

NEWS MEDIA CONSTRUCTIONS OF MALE PERPETRATED INTIMATE PARTNER
HOMICIDE

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ABSTRACT

The news media are powerful purveyors of culture in North America. Crime news reporting particularly is an influential means by which the news media define the boundaries of deviant and non-deviant behaviour. For the purposes of the present research, I examined the ways that the print news media constructed cases of male-perpetrated Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH) in Alberta. Using a social constructionist theoretical orientation grounded in an Ethnographic Content Analysis methodology, I examined 381 newspaper articles that discussed four separate incidents of male-perpetrated IPH. Approaching these data from the perspective of media reciprocity and a social constructionism epistemology, I considered the various ways that the print media presented these cases for their audience, but also the various ways that the audience's expectations and the general zeitgeist of the culture may have affected this presentation. Much of the dominant discourse in the cases I studied was consistent with previous research examining IPH presentations in the news media, namely that the media present victims and perpetrators in stereotyped ways according to their gender and ethnicity. However, I also examined some less prominent themes, including those that were pro-feminist, ambivalent, fictionalized, and constructed for the purpose of audience titillation and voyeurism. Additionally, owing to the qualitative nature of the methodology, I was able to examine discussions that subverted the stereotypical representation of victims and perpetrators in the news media and examine how these presentations could affect audience understanding of the phenomenon of IPH. Overall, the present project led to a discussion of how the media construct various facets of psychology and feminism and how these facets are in turn constructed by society in a reciprocal process whereby the media influence culture and culture correspondingly affects the media.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Blagica and Alex Fekete, Brenda Moreside, Cari-Lynn Gaulton, and Kelly Anne Quinn. Rest peacefully.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| IPV | Intimate Partner Violence |
| IPH | Intimate Partner Homicide |
| ECA | Ethnographic Content Analysis |

1. Introduction

The investigation of facets related to intimate partner violence (IPV) and intimate partner homicide (IPH) is a rich area of inquiry within psychology. Psychological research has examined personality characteristics (e.g. Starzomski & Nussbaum, 2000), mental illness (e.g. Dutton & Kerry, 1999), social histories (e.g. Bixenstine, 1999), and motivations (e.g. Wilson & Daly, 1993), as well as the risk of re-offending or victimization (e.g. Dutton & Kropp, 2000; Grann & Wedin, 2002) in the context of IPV. While far from an exhaustive list, these topics are some of the most common lines of research inquiry in the forensic study of IPH in western culture.

IPV and IPH are rich research areas within the social sciences, including psychology, and incidents of IPH are also at times sensational news media events. Indeed, despite the strong base of psychological and criminological research examining factors related to IPH, news media are often the only means by which the public receives information about these types of homicides. It is therefore important to understand what news media say about IPH to determine how the public understands these events. The purpose of the present research project is to describe how the print news media construct incidents of male-perpetrated IPH for their audience.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media Presentations of Intimate Partner Violence and Intimate Partner Homicide

Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987) argued that news is generally a report on deviance, or behaviours that stray from definitions of normality. Journalists are responsible for recognizing these incidents or behaviours and presenting them for the audience. In doing so, journalists become agents of social control, where they have the ability to define the limits of normal and acceptable behaviour for society (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989). The news media's presentation of behaviours identified as deviant influence society's way of thinking about and understanding the world. Indeed, the news media are skilled in defining deviance and those individuals engaged in deviant behaviour as 'other,' constructing them in opposition to the presentation of the values and behaviours of the social majority. Representation of crime is one of the most common means by which the news media construct deviance for their audience. In the present research I examined print news media presentations of IPV and IPH as exemplary of the ways the media construct deviance (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987).

2.1.1 Elimination of IPV discourse

Numerous authors agree that news media reports of IPH obscure a couple's history of violence, often minimizing it or eliminating it for readers. Even in IPH incidents in which a clear history of IPV exists, historically the media have been reluctant to discuss these details in their framing of the story (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Meyer, 2008; Meyers, 1997; Ryan, Anastario, & DaCunha, 2006). A number of researchers have examined this elimination of IPV discourse from IPH reporting and have discussed the implications of this type of construction.

Bullock and Cubert (2002) examined the presentation of IPH in print news media documents over a one-year period and discussed how the elimination of an IPV discourse seemed to occur because of the choice of expert sources. They determined the sources journalists

cited most frequently were those who were socially constructed as reliable or expert. These sources included police officers, court documents, and lawyer statements. A very small number of articles quoted personal witnesses such as friends and family of the victim or the perpetrator, and an even smaller number sourced an IPV 'expert.' Bullock and Cubert discussed how, by consulting law enforcement and legal experts as sources, media constructed IPH as a criminal justice issue, framing the story primarily as an issue of law and order. They noted a 'police' frame was common where media cited 'facts' without speculating about the nature of the relationship between the homicide victim and perpetrator.

