptor ‘positive’ includes the following: hopeful, compassionate; see Appendix B for definitions and examples.] This is consistent with other research that indicates that female journalists have a greater sensitivity towards sexism in journalism (Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1997:37). Therefore, to answer one of the questions raised in the introductory chapter:

¹¹“Attitudes improve toward alcoholics, say AA members,” *Montreal Gazette*, August 21, 1988.

¹²“Alcoholism affects men, women differently,” *Calgary Herald*, October 26, 1989.

yes, the gender of the journalist does have an impact on how a story on women and drinking is reported.

Distribution, Placement and Length of Articles

Table 2 shows the distribution of articles by newspaper. Halifax daily newspapers (*Chronicle-Herald/Daily News*) had the lowest number of articles, while the *Toronto Star* published the highest number. It is perhaps not unusual to find more stories on women and drinking in a newspaper published in a large cosmopolitan centre like Toronto as opposed to a smaller centre like Halifax. First, the *Toronto Star* is much bigger than either of the Halifax newspapers. Second, there are more addiction-related resources in Toronto than in all of Nova Scotia, including the Addictions Research Foundation, the Donwood Institute (which in 1998 merged with two other organizations to become the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) and the Jean Tweed Centre (a treatment centre for women). As one article in the sample indicates, addictions services in Nova Scotia, especially for women, were sadly lacking¹³. This could contribute to the low number of newspaper articles about women and drinking.

In content analysis of newspaper articles, the location of the story is one of the basic indicators used to demonstrate the degree of importance attached to a particular event or group (Grenier, 1994:315). Only 11 stories in my sample (7.4 percent) appeared on the first page, with nearly half (73 or 49 percent) appearing in the second section or

¹³"Waiting for detox," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, August 8, 1990.

Table 2 Distribution of Articles					
Paper	Number of articles			Total articles	Percent of total
<i>Halifax Chronicle-Herald</i> (1970s, 1980s) <i>Daily News</i> (1990s)	1970s	1980s	1990s	15	10.1
	2	2	11		
<i>Montreal Star/Gazette</i>	5	10	19	34	22.8
<i>Toronto Star</i>	23	10	18	51	34.2
<i>Calgary Herald</i>	7	6	15	28	18.8
<i>Vancouver Sun</i>	8	1	12	21	14.1

later. By this measure, therefore, the topic of women and drinking is not important to those who publish daily newspapers. Stories deemed important enough for the front page included articles about multiple deaths as well as drug use by rock stars. An article reporting on possible political action following two murders on skid road, bringing the total to 14 over a period of two years, also made it to the front page¹⁴. So did the report of the death of four street people in Vancouver following their consumption of a "deadly cocktail made from Lysol, hair spray and a mystery substance"¹⁵. Articles such as these traditionally attract public interest, and can be used to increase newspaper sales. Sensationalism is a frequent newspaper sales tactic (Grenier, 1994; Ericson et al., 1989)

¹⁴"Drea wants winos jailed to help them stay alive," *Toronto Star*, December 18, 1978.

¹⁵"Skid Road cocktails kills four," *Vancouver Sun*, November 26, 1979.

and the article headed “Many rape victims indiscreet, police say,”¹⁶ printed on the first page, fits this category. An increase in the number of reports of rape led police to conduct a study of the issue. Their conclusion: reports of rape were on the increase because of women’s promiscuity, as well as their use of drugs and alcohol - a classic example of victim-blaming. To its credit, on the following day the *Toronto Star* published a rebuttal by Michele Landsberg, with the banner headline: “Bumbling OPP report smears all rape victims.” Another front-page story worthy of note is one published in the *Calgary Herald* on January 11, 1988. “Father’s death made band chief sober up” describes Theresa Strawberry, chief of the O’Chiese band, and how her life had changed after she stopped drinking. This story is unusual in its compassionate (positive) coverage of the topic. In my sample, over two-thirds of the stories which identified the drinker as native were reported in a negative fashion (this is explored in further detail later in this chapter). It could perhaps be argued that the reason the *Calgary Herald* gave this story front page coverage was because the newspaper publishers, whose race is not Aboriginal, considered it to be an unusual circumstance; nevertheless, I interpret the location of this story as positive.

Just as there are few articles about women and drinking that made the front page, there are also only a few articles that take up a full page of the newspaper or more - only 7.4 percent. Most of them, or 70.5 percent, are classified as “short”, a quarter of the newspaper page or less. It is impossible to give in-depth coverage or to provide contextual analysis of a topic in a short story. I have based this measurement on the space

¹⁶*Toronto Star*, January 12, 1979.

occupied by the article on the actual page of the newspaper and not on an exact measurement of the total column inches occupied by the story. All of the newspapers in my sample have a similar page size and none is a tabloid, which is smaller than a newspaper like, for instance, the *Toronto Star* or the *Montreal Gazette*. Articles on Canadian NewsDisc do not appear in columns as they would appear in the paper; however, each article carries an indication of whether it is 'short', 'medium' or 'long', which I used.

The Drinkers - Gender, Race, Employment Status and Socio-economic Status

Demographic information that I recorded about drinkers includes gender, race, employment status and socio-economic status (SES). The gender breakdown of the articles is as follows: female only - 104 (69.8 percent); male only - 11 (7.4 percent); male and female - 34 (22.8 percent). [As noted earlier, articles were selected that included male drinkers when, reading the headline only, one would expect it to include women drinkers.] Table 3 depicts this breakdown by decade. The impact of technology on this research is evident in that it was far easier to locate articles from the 1990s than from the 1970s that met the criteria for coding.

There are more positive articles (compassionate, hopeful) when the drinker is male than when the drinker is female. Articles that were about male drinkers only were evenly divided (5 positive, 6 negative); articles in which the drinker was female, however, were twice as likely to be negative as positive (61 negative, 28 positive). Despite the fact that,

Table 3 Gender by Decade				
	1970s	1980s	1990s	Total
Female only	27 (18.1%)	12 (8.1%)	65 (43.6%)	104 (69.8%)
Male only	10 (6.7%)	1 (.7%)	0 (0%)	11 (7.4%)
Male + female	8 (5.4%)	17 (11.4%)	9 (6%)	34 (22.8%)

over the comparative time period, fewer articles conveyed the idea that 'ladies don't drink', women and drinking is still frequently reported in a negative manner.

In the majority of articles the drinker's race, employment status and SES are not identified. This is significant because it creates the impression that drinkers are an homogenous group, obscuring the real differences that these characteristics contribute to the visibility of a drinking problem. The only race of drinker specifically identified is Aboriginal (24 articles or 16.1 percent of the sample). It is sometimes possible to infer the race of the drinker from her identity. For instance, the sample contains articles about Dorothy Joudrie (the Alberta woman who shot her industrialist husband in 1996), Betty Ford, Kitty Dukakis (wives of American politicians), Oksana Baiul (a professional figure skater), Princess Diana's mother, the heiress to the Wal-Mart fortune and the actress Jennifer O'Neill. We know these women are white. In 28 articles (18.7 percent), the drinker can be identified as white. In the remainder of articles, almost two-thirds (96 or 64.4 percent), race is not indicated. These figures support and reinforce Khayatt's argument that those who occupy a dominant position in society due to their race or gender

can remain unnamed, while using their power to define others. She quotes Toni Morrison (1992:77): “Eddy is white, and we know he is because nobody says so” (Khayatt, 1998:5).

As noted with gender earlier, the tone of the article varies according to the race of the drinker. There are fewer positive articles about Aboriginal drinkers than about white drinkers (6 of 25, or 24 percent, vs 9 of 28, or 32.1 percent).

In half of the articles (49.7 percent), the employment status of the drinker is not indicated. Of the remainder, however, there is a gender difference in reporting this variable - men’s employment status was more likely to be noted than women’s. Only 9 percent of the articles in which the drinkers were exclusively male (1 of 11) did not report whether the drinker was employed (paid/unpaid) or unemployed, as opposed to 55.7 percent of stories about women drinkers (58 of 104). This reflects and reinforces the social myth that women “don’t work”. There is also a difference by race in the reporting of this variable: more articles were written about employed (paid/unpaid) whites than about employed Aboriginals (21 vs 3 - representing ratios of 75 percent and 12 percent, respectively). Again, this has the effect of reinforcing a negative stereotype, that of the ‘lazy, drunken Indian’ (Maracle, 1993).

The lack of information on socio-economic status (SES) is similar to that on employment status: in half of the articles (77 or 51.7 percent) this information is not reported. Because articles did not contain enough information needed to calculate a precise indication of SES, I devised an informal measurement to code this variable as ‘poor’, ‘average’ or ‘above average’. In the category coded ‘poor’, I included persons on social assistance as well as those working in service occupations. In the category coded

'average', I included persons employed in occupations such as flight attendant or identified as the spouse of an advertising or insurance executive. In the category coded 'above average' I included persons such as the spouse of a politician, professional athletes, actresses and personalities such as Dorothy Joudrie, Princess Diana's mother and the heiress to the Wal-Mart fortune.