Meyer (2008) noted that when the media did not include a discussion of a couple's history of IPV in cases of IPH, readers were prevented from contextualizing past relationship factors as relevant to the homicide. Indeed, this style of reporting often identified only immediate situational determinants as causal factors in IPH incidents. Factors such as separation and custody issues, or a perpetrator's experience of mental or physical illness, were often cited as explanatory and did not allow for a contextual understanding of the nature of the relationship, which, in many cases, was often one dominated by unilateral patterns of coercive control.

2.1.2 Emotional abuse

A discussion of an IPH that included reference to a couple's historical experience of violence in their relationship was not a frequent means by which the news media constructed this crime (Bullock & Cubert, 2002); however, this discussion of violence did occur occasionally. In contrast, a discussion of psychological or emotional abuse was almost always absent from news media discourses of IPH (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). Such a construction presented IPH to the reading audience as a phenomenon related only to physical violence, and might, according to Sims (2008), cause readers to overestimate the lethality of IPV.

By not including a discussion of other forms of abuse, particularly those relevant to IPH such as coercive control and psychological manipulation, readers of news media did not get the opportunity to link different forms of controlling behaviour to the abuse that might, in some cases, have led to homicide (Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008). Further, such a presentation precluded a discussion of how one partner could murder another even when there was no history of immediate physical violence between them. By not acknowledging emotional abuse and its possible fatal consequences, readers might have conceptualized IPH as a normal argument in which the perpetration of violence became excessive and one member of the couple killed the other, as if by accident. This type of construction would not allow for the identification of issues of power and control in the media's discourse, which researchers noted are important contextual variables in understanding IPH (Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008; Sims, 2008).

2.1.3 Degendering

The news media's failure to discuss IPH in the context of dominance and control is problematic for some researchers who noted that the lack of acknowledgement of these issues obscured other contextual factors such as gender disparity in relationships. Some authors discussed how the failure to include these discussions in news media degendered the problem of IPV in relationships. Berns (2001; 2004) discussed this degendering as highly problematic and speculated that it minimized and distorted evidence of gender disparity in society that made women vulnerable to all types of abuse. From her analysis of IPV discourses in popular men's magazines (*Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *Esquire*, *Men's Journal*, *Penthouse*, and *Playboy*), Berns determined the degendered discussion of IPV served to normalize it for readers, and consequently diverted reader attention away from the structural and cultural factors that contributed to IPV in society. Howe (1997) also discussed how when media focused on statistics indicating men and women, in near equal numbers, perpetrate IPV, readers did not get an

opportunity to contextualize these data within a discussion of gendered perpetration or self-defence patterns of IPV.

Berns (2001; 2004) further described how the use of decontextualized statistics not only degendered IPV perpetration, but also in turn led to a discourse of gendered blame for the problem of such violence. She discussed how authors in the documents she studied often depicted women as abusers of men. Further, she found in the men's magazines studied that authors also blamed victims, criticized societal tolerance for women's violence against men, and blamed IPV advocates for perpetuating a feminist ideology for what the authors believed was a "human" problem rather than a "women's" problem.

2.1.4 Privacy and individualization

A number of researchers have speculated the elimination of a discussion of IPV from the news media's coverage of IPH is a result of their belief that the private details of a couple's life, including the existence of IPV, are not suitable topics for discussion in a public arena (e.g. Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008; Farden, 1996; Sims, 2008). Sims argued this avoidance prevented a public discussion of IPV as a significant social problem. Indeed, Sims noted that by not discussing a couple's history of aggression towards each other, stories of IPH as constructed by the news media were framed as a series of behaviours that occurred between two deviant individuals, not worthy of public discussion or intervention. This presentation served to individualize the victim and the perpetrator of IPV and made a discussion of social responsibility or social intervention unnecessary.

The news media individualized victims and perpetrators of IPV using a number of reporting strategies. Alat (2006) discussed how the news media at times made a perpetrator invisible for the audience, naming him as an "attacker" or a "murderer" and thereby obscuring the nature of the couple's relationship. By presenting IPH as the result of a pathology or

psychiatric issue, the social roots of the problem were ignored. Readers did not have an opportunity to understand how social issues could influence the private behaviours of individuals (e.g. Meyers, 1994).

A discourse of individualization has a number of implications. Consalvo (1998) stated that by presenting a perpetrator as mentally ill, 'sick,' or 'out of control,' the perpetrator was situated in opposition to other members of society as an aberration. Therefore, readers of these constructions could not acknowledge the role they, as society, had in altering the patriarchal systems that would permit such behaviours. Additionally, when victims of IPV and IPH were presented in an individualized discourse, they were often held responsible on some level for their experience of abuse, and society was absolved from taking responsibility for protecting them (Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008).

2.1.5 Othering

Where some forms of media, such as the men's magazines surveyed by Berns (2004), had sufficient space to engage in an in-depth discussion of IPV, most news media, particularly newspapers, did not have the opportunity for such lengthy discussions. Nevertheless, these media did provide commentary about victims and perpetrators of IPV by framing them as 'other' for the audience and presenting them in opposition to general society. Bullock and Cubert (2002) speculated that the media's strategy of othering the victims and perpetrators of IPV was a way of constructing IPH as a rare and isolated event occurring in a context of deviance. Therefore, when the media discussed an IPH, particularly in the context of IPV, they used an 'othering' discussion as a means of differentiating the victims and perpetrators from mainstream readership. Bullock and Cubert's research described how media made couples 'other' by drawing attention to their minority status, cultural background, or socioeconomic status.

Bullock and Cubert (2002) noted that the process of othering victims and perpetrators of IPH occurred in their data when the media sought sources who expressed surprise at the homicide given the apparent normalcy or ‘niceness’ of the couple. In these cases, ‘othering’ was used to subvert reader expectations and was achieved when a discussion of the couple’s normalcy was contrasted with the violence of their behaviour. Such a presentation indicated to readers that the perpetrators and victims might not have been as ‘normal’ as they appeared. Mason and Monckton-Smith (2008) noted the media also othered both victim and perpetrator by constructing male perpetrators as monstrous and female victims as somehow deserving of their victimization. This presentation reminded readers that perpetrators and victims were somehow different from general society and differentiated them from the reading audience.

Researchers have also discussed how an othering discussion can emerge in news media reports of IPV and IPH when the media referenced gender stereotypes in a frame of victim blaming. Meyers (1997) criticized the news media’s tendency to individualize and pathologize victims of IPV when they deviated from expected gender roles. Meyers (1997) noted that the news media often framed women in uncompromising and stereotypical terms. Women who deviated from societal expectations of their gender were constructed as blameworthy for their own victimization. If a woman engaged in premarital sex, casual sexual relationships, or drug or alcohol use, she, according to Meyers’s analysis, was portrayed as deserving of her abuse or homicide in some way. Further, the media constructed women who had a history of abuse as deserving their fate for not taking the initiative to leave their abusive situations.

2.1.6 Victim-blaming

Discussion of a woman’s behaviour, clothing, or personality as a causal factor in her death was a form of the ‘othering’ frame that researchers noted was used to blame victims in IPV and IPH reporting. Alat’s (2006) investigation of the ways in which media covered IPV and IPH

in Turkey revealed a variety of strategies used to blame female victims for their victimization. Alat discussed how frequent references to a woman's dating and sexual behaviour were a salient example of victim-blaming, particularly given cultural taboos about female sexuality in Turkey. This pattern is not unique to Middle Eastern presentations of violence against women, however, as both Berns (2004) and Meyers (1997) noted similar discursive strategies in North American reporting.

The notion that a victim provoked her assailant was another common frame of IPH discourse observed by a number of authors. The news media presented women as provokers of violence by referencing victims' 'nagging,' promiscuity, adultery, or substance abuse as explanatory factors for her victimization (Alat, 2006; Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002; Meyer, 2008;). Researchers have interpreted the purpose of such discourse as an excuse for male violence against women and have noted that this presentation often occurs by way of subtle linguistic choices (Carll, 2003). Carll noted different patterns of discourse when comparing male-perpetrated IPH to female-perpetrated IPH and discussed how the news media often provided explanatory reasons for homicide in instances of male-perpetrated violence early in reporting, frequently in the headlines of the case. Examples such as the perpetrator's experience of rage at the behaviour of his partner reinforced a frame of victim-blame for the killing. In contrast, Carll discussed how when women murdered their male partners, the news media discussed the nature of the crime early in the discussion. This presentation would then focus on the violence of the homicide rather than provide explanatory reasons such as self-defence, which were common in cases of male-perpetrated IPH.

Frazer and Miller (2009) noted that the media often used the passive voice in their reporting of IPH, not only to blame the victim, but also to excuse the perpetrator. Differentiating between a passively constructed headline "Woman Murdered" and an actively worded headline

“Husband Murders Wife,” the placement of blame was clear in the second example but vague in the first. Frazer and Miller suggested that in passively worded statements such as “Woman Murdered,” readers would more readily identify the object of the sentence (e.g. the victim) which then allowed the reader to blame a victim for her situation.

As noted previously, researchers have also observed that the news media often held women accountable for their victimization by referencing their failure to take responsibility for ending the violence in their relationships by leaving or through other means of intervention. Meyer (2008) discussed how some constructions of IPH in the media, by way of expert sources, held women accountable for their victimization even in the face of clear negligence by law enforcement. Meyer (2008) noted that even in cases where a victim did not receive adequate police protection, she was often blamed for her victimization for not taking action against her abusive partner sooner or for not providing officers sufficiently detailed information about her experience of abuse.