I was interested in tracking this variable for a number of reasons. First, there is a positive correlation between a low income and a drinking problem (McKenzie and Single, 1997:25). Second, there is a stereotypical link between social assistance and drinking; when describing his government's forthcoming 21 percent cut to social assistance rates in July 1995, Ontario Premier Mike Harris referred to women at home all day drinking beer. I therefore expected there would be more articles about poor people and drinking than about middle or upper income people and drinking. On the other hand, one study has found that the overall coverage of poverty by the *Vancouver Sun* declined between 1988 and 1997 (Uzelman and Krause, 1999).

My sample contains more stories about persons whose SES is average and above average than about those who are poor (45 vs 27, or 30.2 percent of the sample vs 18.1 percent). Over the comparative time period, the number of articles depicting average or above average drinkers has increased slightly, as depicted in Table 4. However, there were more negative articles written about drinkers of low income (15 of 27, or 55.5 percent) than about drinkers of average and above average income (22 of 45, or 48.8 percent).

The number of articles about drinkers of low income reflects Uzelman and Krause's study of the coverage of poverty. It also perhaps reflects a desire on the part of the news industry to minimize the effects of drinking when the person is of average or

Table 4 SES by Decade				
	1970s	1980s	1990s	Total
poor/more than one	10 (6.7%)	7 (4.7%)	10 (6.7%)	27 (18.1%)
aver./above average	18 (12.1%)	4 (2.7%)	23 (15.4%)	45 (30.2%)
not stated	17 (11.4%)	18 (12.1%)	42 (28.2%)	77 (51.7%)

above average income, given the prevalence of alcohol use in our society. A number of articles in my sample reinforce the idea that anyone (anyone who is not Aboriginal, that is) can develop a problem with drinking or drugs. Typical headlines include: "Deadly double of drink, drugs hooks thousands" (*Toronto Star*, May 6, 1978); "There are no hard and fast rules about why people drink" (*Calgary Herald*, June 24, 1978); "Attitudes improve toward alcoholics say AA members" (*Montreal Gazette*, August 21, 1988); "The many faces of addiction: People from all walks of life, not only the downtrodden, can fall victim to drug and alcohol abuse" (*Calgary Herald*, November 18, 1998).

A Note on Gender, Drinking and Disability

None of the drinkers in my sample is identified as having a disability. However, while searching for appropriate articles to include in my sample I came across a story

published in the *Halifax Daily News* that I did not code but in my belief confirms that negative attitudes about women and drinking are still very much alive.

A woman with a genetic physical disability that manifested itself in reduced co-ordination, abnormal speech and loss of balance was arrested for public drunkenness as she left a Halifax restaurant. Police ignored her explanations and held her overnight in jail, refusing her request to call either a lawyer or family members. The woman subsequently sued the police and the Halifax Regional Municipality for false arrest and unlawful detention. It is interesting to note that it was not the incident in question, which occurred in the summer, that resulted in the publication of this article, but the judicial hearing of her lawsuit, some six months later.¹⁷

Subject and Tone of the Articles

Articles were coded into one of six subjects, as follows: drinking and ... (1) the law; (2) street people; (3) women's issues; (4) pregnancy; (5) rehabilitation; and (6) other issues. Pregnancy was filed separately from women's issues due to the disproportionately high number of articles on this subject (see below for additional analysis). Table 5 shows how these six subjects were distributed over the comparative time period.

¹⁷"Disabled woman sues after arrest," *Halifax Daily News*, December 29, 1996.

Table 5 Distribution of Subjects by Decade				
Drinking and ...	1970s	1980s	1990s	Total
The law	3 (2.0%)	5 (3.4%)	31 (20.8%)	39 (26.2%)
Street people	11 (7.4%)	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	15 (10.0%)
Women's issues	9 (6.0%)	3 (2.0%)	9 (6.0%)	21 (14.0%)
Pregnancy	2 (1.3%)	5 (3.4%)	20 (13.4%)	27 (18.1%)
Rehabilitation	10 (6.7%)	6 (4.0%)	3 (2.0%)	19 (12.7%)
Other issues	10 (6.7%)	8 (5.4%)	10 (6.7%)	28 (18.8%)

As the above table indicates, over the comparative time period the press has become far more interested in drinking and legal issues (in particular drinking and driving) and stories relating to drinking and pregnancy, while interest in stories about drinking and street people and about rehabilitation has declined dramatically.

Similarly, changes in the tone of the articles over the comparative time period can be identified. Table 6 presents this information.

While the number of compassionate articles has decreased slightly over the comparative time period, two of the tone descriptors included in the 'negative' category - sensationalized and warning - have increased dramatically. This reflects the influence of two subjects on the total sample - FAS and drinking and driving. This is also

Table 6 Tone of the Article by Decade				
Tone	1970s	1980s	1990s	Total
compassionate	16 (10.7%)	2 (1.3%)	12 (8.1%)	30 (20.1%)
hopeful	4 (2.6%)	5 (3.4%)	6 (4.0%)	15 (10.0%)
hopeless	2 (1.3%)	3 (2.0%)	3 (2.0%)	8 (5.3%)
informative	4 (2.6%)	7 (4.7%)	10 (6.7%)	21 (14.0%)
patronizing	11 (7.4%)	3 (2.0%)	5 (3.4%)	19 (12.8%)
sensationalized	2 (1.3%)	4 (2.6%)	22 (14.8%)	28 (18.8%)
warning	6 (4.0%)	5 (3.4%)	17 (11.4%)	28 (18.8%)

an indication of the direction of recent Canadian social policy, which is moving towards law-and-order and away from compassion, as reflected in the so-called ‘Common Sense’ political agenda of Ontario’s Premier Mike Harris.

Drinking and Pregnancy

Of the 27 articles in the sample on drinking and pregnancy, 15 are coded ‘warning’ and 7 are coded ‘sensationalized’, with the result that one could hardly describe the reporting on this subject as balanced. The subject title “fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)” was not included in the Canadian Newspaper Index until 1988, yet there are more articles

on this one topic than on any other in this sample (my subject 'drinking and the law' includes more than one topic).

While it is bad enough that women's identity is often subsumed in her social role as mother, when reporting on FAS journalists can make women disappear altogether, all the while judging, blaming and denouncing them for their actions against "Alcohol's innocent victims" (*Toronto Star*, September 27, 1996). The headlines are truly frightening: "Alcohol causes nightmarish birth defects" (*Montreal Gazette*, August 18, 1989), "Drinking during pregnancy can produce children with stunted growth and low IQs" (*Toronto Star*, August 28, 1989), "Brain-damaged babies ..." (*Vancouver Sun*, June 8, 1996), "Fetal alcohol syndrome at 'epidemic' level: MDs" (*Montreal Gazette*, February 26, 1997) and "Mothers-to-be who drink face jail: two states pass tough fetal protection laws" (*Calgary Herald*, May 31, 1998). Headlines are an important parameter in content analysis of media communication because the headline is likely to be read more often than the article; in addition, the terms used in headlines can reinforce stereotypes (Grenier, 1994:322).

It is known that the findings on FAS are far from conclusive, and that methodological problems in many studies, such as a retrospective study in groups where FAS is expected to occur, may falsely over-estimate the rate of FAS in the population (McKenzie, 1997:195). And although most of the articles refer briefly to the many unknowns on this topic, this information is usually buried towards the end of the article. An over-simplified and, in my opinion, patronizing solution is often proposed: "The cure

for FAS is simple - don't drink during pregnancy," notes one article¹⁸; "By just common sense and good living, we could get rid of FAS; it could be completely eradicated," says a Calgary addictions counsellor;¹⁹ "Don't drink alcohol if you're trying to get pregnant. Say 'no' to alcohol during the first three months of pregnancy. Use good sense for the rest of the pregnancy." advises a medical columnist;²⁰ "Plan your pregnancy," advises a guidebook published by the British Columbia provincial government.²¹ Yes, but what about the number of pregnancies that are unplanned, which, according to Dr. Gideon Koren at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, ranges up to 50 percent?²² This fact is ignored.

The entire responsibility for a healthy fetus is placed squarely on the woman's shoulders, despite the fact that it takes a man and a woman to create a baby. Only one article refers to the male role in this process, noting the lack of research into the effect on the fetus of the father's alcohol consumption. Dr. Robert Sokol of the Cleveland Metropolitan Hospital notes:

¹⁸"Pregnancy, booze make a dangerous cocktail: A plea for early and lifetime intervention," *Vancouver Sun*, February 12, 1997.

¹⁹"Alcohol takes its toll on unborn children: Women who drink while pregnant leave a legacy that won't go away," *Calgary Herald*, February 9, 1998.

²⁰"Avoid alcohol when trying to conceive: don't give your child a hangover for life," *Montreal Gazette*, February 18, 1996.

²¹"Victoria tries to warn mothers not to drink," *Vancouver Sun*, November 17, 1998.

²²"Risk of alcohol during pregnancy still unknown," *Halifax Daily News*, October 13, 1998.

*Women who drink heavily tend to be associated with men who drink heavily. Men develop potency problems, their male hormone levels fall and it may have effects in pregnancy outcome.*²³

There are a number of features that set this article apart from the majority of articles on this topic: it is longer than most, occupying two thirds of the first page of the Lifestyles section of the paper. It provides more balanced information, noting that many studies to that date had been conducted with lower socio-economic groups from the core city, thus skewing the results. It also acknowledges that alcohol consumption is only one of many factors that contribute to the healthy development of a fetus. Finally, it contains the above statement about the father's role, although this information is located towards the end of the article.

While no one can dispute the severity of the effects on the Aboriginal population of FAS, some authors are cautious about the reliability of the statistics on FAS because of the large number of studies conducted among Aboriginals or African-American populations only. As McKenzie notes:

Studies of minority groups may be severely biased. ... The potential cultural bias in these studies brings into question the findings of studies that found inordinately high incidence of FAS in these populations. (1997:197).

In my sample, almost half of the articles make either a direct or indirect link between Aboriginal women and FAS (13 of 27 articles). The phrase "... in some communities ..." is sometimes used as a shorthand reference to Aboriginal communities. Adjectives such as

²³"Booze and babies don't mix," *Toronto Star*, June 5, 1980.

"epidemic" describe the prevalence²⁴, "retarded, unstable and deformed" are used in the same sentence as "native" children.²⁵

McKenzie notes that risk factors for the fetus other than alcohol are not well understood, and that "... women who drink heavily during pregnancy are often poor, undernourished, depressed and abused. These problems are present among heavy drinking populations generally." (1997:197). In my opinion, this is what makes the over-simplified advice offered to pregnant women so patronizing, even insulting. Judging, blaming and criminalizing women will not solve this problem; provision of adequate housing, nutrition, child care and a secure environment free from violence and abuse will do far more.

Spector and Kitsuse have suggested that there is a 'natural history' to the way social problems come to be defined as such. FAS can be seen to have developed as a social problem along the lines of their proposed four-stage model. Stage 1 involves a group's attempts to define the existence of a particular condition as offensive, harmful, or undesirable and to stimulate controversy by calling for public or political action. The media plays an important role in the eventual definition of a certain condition as harmful. Stage 2 involves the recognition by an official organization or agency of the legitimacy of the group's claim. In Stage 3, the group re-presents its claim, often expressing dissatisfaction with the way the official organization or agency is handling the complaint. The process concludes with Stage 4, in which the complainant group rejects the official

²⁴"Fetal alcohol syndrome at 'epidemic' level:MDs:Ojibway community subject of study," *Montreal Gazette*, February 26, 1997.

²⁵"Alcohol causes nightmarish birth defects - Native child born retarded, unstable and deformed because of mother's drinking," *Montreal Gazette*, August 18, 1989.

response - sometimes lack of response - and develops activities designed to create alternative, parallel or counter-institutions (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:140-143).

The medical community first described the effects of alcohol on the developing fetus in 1973; since that time, more than 5,000 academic articles have been published on this subject (McKenzie:1997:193). By the 1980s, print and television stories about FAS were common. The pro-life movement is also a strong supporter of the medical community's position (Gomez, 1997). This could be considered as Stage 1 in the development of FAS as a social problem. Governments enter the picture, disseminating through official means the medical community's message; this is Stage 2 in this process. Stage 3 can be seen in the 1990s with the medical community collaborating with the media to increase its activities in this area. In Stage 4, the medical community, supported by the pro-life movement, is dissatisfied with the government response and increases its lobbying activities, with the result that legislation is adopted that permits the arrest and detention of "... addicted women for the sake of their unborn babies."²⁶ The Reform Party in Canada has proposed similar legislation for Canadian women.²⁷

Researchers such as Morgan (1981) and, more recently, Jamrozik and Nocella (1998) note the inherent political nature of social problems, which are the logical result of an unequal allocation of resources and imbalance of power in a society structured in accordance with patriarchal, capitalist ideology. Intervention methods, however, often

²⁶"Mothers-to-be who drink face jail: Two states pass tough fetal protection laws," *Calgary Herald*, May 31, 1998.

²⁷"MP attempting to protect unborn: Proposed law would force a pregnant substance abuser into a treatment program," *Vancouver Sun*, March 7, 1997.

address the situation via the justice system aimed at the individual, or micro, level, rather than at the macro, or societal level. In this way, the problem is converted from one of a social or political nature in the public sphere to one of an individual nature in the private sphere (Morgan, 1981: 17-26; Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998:10, 39-60). Morgan notes:

Historically, the foremost priority of the criminal justice system has always been the identification, sanctioning and punishment of particular or deviant segments of the working class (1981:26)

This describes perfectly recent developments in the treatment of FAS: rather than focussing on interventions that would improve the social conditions of the marginalized women who are most at risk, action has focussed on criminalization of individual women, via the adoption of legislation. Underlying the justification of this legislation is the strategy of holding women entirely responsible for their situation, adding to the illusion that individuals alone have the power to improve their circumstances. It distracts the public from the issues that have created the situations that lead many women to use substances as a coping mechanism: inadequate resources to deal with the lack of affordable housing and reduction in government funding of social programs, of which women are the primary users (NAPO, 1999; Day and Brodsky, 1998).

Drinking and the Law

Topics in this sample which are frequently reported in a sensationalized manner are drinking and driving and drinking and women as perpetrators of violence, included in the category 'drinking and the law'. In almost half of the articles on drinking and driving (11 of 23), the drinker is a woman with a public persona - such as Oksana Baiul, the Olympic

figure skating champion, Jennifer O'Neill the actress, Alice Walton, heir to the Wal-Mart fortune, and Frances Shand Kydd, the mother of Princess Diana. There is little that is 'newsworthy' in these articles, beyond the fact that these well-known women were charged with drinking and driving. "Diana's mother grounded" is the headline of the story that was published in the *Montreal Gazette* on November 23, 1996. The subject of the story is not even named in the headline as a person in her own right, but is identified by her social role of mother. In an impressive display of alliteration, another article is headed: "Bombed Baiul was blazing along at 160 km-h" (*Halifax Daily News*, January 23, 1997).

Two articles reporting on women who have killed their partners carry the following headlines: "Pushed man off balcony, woman gets 5 years" (*Toronto Star*, March 4, 1997) and "Woman is jailed for killing her lover" (*Toronto Star*, October 16, 1996). The articles, each of which is a report of the court proceedings, note that the woman was involved in an abusive relationship and had experienced other violence in her life. The link between this abuse and subsequent substance use is not made, however. Instead, one defence counsel traces the alcohol abuse to "... when she was 15 after her beloved grandmother was killed in a car crash."²⁸

Sources

Through the use of sources, the news constitutes an authoritative vision of the social order (Ericson et al., 1989:4). Other content analyses of daily newspapers have

²⁸"Woman is jailed for killing her lover," *Toronto Star*, October 16, 1996.

demonstrated that increasingly, most of the sources cited are affiliated with government and large organizations. This has led one author to contend that the news legitimates the sociopolitical structure (Voakes et. al, 1996:584). My research has produced similar results: 56.4 percent of the primary sources can be defined as 'claims-makers.' In the category of 'claims-maker' I included the following: doctors and other members of the health care profession such as social workers and addictions counsellors; institutional representatives (i.e. from the Addictions Research Foundation); government representatives; representatives of the legal system (police, lawyers, judges); academics; and union president (one article). The drinker has been cited in only 30 articles, or 20.1 percent of the articles, thus supporting Smith's argument that various institutional forms that organize and control our world, including the media, have traditionally excluded and silenced women (1990b:6). In this way, newspapers delegitimize and marginalize women (Ericson et al., 1989:279).

My research shows that the source cited has an effect on the overall tone of the article: when the primary source is the drinker or a peer of the drinker, the article is more likely to be positive (22 positive vs 12 negative articles). Conversely, when the primary source is someone who can be categorized as a 'claims-maker', the article is more likely to be negative (15 positive vs 55 negative articles).