While many of the above-mentioned researchers discussed the predominance of a discourse of victim-blame in news media reporting of IPH, others did not find the same patterns. McManus and Dorfman (2003) examined 488 articles that were published in 2000 looking for themes of victim-blame and other issues relevant to IPV and IPH reporting. They noted, according to their coding procedure, that presentations of victim-blame and deflection of perpetrator responsibility were rare in IPV reporting, though they still occurred with greater frequency than in general violence reporting. McManus and Dorfman cited statistical analyses of frequencies of victim-blaming language and noted that the text blamed victims in approximately one to six percent of the text studied by discussing the victim’s sexual behaviour or her “nagging.” This result was similar to that obtained by Bullock and Cubert (2002), who noted a victim-blaming presentation in approximately 1% of the cases they investigated. The difference

between these quantitative results and the qualitative findings of researchers such as Meyers (1997), Berns (2004), Meyer (2008), and Alat (2008) were likely reflective of issues of salience where, although a mathematically infrequent presentation, the inclusion of a victim-blaming discussion in media reports of IPH was deemed worthy of an in-depth qualitative analysis.

2.1.7 Race and ethnicity

The North American news media have tended to cover crimes involving minority racial and ethnic groups differently from those concerning individuals from the majority (e.g. Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002). The same was true for the news media's presentation of IPH, where their coverage of the murders of Caucasian women was different from that of minority women. While the news media have largely ignored the crime of IPV, regardless of the race of the victim and the perpetrator, the media presented the crime of IPH differently. Consalvo (1998) observed that mainstream news media virtually ignored IPHs in which a woman of a racial or ethnic minority was murdered unless the circumstances of her death were in some way exceptional. Farden (1996) also noted that the news media rarely covered the IPHs of Aboriginal women with the same depth as when a Caucasian woman was murdered under similar circumstances. Indeed, Farden noted the news media often completely ignored the IPHs of Aboriginal women.

Lundman (2003) discussed how racial and gender stereotypes led to the differential presentation of general violence against Caucasians in comparison to minorities. Lundman noted that the media did not often cover the murders of ethnic minorities because these murders were not considered significantly interesting or rare to warrant news coverage. Rather, these homicides were expected, and their occurrence was taken for granted. Indeed, if, according to Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987), the news was a report on deviance, then the frequency with which minorities were perceived to be involved in violent crime precluded these crimes from being considered newsworthy. They were considered so common they were not actually deviant.

However, Lundman also discussed how novel homicides such as those committed by women or those in which a white person murdered an individual from a minority group did not necessarily warrant more in-depth media coverage because they were too complicated to discuss within the confines of the media's preconceived notions of homicide scripts. Lundman's analysis instead revealed that murders which involved race and gender combinations that conformed to preconceived stereotypes (e.g. white female victim and black male perpetrator) were those that received the most extensive coverage.

Though Lundman (2003) discussed the stratification of presentations of violence against racial and ethnic minorities in the news media, Taylor and Sorenson (2002) noted that the media's coverage of IPH specifically was not related to the ethnicity of the victim or the perpetrator. Instead, they discussed how the media often covered IPHs unemotionally, without human-interest angles, in comparison to gang-related homicides and the homicides of children. The authors discussed how this differential coverage might have been the result of notions about IPV being a private matter, not appropriate for discussion in a public forum.

Kozol (1998) noted that when the news media presented minorities in discussions of IPV and IPH, it usually occurred in a stereotyped way, namely, within a discursive frame of poverty and social welfare. Kozol discussed how when an individual from a minority group was the victim of an IPH, particularly if he or she was from a lower social class, the individual was presented as not conforming to the standards of the middle class and deserving of victimization. Consalvo (1995) also discussed how the media often presented immigrant women stereotypically as having less power and social status than non-immigrant victims of IPH had. Consalvo further noted that the news media constructed immigrant women more critically when they did not conform to the expected role of 'good immigrants' in North American culture by being subservient and assimilating to the majority culture.

2.1.8 Mental illness

Research on the media's presentation of mental illness is a varied and large field of investigation with many studies noting that the media's construction of people with mental illness was negative. Specifically, these constructions tended to focus on the dangerousness, violence, and criminality of mentally ill people (Coverdale, Nairn, & Claasen, 2002; Philo, Secker, Platt, Henderson, McLaughlin, & Burnside, 1994; Wahl, Woods, & Richards, 2002). However, to date, there have been no qualitative or quantitative studies examining the presentation of mental illness in the context of IPV or IPH. Meyers (1997) did note that a psychological frame of interpretation was a common way of discussing the perpetrators of IPH incidents, where some sort of mental illness was implied as an explanation for their behaviour. Specifically, Meyers discussed how the news media often presented perpetrators as obsessive, psychopathic, or monstrous. This line of inquiry was not a primary thematic frame for her analysis and may be worthy of its own investigation.

2.1.9 Psychopathy

Psychopathy, defined by Hare (1993), is a personality disorder marked by an individual's refusal to conform to the rules, laws, and norms of society. Psychopaths are charming, manipulative, and lacking in conscience and empathy. In the popular media, news pieces often present psychopaths as serial killers, rapists, gang members, child abusers, and batterers. The public is fascinated by accounts of psychopathy, and these accounts are common topics in news and popular media (Burnett & Presse, 2006).