When the drinker is cited, there is a greater likelihood that information about pre-disposing factors will be provided. "I tried to stay happy and drunk," says one woman, "my childhood experiences were painful."²⁹ "I went the marriage and two kids route, but I

²⁹"Woman sues parents for life of abuse," *Halifax Daily News*, November 10, 1998.

felt frustrated, isolated and lonely at home," says another.³⁰ A native woman provides evidence of the power of stereotypes to influence the self-image of minority groups: "I drank to escape my reality," she says, "I saw natives as drunks."³¹

Drinkers of average and above average income were more likely to be cited than poor women: 16 articles vs 6 articles. The quotes often reinforced the 'normality' of these women's lives, reinforcing the 'abnormality' of a drinking problem for these women: "I played tennis every morning," says the wife of an advertising executive, "I was still mothering my four children. I gave divine parties."³²

Some articles in which a claims-maker is the primary source also provide evidence of possible pre-disposing factors, however the information is often coupled with judgemental information. Commenting on the abusive circumstances in the life of a young native woman who had committed suicide, the coroner's report noted: "The day before she died, Thomas had been drinking heavily and got into a fight with another woman over a mutual boyfriend. She then had sexual intercourse with two men."³³ A 1978 article, describing the resources available to assist native women arriving in Toronto seeking employment, quoted a George Brown College course consultant as saying: "It will teach

³⁰"'Battle of bottle' dogs housewives' footsteps," *Calgary Herald*, June 8, 1979.

³¹"Sober Walk first step to addiction recovery," *Calgary Herald*, November 18, 1997.

³²"White wine, tranquillizers made her life a nightmare," *Toronto Star*, May 6, 1978.

³³"Pacheenaht band member filled herself after being mother, alcoholic at age 21," *Vancouver Sun*, February 29, 1996.

the women how to learn to search for work, a home and a social life beyond the tavern.”³⁴

As noted earlier, articles about Aboriginal drinkers are more likely to be negative than positive. This subject will be explored further later in this chapter.

Doctors and other representatives of the health care profession constitute 24 percent of the primary sources cited in this sample (36 articles). As noted earlier in the discussion of drinking and pregnancy, articles in which these sources are quoted are frequently negative. I was somewhat surprised, however, by some of the viewpoints expressed by members of the medical profession on topics other than drinking and pregnancy. “Alcohol abuse by women carries far more of a stigma because ... it leads to less sexual inhibition, making women less able to fend off sexual advances.”³⁵ This is another classic example of victim-blaming, and I find it distressing that this article dates from 1996; I would have expected this type of comment two decades ago. A female addictions counsellor expressed this viewpoint about the pre-disposing factors for a woman’s alcoholism: “Something that forces women to be alcoholics has to do with feminism.”³⁶ This point of view is consistent with the medical model of treatment, which dominates the field of addictions treatment. Almost 90 percent of the articles, when describing treatment options for addictions, mention either the medical model or do not state which treatment type is being discussed. This is another example of Khayatt’s

³⁴“Women in the twilight,” *Toronto Star*, October 27, 1978.

³⁵“Women have their own problems when it comes to alcohol,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 19, 1996.

³⁶“Big problem with female drunks is getting them out of the closet,” *Calgary Herald*, June 24, 1978.

'default position' (1998:5), in that the medical model dominates the field and therefore does not need to be named. One of the articles that describes woman-centred treatment is the report of the opening of Ottawa-based Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre in May 1979. The quote from the Centre's Director, Nancy Huneault, provides evidence that this Centre has a different approach to women and addictions:

*The women we're seeing are people who've always put somebody else's needs first. They don't think they deserve attention, even from themselves. While this phenomenon is true for almost all women, drinkers feel it to an extreme degree. We want to help them express what they're really feeling when they're sober.*³⁷

However, only five articles in this sample (3.4 percent) discuss woman-centred treatment options. While it is true that there are very few woman-centred treatment programs available (Adrian and Kellner, 1996), a journalist sensitive to women's issues could be expected, in my opinion, to note this lack.

Missing Information

My research indicates that there is much information about women and drinking that is not reported which, in my opinion, contributes to the continuing stigmatization of women who drink.

It has been argued that women's use of alcohol and other substances must be considered within the context of their socialization and social conditions (Addictions Research Foundation, 1996; Adrian and Kellner, 1996; Bepko, 1986; Carter, 1997; Ettorre, 1994, 1989, 1986; Fillmore, 1984; Forth-Finegan, 1991; Gomberg, 1986, 1984;

³⁷"New sisterhood for sobriety," *Toronto Star*, May 8, 1979.

Lundy, 1991; Smith, 1983). We know that women as a group are poorer, suffer more frequent abuse from intimate partners, and generally have less social and political power than men. We know that women are more likely to be single parents than men, and that most of them will live in poverty (Day and Brodsky, 1998). We know that Aboriginal women as a group have much more difficult lives than women who are not Aboriginal (Scott, 1996).

We know that women's experience of violence, whether in childhood or as an adult, is positively correlated with the subsequent development of a substance abuse problem (Ettorre, 1992). We know that, on average, women drink less than men and are less likely to seek help for a drinking problem, for a variety of reasons that include barriers to treatment, lack of treatment programs that meet their needs, and lack of support from family members (Adrian and Kellner, 1996; Bepko, 1986).

How much of this factual information makes its way into the articles in this sample? Very little. Articles about women drinkers are more likely to report the woman's age (55.7 percent of articles), whether she has children (22.8 percent) or her marital status (34.6 percent) than to provide information about the availability and accessibility of treatment or to report that women drink less than men. Only 5 articles mention that women face barriers to treatment such as lack of childcare and lack of programs to meet their needs; none of these articles was published in the 1990s. Only 8 articles link childhood experiences of abuse and violence with the subsequent development of a drinking problem, 2 in the 1980s and 6 in the 1990s. Only 4 articles include information about a woman's experience of violence as an adult, all published in the

1990s. Only 18 percent of articles (27) link drinking with the development of health problems.

Reinharz notes that "... feminist content analysis is a study both of texts that exist and texts that do not..." which enables us to link both the existing and missing text with the "... social conditions of the time" (1992:163). The social conditions of the comparative time period have been marked by a gradual erosion of social programs, introduced largely as a result of trade union action early in this century. Influenced by the ideas of economist John Maynard Keynes, who believed that governments could intervene to influence levels of investment and thereby regulate unemployment, in the 1930s the Canadian government introduced institutions and social reforms that many of us take for granted today. This state intervention has meant that most Canadians have had relatively easy access to goods and services such as education, health care, pension plans and social assistance (Teeple, 1995: 17; Barlow and Campbell, 1995, 29-30).

However, during the past 25 years we have witnessed a shift from a national to an international economy, also referred to as the globalization of capital (Teeple, 1995). A discussion of globalization brings one face to face with a range of simplistic, positive-sounding terms and phrases: renewal, new realities, Common Sense Revolution, and choice. In reality, these phrases are euphemisms for regressive, contradictory policies which have a disproportionately negative impact on the poor and marginalized in society (Ralph et al., 1997).

Women and children constitute a majority of society's marginalized, and are the largest recipients of non-contributory social benefits (Teeple, 1995:46; Day and Brodsky,

1998). There is also a racist quality to the language and policies of globalization. The “silent ideology of white supremacy” (Trickey, 1997:113) is used to promote racism by showing groups other than white middle-class property owners as the problem. Articles in this research sample bear witness to the effects of globalization: the simplistic ‘solutions’ that place the responsibility and blame for FAS squarely on women while social resources that might alleviate the situation are pulled out from under them; the disproportionately high number - two-thirds - of articles about Aboriginals and drinking that have a negative tone.

This time period has also been marked by an anti-feminist backlash from mainstream institutions. As Faludi notes:

Most important, the press was the first to set forth and solve for a mainstream audience the paradox in women's lives, the paradox that would become so central to the backlash: women have achieved so much yet feel so dissatisfied; it must be feminism's achievements, not society's resistance to these partial achievements, that is causing women all this pain (1991:77)

This argument can be applied to women's use of substances as one of the coping mechanisms employed to cope with this pain.

Finally, we need to consider the news industry itself. Newspapers are engaged in fierce competition for readers, not only with each other but with newer technological innovations such as the Internet. One way to boost sales is through the use of sensationalization of information (Grenier, 1994:333; Ericson et al., 1989:117). As this sample demonstrates, far more articles carried a sensationalized tone in the 1990s than in the 1970s, and constitute the largest number of articles in the sample (22). In addition, as

Miller argues, the daily press can be characterized as 'arrogant and imperial', employing few journalists of colour and even fewer of Aboriginal ancestry. While there are growing numbers of women on staff, few of them occupy positions senior enough to determine what gets published and the priority it will be given in the paper (1998:35-57).

The combination of these forces has led to the publication in the daily press of information about women drinkers that can only perpetuate the social myth that nice women don't. Using specific examples from articles in the research sample, the way the press has portrayed women drinkers will now be explored.

Women Drinkers - Through the Eyes of the Daily Press

It was noted earlier that the reliability of information about women drinkers published in the daily press needs to be questioned. This section will explore this topic in further detail. From a discussion of women drinkers in general, it will proceed to an examination of the portrayal of women drinkers who are Aboriginal.

Women Drinkers are Criminals

Over one-quarter (26.1 percent) of the articles in this sample concern women who have come into contact with the law as a result of drinking. Articles about drinking and driving comprise the majority of this subject (23 articles), followed by articles about women as perpetrators of violence (9 articles). Anyone who relies on the newspaper for information about women drinkers, therefore, could come to the conclusion that women commonly drink and drive. Yet women as a group drink less than men, both in terms of

frequency and amount. Women also constitute a smaller percentage of those who drink and drive (CADS, 1994).

Women Who Drink are Bad Mothers

Women are still strongly identified with their social role as mothers; over one-quarter of the articles in which only women drinkers are described include a reference to children, as opposed to none of the articles in which only men drinkers are described (although it must be remembered that only 11 articles in this sample describe male drinkers only). In addition, as noted earlier, the largest number of articles on any one subject in this sample concerns drinking and pregnancy.

Sometimes reference to motherhood is the only information provided about them, in addition to the fact that they have a drinking problem. In one of the early articles, compassionate to the issue of the over-medication of women, a short paragraph mentions a woman named Louise. She is described as "... a childless 34-year-old wife" who had been drinking heavily for three years.³⁸ Is the journalist - a male - trying to attribute Louise's drinking to her childlessness? A woman sentenced to life imprisonment in 1979 for beating her male tenant (whom the woman reported she had caught trying to rape his six year-old son) is identified as: "... a mother of six ..."³⁹ A typical introduction to an article about the 'housewife drinking at home' is this: "It's 10 a.m. The kids have gone to

³⁸"Medical sexism pushes women into pill popping," *Toronto Star*, March 25, 1978.

³⁹"Woman gets life sentence for beating man to death," *Calgary Herald*, January 25, 1979.

school. She's restless. A lot of brandy in a little coffee should do it."⁴⁰ Women internalize society's messages about how mothers are supposed to act, as this quote from a 1978 article indicates: "Guilt over present or past neglect of children because of drinking is another frequent topic at WFS (Women for Sobriety) meetings."⁴¹ Sometimes a story will contain a reference to drinking and children in the same sentence, even when the link is tenuous: "... she bought a bottle of liquor and went to a park, where she takes her two children - ages one and four."⁴²

Women risk losing custody of their children when they exhibit a drinking problem, and can be blamed for their alleged 'refusal to stop drinking or to take an effective treatment program.'⁴³ No mention is made, however, of what constitutes an 'effective' treatment program or how few women-centred treatment programs exist.

While women drinkers may be identified as mothers, some mothers are obviously 'better' than others, as a story published in the *Halifax Daily News* demonstrates. The lead paragraph reads as follows: "A 39-year-old mother of 14 proved beyond a doubt she could have children - but she couldn't convince a judge she could raise them."⁴⁴

⁴⁰"There are no hard and fast rules about why people drink," *Calgary Herald*, June 24, 1978.

⁴¹"Aid for alcoholic women," *Montreal Star*, December 15, 1977 [note - this article was included in the sample because it was listed in the 1978 edition of the Canadian News Index.]

⁴²"Two-time drunk driver gets discharge," *Halifax Daily News*, December 9, 1998.

⁴³"Alcoholic can't shake her addiction and fails to regain custody of son, 5," *Toronto Star*, April 24, 1996.

⁴⁴"Authorities take last of alcoholics' [sic] 14 children," *Halifax Daily News*, September 14, 1996.

Women Should Look and Act Like Ladies

Another frequent occurrence in stories about women and drinking is a reference to physical appearance, as this quote indicates: "... she is now 20 pounds lighter. With blond-frosted hair, ready smile and a forthright manner, she'd almost pass as a lookalike for Doris Day."⁴⁵ "She is an attractive, intelligent woman in her early forties who frankly describes herself as an alcoholic," reports another article.⁴⁶ An article on the 'anyone-can-be-an-alcoholic' theme begins: "She wears a smart looking skirt and jacket with a matching navy-blue sweater covered by a long overcoat."⁴⁷ This comparison of a male and a female drinker, through a description of their behaviour, shows clearly that women are expected to behave with decorum:

*Dean Martin made a good living at appearing drunk on his weekly show. Joan Collins, the Dynasty star, is seen pouring herself a drink and knocking it back at the end of many scenes. The outcome of such blatant drinking is rarely shown. As Marcelle [public information director for the National Council on Alcoholism] points out: 'We never see her throwing up down her cleavage, or waking up with three undesirables in her bed.'*⁴⁸

While Collins' behaviour is described in a sexualized manner, Martin's is described favourably in terms of the 'good living' he made. Describing Collins' behaviour in this provocative manner not only stereotypes women, it allows abnormal male behaviour to escape blame (Kellner et. al, 1996:159).

⁴⁵"White wine, tranquillizers made her life a nightmare," *Toronto Star*, May 6, 1978.

⁴⁶"'Battle of bottle' dogs housewives' footsteps," *Calgary Herald*, June 8, 1979.

⁴⁷"The many faces of addiction: People from all walks of life, not only the downtrodden, can fall victim to drug and alcohol abuse," *Calgary Herald*, November 18, 1998.

⁴⁸"The booze revolution: Has it gone too far?" *Calgary Herald*, September 7, 1988.

Women should drink with care, advises one doctor who writes a column in the *Vancouver Sun*, because it makes them “less able to fend off sexual advances” and so that they will not “... elicit feelings of anger, anxiety and betrayal from family and friends.”⁴⁹ In other words, perpetrators of sexual violence against women are blameless, and women are responsible for the feelings of those around them.

As with social messages of what constitutes appropriate mothering, women also internalize messages about the value of their appearance in a patriarchal society. An article about an AA meeting reports part of a conversation between two female AA members: “I know I shouldn’t say this, but she used to be so gorgeous.” “Yeah, I know,” replies her companion, “she’s in rough shape now.”⁵⁰

Women Drinkers are ‘Less Than’

Another message that comes through in these articles is that women drinkers are ‘less than’ - less than men, less than other women who do not have a problem with alcohol. Women drink because they have an “all-encompassing need for love,” says Dr. Jean Kirkpatrick, the woman who founded Women for Sobriety, an alternative to AA for women.⁵¹ Women cannot drink as much as men because they have less of the stomach

⁴⁹“Women have their own problems when it comes to alcohol,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 19, 1996.

⁵⁰“Women alcoholics: the shame of it,” *Toronto Star*, March 18, 1989.

⁵¹“Drinking linked to rejection,” *Toronto Star*, December 6, 1977 [this article was included in the sample because it was listed in the 1978 edition of the Canadian News Index].

enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase, according to a 1990 article.⁵² How refreshing it would be to read the following headline on this story: "Men have too much stomach enzyme, study shows". A woman with an admitted drinking problem, convicted of obtaining social assistance funds by false pretenses, was given a jail sentence, whereas a woman tried at the same time and convicted of a similar offence, but who did not have a drinking problem, was not jailed.⁵³ A 1990 article about the lack of treatment services notes that there are no women-only services in Nova Scotia.⁵⁴ The province will pay the cost of treatment in the United States, "only in some circumstances, usually when the needed treatment is not available in Nova Scotia." The head of the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency is quoted as saying there is rarely a need to leave the province, however, and that only 20 out-of-province cases have been approved in the previous five years. The article does not indicate whether these referrals were for men or for women, but I am left with the impression that the lack of services for women in Nova Scotia is not considered an adequate reason to refer women needing services out of province.

There have consistently been fewer services provided for women than for men with a substance use problem, and this situation persists today (Adrian and Kellner, 1996). I interpret this as an indication that women's health needs are considered less important than those of men. When articles are about women on 'skid road', as the 1970s articles called

⁵²"Alcohol's stronger effect on women blamed on lack of stomach enzyme," *Toronto Star*, January 11, 1990.

⁵³"Two welfare swindlers: only one jailed: Judge tougher on alcoholic," *Halifax Daily News*, January 9, 1997.

⁵⁴"Waiting for detox," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, August 8, 1990.

it, this difference is noticeable. As noted earlier, only 15 articles in this sample deal with this issue, of which 11 were published in the 1970s (two were published in the 1980s and two in the 1990s). It was not unusual for an article to discuss street people and not mention women at all.⁵⁵ Another article acknowledges that there is a 'hidden' population of women on skid road and that no one knows the number.⁵⁶ One article described the death of four residents of the Wonder Rooms in Vancouver's East Side, known for the prevalence of substance abuse there. The three men and one woman were all identified by name. In the concluding paragraph, however, the woman disappears: "Hotel residents were also hesitant to talk, even though the dead men, in some cases, were neighbors."⁵⁷

To conclude this section, as these articles indicate, the portrayal of women drinkers is still laden with moral judgement. This research supports the contention of other researchers that women's deviance is considered more severe when they contravene their socially-prescribed gender roles (Schur, 1980). In addition to highlighting their violation of gender norms, racism plays a clear role in how Aboriginal women drinkers are portrayed. Only a minority of articles (one-third) were coded as positive - denoting a compassionate or hopeful tone. This subject will now be explored.