While the news media did not always label violent criminals as "psychopaths," media descriptions of their behaviour often made the construct both accessible and elusive to the audience. Where psychopathy was a distinct set of traits involving both behavioural and affective components, including a lack of empathy, pathological lying, parasitic lifestyle, and impulsivity

among others, the news media rarely discussed these behaviours as belonging to a series of traits consistent with a form of personality disorder. Instead, the media presented these traits and the people who exhibited them as evil or monstrous. (Byrne, 2003; Hare, 2004;).

The media commonly used a discussion of the traits that embodied psychopathy as a way of framing perpetrators of IPH without openly labelling them as psychopaths. Bullock and Cubert (2002) noted that in the newspapers they studied, the media attempted to attribute the perpetration of IPH to a specific type of personality or individual set of traits. Specifically, the media labelled these perpetrators of IPH in colloquial terms rather than those common among clinical or academic discourses of psychopathy (e.g. Hare, 1993; 2004).

Research examining the ways psychopathy was presented in the news media is limited (e.g. Stevens 2008), and, to date, there have been no specific investigations of the ways in which psychopathy is presented in the context of IPH. Although Berns (2004) and Meyers (1997) both discussed the ways the media implicated various personality characteristics as a means of individualizing the victims and perpetrators of IPH, there has not been a systematic investigation into the ways the media present the construct of psychopathy in these crimes.

2.1.10 Media attitudes

Criticism of the news media's coverage of IPV and IPH was a familiar topic in academic feminist research, and, generally, this criticism was warranted by the news media's misogynistic, unbalanced presentation of violence against women that blamed victims and exonerated perpetrators (e.g. Berns, 2004; Meyers, 1997). Farden's (1996) interview with the editor of a Saskatchewan newspaper was further evidence of the systemic sexism in the consideration of IPH as a topic of interest to audiences. The editor noted that the murder of women by their romantic partners was insufficiently interesting to warrant immediate and primary news coverage because its frequent occurrence made it mundane. Citing a desire to keep private details of a

couple's intimate relationship private, the editor excused the lack of media coverage of IPH for this reason as well. Additionally, while discussing the lack of media coverage of IPH against Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan, the editor contended this pattern to be an error or oversight. However, Farden noted that neither of Saskatchewan's two major newspapers provided any coverage of the murders of eight Aboriginal women in her sample.

Although the news media have been negligent on occasion in their reporting of IPH and violence against women in general, it seems this negligence cannot be generalized to all major news media outlets. Specifically, some researchers have noted changes in media attitudes towards the presentation of violence against women. Ryan, Anastario, and DaCunha (2006) assessed the impact of an intervention designed to assist the news media cover incidents of IPH in less misogynistic and more balanced ways than had been observed previously in the research. The researchers provided journalists in Rhode Island with a handbook advising them how to cover IPH in ways consistent with a feminist perspective. Designed to educate media about the systemic aspects of IPH and its relationship to IPV, the handbook was successful in altering newspaper reporting practices. It seemed that rather than reflecting a genuine and entrenched system of patriarchal misogyny, the news media's sexist reporting practices might have been more reflective of genuine ignorance about the issues of IPV and IPH.

Consalvo (1998) noted further evidence of the news media's occasional deviation from the expected sexist reporting practices. Consalvo compared the presentation of IPH in independent newspapers to national or corporate-owned newspapers and discussed how independent papers regularly challenged the sexist or misogynistic presentations of violence against women that appeared in mainstream publications. In discussing IPH and IPV, these independent media outlets were more likely to present IPV and IPH as social problems rather than problems of individual deviance and pathology.

Rhode (1995) argued that the news media's coverage of violence against women changed dramatically and in a positive direction following the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and the subsequent criminal trial of O.J. Simpson. Often referencing IPV experts, the news media examined issues of race, class, police response to IPV, and the lack of social services available to victims of IPV. Therefore, it seemed the coverage of IPV and IPH was variable depending on the climate of the culture in which a media document was produced. This variation in presentation was impacted further by the source examined, the author of the document, and the ideology of the editorial staff. Not all news media outlets choose to present IPV victims and perpetrators in sexist and stereotypical ways. Indeed, with the growing influence of the independent news media by way of the Internet, the hegemonic discourse studied in the present research may be subverted and eliminated with the rise of the Internet and the decline of print journalism in general.

Finally, it is important to consider that the vast majority of research studies that discussed issues of IPH and IPV presentation were written from a feminist theoretical perspective, which might have influenced the type of data the researchers looked for, expected, and subsequently found. Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mattis (2007) noted in their aptly titled article, *The Pond You Fish in Determines the Fish you Catch: Exploring Strategies for Qualitative Data Collection*, that data collection strategies determined the type of data collected and the results researchers would obtain. The same likely held true for theoretical orientation. The dominance of feminist theory in the field of IPV presentation research seemed to have resulted in a prevailing academic discourse where discussions of the phenomena often criticized the news media for their errors and rarely lauded the news media for their accomplishments.