⁵⁵"Drea wants winos jailed to help them stay alive," *Toronto Star*, December 18, 1978; Living is free on Metro's skid road," *Toronto Star*, March 4, 1978; Alternative to death on skid road - night in jail," *Toronto Star*, February 25, 1978.

⁵⁶"Home Base gives shelter to the homeless," *Toronto Star*, February 25, 1978.

⁵⁷"Skid Road cocktails kill four," *Vancouver Sun*, November 26, 1979.

Aboriginal Women Drinkers

Other researchers have noted that the media tend to portray persons of Aboriginal descent, along with members of other minority groups, "... as strange, as unpredictable events threats to social order, and as heavily engaged in emotive and largely deviant forms of conflict" (Grenier, 1994:13). It has also been noted that there have been few studies of media treatment of Native Indians in Canada (ibid) and that the media's portrayal of minority groups leads to stereotyping (Grenier, 1994; Miller, 1998). Only 16 percent of this sample - 24 articles - identify the drinker as native. How then can it be argued, one might ask, that the daily press contributes to the stereotype of the 'drunken Indian'? This section will suggest some explanations.

Of the 24 articles, half are about street people or make a direct reference to native drinkers and FAS. Even though the number of articles that specifically identify women drinkers as Aboriginal is small, when 50 percent of these articles are about topics that support negative stereotypes, the average reader is led to believe the worst about Aboriginals.

Two articles published in 1989 provide a glimpse of how our legal system perceives Aboriginal women drinkers. One article describes the inquest into the death of a Cree woman, who was pulled to the side of the road early in the morning of New Year's Day and left there, despite a bystander's insistence that an ambulance be called because the woman, Minnie Sutherland, had been involved in a car accident. The police refused, believing she was drunk. She died ten days later of severe head injuries.⁵⁸ The second

⁵⁸"Officer denies he was racist in handling native woman," *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1989.

article reports on the outrage expressed by many people across Canada at the comments of a Northwest Territories judge about sexual assault. Women in the North are often assaulted, Judge Michel Bourassa said, because they are attacked while they are drunk and passed out: "A man comes along, sees a pair of hips and helps himself. That contrasts sharply to the cases I've dealt with in southern Canada of the dainty co-ed who gets jumped from behind."⁵⁹

Motherhood is even more of an issue in articles about Aboriginal women drinkers, and the journalist's moral judgement is often evident: "Sinclair said her three previous children, the first born when she was only 16 ..." notes one article.⁶⁰ "Nootchai was a mother when she was 17, but she never really got to know her daughter Lori, or the 10 children who followed. Fathered by different men,..." notes another.⁶¹ The headline on an article about the inquest into a young native woman's suicide was: "Pacheenaht band member killed herself after being mother, alcoholic at age 21."⁶² Even when the overall tone of the article is positive, such as the story of one young woman in a native treatment program in Alberta, it can be presented in a negative way. The headline "Young native

⁵⁹"Irate native women want judge out for his comments on sex assault," *Toronto Star*, December 21, 1989.

⁶⁰"Baby's killer sought help, inquest told," *Toronto Star*, November 20, 1997.

⁶¹"A lifetime of despair ends in cold hotel room," *Toronto Star*, January 16, 1989.

⁶²*Vancouver Sun*, February 29, 1996.

mom is learning basics of being parent” leaves the impression that even something as basic as parenting needs to be ‘learned’ by native women.⁶³

Only four of the articles are about efforts within the native community to address the problems resulting from alcoholism which, as Maracle notes is “... a symptom of the fundamental problems facing native people - problems that cannot be solved by half-measures in isolation.” (1993:2). Yet Rupert Ross’ work has noted the many creative ways that Aboriginal communities across the country are tackling the problem of alcoholism and its consequences (1996).

Miller (1998:36) concludes his description of a story about the alleged number of women who come to Canada to deliver ‘passport babies’ with these words: “By almost any standard, it was a good story. The only problem was, it was almost completely untrue.” The same can be said of the portrayal of Aboriginal women drinkers. The stories are generally superficial, over-generalized and patronizing. Not only does this do a disservice to the subjects of the articles, and by extension to native people as a group, but it also does a disservice to newspaper readers, who are being prevented from learning about the complex interweave of factors that contribute to native substance abuse.

⁶³*Calgary Herald*, April 9, 1998.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

I think that so many people have the misconception that addictions, especially alcohol and drugs, are strictly a problem of the poor and uneducated (Calgary Herald, November 18, 1998)

Relevance of the Research

This research has two primary objectives: (1) to increase the amount of information available to social workers about women who use alcohol as a coping mechanism; and (2) to provide an alternative view on the issue. Written from a structural social work perspective, it has explored how the daily press perpetuates myths and stereotypes about women who drink.

Structural social work focuses on social structures and how individuals are oppressed by the resulting power imbalances (Carniol, 1992:1-3). Its goal is

... to contribute to the transformation of society, through two methods: to provide care to individuals who are adversely affected by our patriarchal, capitalist society; and to work to restructure our society by changing the social order (Mullaly, 1993:53).

By examining how individuals are shaped and influenced by the various structures in society, including the church, the family, and the education and legal systems, structural social work analyzes social problems in the context of the patriarchal capitalist system in which they arise.

The data from this research indicate that, although there may be far more newspaper articles written about women drinkers today than there were 20 years ago, the information they impart does not necessarily reflect an awareness of the factors that contribute to women's substance use - whether that substance is purchased at the liquor store or the pharmacy. Few articles note that women drink less than men, both in terms of amount consumed and number of drinking occasions. Few articles question the fact that women are prescribed mood-altering drugs at a rate far higher than that of men or note how these drugs heighten the effects of alcohol. Women who drink are still too frequently described in terms of their socially constructed role of mother: an article is more likely to tell readers about the number of children she has or that she is a "lousy housekeeper" (Egan, 1999:A1) than to describe how difficult it is for her to find a treatment program that includes childcare. If the drinker is an Aboriginal mother, the article is likely to be laden with moral judgement.

The majority of articles in this sample omit the drinker's employment status and socio-economic status. This obscures the differences that these characteristics contribute to the visibility of a drinking problem. In addition, when the race of a drinker is noted, the implication is often that race somehow explains the problem. Over the comparative time period, the number of articles about drinkers of average and above average income has increased slightly, creating the impression that 'anyone can have a drinking problem'. However, it is drinkers who are poor who are most likely to come to the attention of the social welfare authorities. These are the women who have fewest resources and need help the most. As the data from this research show, articles that describe poor drinkers are

more likely to reflect a negative tone, and when the drinker is identified as Aboriginal, the article is twice as likely to be negative. Since women who drink risk losing their children to social welfare authorities, it is not unlikely that many social workers will eventually come into contact with a mother who may have an unhealthy attachment to alcohol as a coping mechanism. The addictions field is dominated almost completely by the mainstream medical model which, I have argued, does not meet the needs of women and other members of equity-seeking groups. A feminist perspectives on this issue is therefore important.

Social Workers and Power

Social work has been described as a “socially organized practice of power” (de Montigny, 1995:209). As control agents, social workers have a certain amount of discretion in determining whether a particular behaviour will become a ‘case’ and how it will be handled (Schur, 1984:188). Because they hold such positions of power in relation to their clients, social workers have a responsibility to confront their own attitudes about women and drinking in order to be able to assist women more effectively. This responsibility includes gaining an awareness of different addiction treatment philosophies and questioning how - or even whether - the different philosophies meet the needs of women who may have an unhealthy reliance on alcohol. They have a responsibility to read with a critical eye stories about women - especially mothers - and drinking that appear in the daily press.

Women who drink risk becoming labelled as neglectful mothers, with the consequential loss of their children. The male drinker does not usually face this risk. The greater consequence to women than to men around loss of children is reinforced by data from this research: none of the 11 articles in which only male drinkers are described refer to their children or to their social role of 'father'. Obviously, this is not considered an important piece of information to include in a story about male drinkers. However, loss of children is real for women: in 1995, approximately 85% of the adolescents taken into care via the Children's Aid Society's Adolescent Crisis Team (ACT) came from homes where one or both parents abused substances.⁶⁴ Approximately 30% of the clients of Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre in Ottawa in 1998 were involved with the Children's Aid Society because of their drinking.⁶⁵

The concept of 'neglect' is itself a gendered, class-based social construct, as Swift has argued (1995). Neglectful mothers, the majority of whom do not match the media-generated ideals of womanhood, are considered to have failed in their duty (Swift, 1995:101-125). This focus on the performance failures of mothers obscures the poverty, violence, and lack of resources that mark the lives of so many, and which have been shown to be pre-disposing factors to the development of a drinking problem.

Swift notes that "Mothering is the means for producing particular kinds of future adults needed by society's economic arrangements" (1995:120). Social workers are key players in ensuring they remain at their post. Through their professional roles in the social

⁶⁴A. Brethour, ACT worker, personal communication.

⁶⁵K. Bulger, counsellor, personal communication.

problem apparatus, social workers help to maintain social order. Swift defines the term 'apparatus' as:

... sets of relevant social relations, connected directly and indirectly to state power, and performing both repressive and ideological functions. Although not commonly used in social work discourse, the term is useful in its power to evoke social relations that are otherwise not named or categorized and that are normally not perceived as connected (Swift, 1995:36).

The daily press is also a key player in the social problem apparatus.

A Critical Analysis of News Coverage

The feminist national electronic newsgroup, PAR-L, recently suggested seven questions which can be used to assess news coverage. Media in all their forms are more accessible than ever, yet it has also been argued that they increasingly reflect corporate and government interests at the expense of those of marginalized groups in society (Uzelman and Krause, 1999). It is interesting to apply the data from this research project to these seven questions.

Who are the sources? Over half of the sources in the articles that comprise my sample represent either government, addictions-related institutions, or the medical and legal professions. Drinkers are decidedly in the minority.

Is there a lack of diversity? In the majority of articles in this sample, information about the drinker's socio-economic status and employment is not provided, leading one to conclude that drinkers are an homogenous group. Only white and Aboriginal drinkers are reflected in this sample, and when the drinker is Aboriginal the article is more likely to be negative. Consistently portraying white drinkers more favourably than Aboriginal

drinkers, and white male drinkers more favourably than white female drinkers, has a normalizing effect on the issue of drinking, minimizing the consequences when a certain group is being discussed (e.g., drinking is OK for white men, not so OK for white women, and really bad - but only to be expected - for Aboriginals). The daily press is a powerful medium; even social workers who carefully assess what they read in the newspaper are likely to be influenced when the information about women who drink is consistently one-sided.

Do stereotypes skew coverage? The consistent negative coverage of Aboriginal drinkers promotes the myth of the 'drunken Indian' (Maracle, 1993). The number of stories on fetal alcohol syndrome, and the manner in which it is reported, creates the impression that the solution to this complex problem is simple: "just live well". Yet it is precisely because it is impossible for many women to access the care and resources they need in order to "live well", because of abuse, violence and poverty, that has led to the creation of the problem. The use of stereotypes eliminates the individuality of drinkers. Drinking does not always result in bad parenting. Sensationalized media coverage, however, creates the impression that it does. Social workers need to be able to separate the person (the woman) from the problem (the drinking) in order to provide effective, non-judgemental service.

What are the unchallenged assumptions? Some of the assumptions that one could make after reading these 149 articles include the following: women who drink are bad mothers; if women look and act like ladies, they won't get into trouble; it's OK for men to drink, but not for women; Aboriginal women have lower morals than white

women; women who drink deserve to be treated less well than other women; drinking makes women less able to defend their virtue. However, the assumption about the appropriateness of women's drinking is not supported by public opinion, as reflected in the 1994 Canadian Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey (CADS). One of the questions asked was: How many drinks is it appropriate for a man/woman to have at a bar with friends? The results (see Table 7 below) indicate that the majority of men and women are comfortable with either sex having a couple of drinks. On the subject of getting drunk, the answers of male and female respondents are even closer, and reflect a distaste for public drunkenness in both men and women.

Table 7 Responses by Gender - CADS Question				
# of drinks	Male Drinker		Female Drinker	
	Male Respondent	Female Respondent	Male Respondent	Female Respondent
no drinks	6.3%	8.8%	8.2%	11.6%
1 - 2	58.7%	68.5%	60.7%	68.7%
To feel effects	19.2%	10.8%	15.7%	8.7%
To get drunk	2.7%	1.7%	2.2%	.9%

However, it is the dramatic, the sensational or the controversial aspects of a situation that make it newsworthy (Ericson et al., 1989:283); it is therefore in the newspapers' best interest to perpetuate a social message that "good women don't drink".

Is the language loaded? There are several instances of ‘loaded language’ among the articles, but one of the most blatant, in my opinion, is the article headed “The booze revolution: Has it gone too far?” (*Calgary Herald*, September 7, 1988). While the entertainer Dean Martin is described as “appearing drunk”, actress Joan Collins is described as “knocking it back”. In articles about Aboriginal women, the word “only” often precedes the woman’s age, particularly when the journalist is referring to the age at which she had her first child.

Is there a lack of context? Almost three-quarters of the articles in this sample (70.5 percent) are short, which for my purposes I have defined as one-quarter of the newspaper page or less. It is difficult, if not impossible, to incorporate context into an article of this length. This is particularly significant in the 1990s, when such a large proportion of the articles are about FAS and drinking and driving. The sensationalized coverage given to many of these articles feeds a conservative, law-and-order government agenda and makes the task of those who are in a position to advocate for social change, such as social workers, more difficult.

Are stories on important issues featured prominently? Only 11 stories in this sample were published on the front page. They included stories of multiple deaths of street people, stories about rock stars and their use of drugs and alcohol, and political responses to issues of violence involving alcohol. Given that the location of the story is a basic indicator of the degree of importance attached to a particular event or group (Grenier, 1994:315), simplistic conclusions could be reached about who drinks (street

people, rock stars) and what happens when they do (violence). As I have argued, the issue is far more complex than the newspapers present..

Social Workers as Advocates

Social workers are among the 'claims-makers' described by Spector and Kitsuse (1977). They "... construct notions about the causes of the conditions they find onerous [in this case, mothers with an unhealthy reliance on alcohol], assign blame, and locate officials responsible for rectifying the conditions" (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:83). They are also more likely to be among the 50 percent of Canadian householders who subscribe to a newspaper (Miller, 1998:10). Even if they are not, they are far more likely than their clients to have access to a newspaper by virtue of the fact they are employed, as opposed to many of their clients. As Miller notes, people whose income is uncertain are not the ones who subscribe to a newspaper (1998:185).

Social workers have an ethical responsibility to "... advocate change (a) in the best interest of the client, and (b) for the overall benefit of society, the environment and the global community" (CASW Code of Ethics, 1994:9). As I have argued, legal, medical and social service professionals do not always act in the best interests of women who drink; their interventions separate families and stigmatize mothers and their children (Boyd, 1999:210). However, social workers are well placed to bring an alternative point of view to public attention. As noted earlier, over half of the sources cited in the articles in my sample represent claims-makers. A letter to the editor from a social worker therefore is more likely to be published than a letter from an 'ordinary' person - for example, a friend

of a woman who may have come into contact with legal or social authorities as a result of her drinking.

Social workers therefore have an obligation to challenge biased media coverage wherever they find it. They should act as spokespersons, and advocate on behalf of their clients at every opportunity. They should react via letters to the editor and 'op-ed' articles to stories that unfairly characterize mothers who drink, or that rely on stereotypes to make a point. They can challenge patriarchal assumptions about women. They can provide context where it is lacking - particularly as regards the effects of poverty.

Despite the growth of electronic media, the daily newspaper is still an important part of the relations of ruling; politicians pay attention to what appears in print. Social workers have the knowledge and the ability to influence the direction of social policy. One area where their input is urgently required is the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). My data show that more newspaper articles have been written about a woman drinker's potential to produce a baby with fetal alcohol syndrome than about any other topic. Coverage almost always lacks context and offers simplistic, often unrealistic, solutions. Social workers can lobby for policies that are sensitive to women's needs as whole persons, and not simply related to their child-bearing capacity. Simplistic solutions such as "don't drink" and "all you need is common sense and good living" not only place the entire responsibility for a healthy baby on the woman's shoulders, but also distract attention from the issues that have created the situations that lead many women to turn to substances as a coping mechanism: poverty, violence and insufficient resources. Several American states now have legislation that criminalizes a pregnant woman who abuses

substances. Similar legislation has been proposed, via a private member's bill, in Canada. In order to assist women effectively, social workers need to know more than these simplistic solutions, which have been incorporated into many of the newspaper articles on this subject.

Women who drink are often abandoned by their heterosexual partners and other family members and are deprived of economic and social support. It is important for social workers to help women build their self-esteem, which is so critical to the woman who is trying to overcome a drinking problem. Social workers can bring attention to the lack of treatment facilities for women; they can advocate for gender-sensitive treatment programs that do not follow a patriarchal treatment model (Carter, 1997:482-483).

Finally, because social workers are so frequently involved in child welfare cases, they need to become aware of how drugs are being promoted as a quick cure-all for so-called childhood behavioural problems. The same ideology that over-medicates women is being extended to children through the increasing prescription of Ritalin (Lexchin, 1984:25). Despite the fact that "... no neurological sign or test ... has been established ... to differentiate hyperactive children or those with minimal brain dysfunction from normal control subjects ..." (Ibid.), Ritalin use is on the increase (Lexchin, 1984:25-28). It seems logical that children removed from their familiar surroundings by Children's Aid Society social workers, even though it may be for their own protection, will display behaviour that could easily be defined as 'problematic' or 'hyperactive'. By becoming more aware of addictions and the inherent dangers associated with increased medicalization, social

workers can ensure that the children for whom they have responsibility learn a different, healthier way to deal with life's problems.