3. Research Question

Researchers have studied the media's presentation of IPV and IPH from numerous angles. Most of these studies have been quantitative (e.g. Peelo, Francis, Soothill, Pearson, &

Ackerley, 2004), a mixture of quantitative and qualitative (e.g. Bullock & Cubert, 2002), or feminist commentary (e.g. Howe, 1997). Few of these studies have taken a systematic, in-depth approach to analysis from a social constructionist epistemology. While some aspects of constructionism were apparent in Meyers's (1997) work, her commentary on IPH presentation was grounded in feminist theory with only passing acknowledgement of the role of the media themselves and how they actively constructed perceptions of IPH. None of the research surveyed included the news media as a variable of scrutiny.

The purpose of the current study was to examine common news media discourses of male-perpetrated IPH using a social constructionist epistemology grounded in media ethnography. This perspective allowed for an understanding of how the media constructed incidents of IPH as newsworthy and described them as deviant or not by various discursive techniques (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987). The current study used theories and ethnographies of news media production to examine how the print news media constructed incidents of male-perpetrated IPH, the victims and perpetrators for the audience, and the larger culture, by way of a qualitative Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) methodology.

Ultimately, while previous research examining how IPV and IPH was presented in various forms of print media has contributed to the research literature by identifying common thematic constructions such as othering, victim-blaming, and mental illness, the present research contributes a unique interpretation to these and other themes and frames. Namely, in the present research, using a qualitative ethnographic approach, I identify less prominent themes and frames relevant to discussions of IPH. In the research cited previously, these topic areas might have been present in the documents under study, but an in-depth examination of them might have been ignored or omitted to focus on some of the more dominant discourses. The strength of the current methodology and its corresponding theoretical grounding in media construction is that it allows

me to examine and comment on topics as they are presented in the documents without having to interpret them through a specific theoretical lens. Such a research methodology will allow me to examine single instances of relevant topics and to identify potentially important ideas worthy of deeper examination.

3.1 Epistemological and Methodological Framework

3.1.1 Social constructionism

For the purpose of the present research, I have adopted social constructionism as an epistemological framework. Working within this epistemology, I assume that all knowledge, including that cited and constructed during the present project, is a social construction not necessarily reflective of an objective truth but a product of my active interaction with the documents under study. Further, I examined a series of media documents under the assumption these documents were themselves social constructions and reflections of the culture from which they were produced.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) described social constructionism as a sociological and psychological theory of how knowledge is developed and maintained in society. Generally, social constructionism maintains that knowledge is constructed by members of a society and does not exist in any objective form (Crotty, 1998). People and societies interact with each other to construct knowledge and to develop a coherent understanding of their worlds. Knowledge and reality are then an agreement between social actors but are subjectively understood by individuals. People make meaning out of their social worlds in different ways and reality only exists by way of individual engagements with the world (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, reality does not exist in some objective form, but is instead based upon the multiple realities of different actors in social life (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Crotty, 1998).

As a framework for research, social constructionism posits that there is not an objective truth or reality awaiting discovery by way of the scientific method. Rather, a researcher attempts to understand and describe the phenomena under study, while they acknowledge that their interpretation is also a construction and that the final product is the result of the researcher's interaction with the social world and not necessarily an objective reflection of it (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Crotty, 1998). In research, social constructionism requires the investigator to be critical of all forms of knowledge and challenge his or her assumptions about the social world and taken-for-granted categories of knowledge that do not objectively exist without social processes (Burr, 1995). Namely, the ways that we as researchers understand our social worlds are specific to our time, history, and culture.

Social phenomena described by psychological research, as in the current project, is a process of the interactions individuals have in their social worlds. Reality is constructed by language through which social actors construct a 'truth' by way of their interactions with the world. The production of research is one way of constructing this 'truth.' Eventually, the products of research, or 'truth-making,' become incorporated into the culture as a taken-for-granted feature of social life, which then allows future generations to guide their own understanding of reality and construct further 'truths.' Knowledge, or the construction of knowledge by way of research, is dependent on these previous constructions of realities and does not exist in any objective form (Berger & Luckman, 1967).

3.1.2 Social constructionism and the news media

The purpose of the present investigation was to examine the ways in which the news media constructed incidents of male-perpetrated IPH. As noted above, the assumption guiding this research question was that what we know of reality is socially constructed by way of our interactions with the social world. This socially constructed reality included our interactions with

other people, institutions, and media. Therefore, one of the guiding assumptions of this project was that the news media were active agents in our construction of the world around us. They actively shaped what we know and understand of reality, and they present it in specific ways. Further, the present research acknowledged that while the news media were active in creating our culture, they were also a reflection of it. The process of creating and describing culture is dynamic and reflexive, and, where possible, the present project acknowledged both the impact of the media's presentation on the reading audience and the audience's impact on the media's social construction of these events (Altheide, 1987; 1996).