I do not wish to imply that the power accruing to social workers by virtue of their position in the system of social problem management will automatically result in public policy choices that put social health before so-called economic health. The social, political and economic context in Canada today is guided by those who believe in the freedom of the market and the need to be competitive at whatever cost. Unfortunately, it is women and children who bear the disproportionate burden of that cost. Economic issues are paramount, with the result that issues of race and gender equality come a distant second, and equality commitments (such as they are) fall by the wayside. Those who oppose these policy choices are often portrayed as being simplistic and out of touch with reality; their credibility is sometimes questioned.

The result can be demoralization and a sense of helplessness - a belief that there truly is no alternative. In effect, those with the ability and resources to advocate for the marginalized become silenced, which only perpetuates the isolation of those who require advocacy. Yet advocacy is needed more than ever, on behalf of ever-increasing numbers of people. Data from the recent census show that in the period between 1990 and 1995, the number of people living in poverty grew by 29 percent, while the population as a whole increased only 6 percent. About 44 percent of Aboriginal people living off reserve live in poverty (Wiggins, 1998:9).

Social workers are well-placed to advocate for change: they come in contact daily with those who are most negatively affected by the regressive and divisive social policies

that have been introduced in the name of 'common sense'. They know first-hand where the needs are. It is difficult to retain one's faith in one's ability to make a difference in today's social, political and economic climate. However, I have always drawn strength from something Margaret Mead wrote, and with which I will conclude this work:

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed
people can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

POST-SCRIPT

The story that generated my interest in this work has come full circle. In December 1999 the mother who, with more than twice the legal limit of alcohol in her system, drove out onto the highway with her young daughter clinging to the car's back bumper was sentenced to nine months in jail. Published on the front page of the *Ottawa Citizen* with a full-colour photograph, the article carried this caption: "She cares more for partying than for her children." This was the lead paragraph: "She lived in a trailer on the edge of Kemptville, a single mother and a lousy housekeeper." (Egan, 1999:A1).

The very next day, December 3, 1999, a story appeared on page A3 of the *Ottawa Citizen* about the sentencing of bank robber Stephen Reid in Victoria, B.C. The headline on this story was: "'Model father' destroyed by heroin addiction". The lead paragraph was: "Bank robber Stephen Reid's friends called him a model father and a wonderful neighbour during sentencing arguments yesterday." (Beatty, 1999:A3).

APPENDIX A
SPSS Coding Scheme for Newspaper Articles

Variable Name	Description	Codes
A: The Article		
decade	decade in which the article was written	1 = 1970s 2 = 1980s 3 = 1990s
paper	newspaper in which the article appears	1 = Halifax Chronicle-Herald/Daily News 2 = Montreal Star/Gazette 3 = Toronto Star 4 = Calgary Herald 5 = Vancouver Sun
author	gender of the journalist (author)	1 = female 2 = male 3 = not stated
place	location of the article in the paper	1 = front page 2 = first section 3 = second section or later
length	length of the article: short (1/4 of the page or less); medium (between 1/4 and a full page) long (a full page or more)	1 = short 2 = medium 3 = long
source1	sources quoted [first three]	0 = none 1 = drinker 2 = peer of drinker 3 = someone with economic/emotional influence over the drinker (eg spouse, supervisor) 4 = doctor/other professional 5 = institutional rep 6 = govt rep 7 = legal rep (police/lawyer/judge) 8 = union official 9 = academic 10 = other

Variable Name	Description	Codes
source2	as above	as above
source3	as above	as above
tone	tone of the article	1 = compassionate 2 = warning 3 = hopeful 4 = hopeless 5 = sensationalized 6 = patronizing 7 = informative
focus	focus of the article	1 = drinking + the law (drinking/driving, drinking/violence) 2 = drinking + street people 3 = drinking + women's issues (mothering, hidden drinking, women's health) 4 = drinking + pregnancy 5 = drinking + rehabilitation (inc. Detox) 6 = drinking + other issues (workplace, elderly, sports +media, general health)
Re individual drinking in general: does the article mention:		
cost	individual economic cost (eg effects on education, job loss etc)	1 = yes 2 = no
pregnan	effects relating to pregnancy	1 = yes 2 = no
appear	the drinker's appearance (including weight, clothing)	1 = yes 2 = no
behave	the drinker's behaviour or lifestyle (eg reference to number of children; parenting practices; drinking habits)	1 = yes 2 = no
health	how drinking has affected the individual's health	1 = yes 2 = no

Variable Name	Description	Codes
family	effects of the drinker's drinking on spouse and/or children	1 = yes 2 = no
treat1	the availability (or non-) of treatment	1 = yes 2 = no
treat2	treatment accessibility (eg location, number of facilities)	1 = yes 2 = no
treat3	barriers to treatment (eg childcare, cost)	1 = yes 2 = no
type	If addictions treatment is mentioned in the article, what type is it?	0 = not stated/unknown 1 = medical model 2 = 12-step 3 = feminist 4 = WFS (women for sobriety) 5 = other self-help 6 = more than 1 7 = native healing
less	that women drink less than men	1 = yes 2 = no
more	that fewer women than men seek help for a drinking problem	1 = yes 2 = no
ladies	does the article convey the thought that "ladies don't drink"?	1 = yes 2 = no
research	what research has been conducted on issues related to women and drinking?	1 = yes 2 = no
The Drinker/s		
race	race of the drinker/s	1 = white 2 = aboriginal 3 = visible minority (inc. Asian) 4 = not stated

Variable Name	Description	Codes
ses	the socio-economic status of the drinker/s	1 = poor (social assistance, inc. working poor, eg waitress, bartender) 2 = average (eg flight attendant; suburban mom with employed spouse) 3 = wealthy (eg politician/actor/spouse of) 4 = not stated
gender	gender of the drinker/s	1 = male & female 2 = male only 3 = female only
Are the following noted about the drinker/s:		
age	age	1 = yes 2 = no
kids	children	1 = yes 2 = no
married	marital status	1 = yes 2 = no
school	level of education	1 = yes 2 = no
job	occupational status	1 = not stated 2 = paid employment 3 = unpaid employment (eg full-time homemaker) 4 = unemployed
drugs	whether the drinker also uses prescription drugs	1 = yes 2 = no
fault	that the drinker is at "fault"?	1 = yes 2 = no
abuse1	whether the drinker experienced violence/abuse as a child	1 = yes 2 = no
abuse2	whether the drinker experienced violence/abuse as an adult	1 = yes 2 = no

APPENDIX B
SPSS Descriptor: Tone
Definitions and Examples

Tone descriptor	Dictionary definition ¹	Example of use
compassionate	showing sympathetic consciousness of others' distress along with a desire to alleviate	article includes reference to at least one of the following: drinker's background, social situation; balances information between negative (eg loss of children due to drinking) with positive (eg how drinker is addressing problems); notes barriers facing women in (a) getting into treatment programs and (b) staying there [eg no childcare; no home support]
warning	giving notice beforehand, esp. of danger or evil	article highlights dangers of drinking without providing any counterbalancing information - eg lack of treatment facilities; differences between men/women; predisposing social/economic conditions; describes effects of FAS/FAE without reference to the drinker as a person; links alcohol and crime.
hopeful	[hope: expectation of fulfilment or success] hopeful: having qualities which inspire hope	article describes ways in which drinker has addressed situation despite structural barriers; indicates some understanding of the difficulties involved in dealing with a drinking problem in some social/economic situations (eg poverty, isolation, government cutbacks)

Tone descriptor	Dictionary definition ¹	Example of use
hopeless	having no expectation of good or success; not susceptible to redemption or cure; incapable of redemption or improvement	describes drinkers on 'skid road' without providing counterbalancing information about drinkers in the rest of the population; provides many negative examples (eg the number of children removed from native parents; the number of police visits because of violence) without providing contextual information.
sensationalized	[sensational: arousing or tending to arouse (as by lurid details) a quick, intense, usually superficial interest, curiosity, or emotional reaction] sensationalized: to present in a sensational manner	article presents only the tragic consequences of drinking without providing any context; use of emotional-laden words (eg nightmarish); extra-large type face in headline (eg Drunk Mom's Baby Froze); reporting on an event simply due to who the person is (eg 'Diana's mom, media personalities); does not add to understanding of the problem.
patronizing	adopting an air of condescension (superiority) towards	article describes drinkers in terms that imply a lower ability or status than non-drinkers (eg some of these women have their sights set too high...")

Tone descriptor	Dictionary definition ¹	Example of use
informative	imparting knowledge, instructive	article includes some detail about one or more of the following: who drinks, how problems develop; how men and women differ in their reaction to alcohol and reactions from society; notes lack of treatment facilities for women

¹ Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1991. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster Inc.

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