My choice to adopt a constructionist epistemological framework informed by media ethnography necessarily eliminated other possible interpretive frameworks. As noted above, researchers have conducted much of the research in the area of IPH and IPV from a feminist or quantitative theoretical orientation. While Berns (2004) and Meyers (1997) conducted their research within a social constructionist epistemological framework, the theoretical positions of these studies were feminist in nature and did not systematically consider newsroom media culture as an active participant in the social construction of these documents.

Berns (2004), Meyers (1997), and Howe (1997) used a feminist theoretical orientation to frame their arguments. This angle allowed for the consideration of only a limited number and type of interpretations of the data, namely those interpretations that considered media presentations of IPH to be reflective of women's position in society. In contrast, an approach whereby the media were assumed to be active agents in the social construction of culture was grounded not only in the text of the articles themselves, but also in the setting in which the documents under study were produced. Therefore, understanding the text as a social construction was the primary lens through which I examined these data. Whereas some articles might have been worth examining from a feminist perspective owing to their inclusion of a discussion of

gender disparity, other equally relevant presentations that become apparent through data analysis, such as a criminal justice discourse, were also examined. For example, where a feminist researcher might have discussed how a newspaper article contributed to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes about women victims of violence, a researcher from a constructionist framework might have examined the same article as exemplifying the ways in which the media reproduce these gender stereotypes for the audience. The present theory and methodology discussed *how* the print news media produce culture, not necessarily *what* was produced (Altheide, 1987; 1996).

3.1.2.1 ECA

Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) is a strategy of qualitative content analysis developed by Altheide (1987) to analyze media documents. It is a means of analyzing the documents themselves in a reflexive fashion to help the researcher understand the meaning of discourse. ECA, in its essence, is a combination of ethnography and quantitative analysis, where ethnography is a description of people and their culture, and quantitative content analysis measures the frequency and variety of messages in documents. ECA allows the researcher to understand how the media construct culture and how members of the culture understand this culture.

Altheide (1987; 1996) described the process of conducting an ECA as one that involved collecting both numerical and narrative information from media sources in order to understand the complex ways in which the news media manifested and constructed culture. ECA offered more depth of analysis and interpretation than a traditional content analysis, which was not capable of capturing the *context* of documents. Indeed, while traditional quantitative content analysis was a means of categorizing the data in media documents, it was not designed to provide a conceptual understanding of the larger cultural landscape in which these documents

were written. ECA, in contrast, provided context, background, and a commentary to the numerical categories and codes elicited in traditional quantitative content analysis. Further, a critical difference between ECA and other qualitative document analysis procedures (such as discourse analysis) was that ECA identified the *process* of creating news in a journalistic environment as a crucial means of understanding the news piece itself. While in traditional discourse analysis procedures, researchers could analyze individual newspaper articles thematically, ECA ensured that the way the media constructed news was an ongoing frame of reference for analysis (Altheide, 1987; 1996).

3.1.2.2 Semiotics

The process of news creation is the defining feature of ECA and the principal theoretical orientation of the present study. However, within this methodology, there is room for an in-depth analysis of textual discourse. Semiotic analysis of the discourse is embedded within the assumptions of the ECA methodology. Briefly, the study of semiotics maintains that the collections of letters that produce words are arbitrary and only develop abstract meaning through social agreement of the meanings of these arbitrary collections of symbols. As an example, Bignell (2002) used the word *cat*, a collection of three letters that, when placed together do not objectively represent the furry animal (i.e. the word *cat* does not objectively look like the furry animal it is supposed to represent). It is only by way of an agreement among members of a particular culture that the word *cat* comes to symbolize the furry animal.

Media semiotics proposes that media formats, both printed and visual, use ‘signs’ that carry societal meaning. In the case of print media, words are the most common sign by which to communicate meaning. A semiotic analysis of a discourse in ECA will then pay particular attention to the choice of words a journalist uses to present the news of IPH in order to

understand how a case is constructed and how an audience makes meaning from a particular article (Altheide 1996; Bignell, 2002).

3.1.3 Media culture and ethnography

The reporting of events defined as ‘news’ is influenced by a variety of temporal, political, and practical factors that are artefacts of the journalism profession and not necessarily reflective of any external definition of ‘newsworthiness’ (Sigelman, 1973; Soloski, 1989). What is defined as news is constructed by media organizations, and what is purported to be ‘fact’ is actually a presentation of the organization’s political culture and its attendant demands. Understanding how a news office actually is organized and how journalists do their jobs is critical in an ethnographic analysis of any media document. Such understanding illuminates the context in which the news document is constructed and what the document implies about social order (Altheide, 1996).

An investigation of news documents conducted in a social constructionist framework requires the researcher to examine news media texts under the assumption that *news* does not happen, rather, *events* happen. Organizations and individuals define these events as newsworthy. The news media report on the events, thereby *creating* news for public consumption. News cannot be objective because it is constructed by people, defined by people, consumed by people, and does not exist without people (Ericson, 1998). Nevertheless, the illusion of objective reporting is a key area of professional and ethical practice among journalists. Journalists act to sift through varying perspectives on an issue in an attempt to find the ‘facts.’ However, the very practice of reporting the unusual, abnormal, and irregular events of life that are considered ‘news’ leads journalists and media in general to define for society what is normal, abnormal, exceptional, interesting, and deviant (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Sigelman, 1973; Soloski, 1989; Tuchman, 1978).

3.1.3.1 Media ethnography

The values of journalistic professionalism, including objectivity and fairness in reporting, are benchmarks for the profession. Producers of news and scholars of news recognize that these values are aspirational, and indeed, in a social constructionist epistemology, not achievable (e.g. Altheide, 1979; Boudana, 2011; Itule & Anderson, 1997; Soloski, 1989). The newsroom culture operates in a fascinating hybrid environment of positivism and constructionism. Journalists work under the guise that an absolute objective truth exists and, with the proper reporting technique, the facts and true nature of a story can be elicited and presented to the public. However, the realities of social life preclude this discovery because knowledge itself is dependent on the source of information and is ever changing; it is socially constructed. The impact of this hybrid culture on the production of news is an area worthy of its own field of investigation, the news media ethnography, and is relevant to the present research because an understanding of the *way* that news is produced helps to understand *what* news is produced.

Ethnography is a branch of research designed to provide an “in-depth understanding of how individuals in *different cultures* and *subcultures* make sense of their lived reality” (Hesse-Biber, & Leavy, 2006, p. 230, italics in original). The ethnographer enters into a culture and watches it as an observer, describing the cultural practices, customs, materials, and group dynamics of the population under study. Ethnography is often associated with anthropology, and researchers can use an ethnographic analysis to examine any form of culture, including the unique environment of the media newsroom. Researchers such as Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987; 1989; 1991) and Tuchman (1979) have devoted years of study to examining the very culture in which a news document is produced. While a discussion of the methods and results of these studies is beyond the scope of the present project, a summary of the newsroom culture is warranted as a means of understanding the production of news documents.

The newsroom culture is a highly competitive environment in which reporters and editors from the same organization and external organizations compete with each other for unique stories, angles, and sources that will appeal to the reading audience. Additionally, reporters compete with each other for places of prominence within the newspaper, where the number of by-line attributions and placements of prominence within the newspaper can accelerate their careers. The process of identifying a story worthy of featured prominence and reporting on it in such a way that appeals to the largest audience is a priority for reporters and editors. This concern influences the types of stories selected because, as will be discussed below in detail, the media will choose the story that is the most deviant in a sensational way for a place of greatest prominence in the media document (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1979).

The competitive nature of the newsroom extends to field reporting, particularly in crime reporting, where various journalists from competing outlets are assigned 'beats' to cover. For the purpose of this study, the crime beat and the court beat are the most relevant. Journalists from different papers meet, often at crime scenes or in courtrooms, interview sources, compare notes, and return to their newsrooms to construct a story out of the information selected. They choose an angle from which to report a story so that the story will appeal to the widest demographic of readers, and then construct the story within the confines of that angle. The process of determining an angle or a frame within which to construct a case is also the process of selecting some knowledge and eliminating other inconsistent or extraneous information. Often, the information eliminated from a story is that which is inconsistent with the reporter's chosen frame. For example, the discussion of IPV as a criminal justice issue is not consistent with a discussion of IPV as a public health problem, at least within the restricted space of a newspaper article. Therefore, a reporter would likely eliminate a discourse of public health to remain consistent with the criminal justice frame of interpretation. Having already dialogued with other

reporters from other organizations about the common facts of a case, the reporter can be reasonably sure his or her version of the story will be similar in context and detail to that constructed by other news outlets (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1979).

Upon the completion of the article, a reporter will send it to the editor, who corrects errors and makes stylistic or contextual changes. Often the editor chooses the headline of a story. The process of changing an article for publication is mired in ideology because the editor has the final say in the way that an article is constructed for the audience. Should an editor feel that a reporter's construction of a case is too sensational, not sensational enough, too right wing, too left wing, or too controversial, the editor will make changes to ensure that the content of the piece suits the ideology of the media organization. The editor then constructs the final document for the audience and is partly responsible for creating the type of knowledge distributed (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1979).

While very brief, this summary of the means by which the print news media produce a newspaper article typifies the way the information is presented—as a product of a culture and not necessarily reflective of any external reality. Indeed, this construction might not even be an accurate reflection of the reality of the original event. The process of constructing news occurs by way of the interaction of a number of factors common to the newsroom culture. These factors include linguistic techniques, an overall ideology that 'news' itself is deviant, and the process of framing a story. The audience's reaction to this process of construction and individuals' interaction with the text is illustrative of the reflexive process of news construction and the ways individuals make meaning from their social worlds.

3.1.3.2 Linguistic and discursive techniques

Newspaper articles construct crime by discursively framing newsworthy events in specific ways. Newspaper reporting itself is a branch of journalism with its own stylistic

demands. The newspaper-reading audience is familiar with the various formats that news media use to present their documents. The very organization of newspaper articles, both contextually and aesthetically, contributes to the ways the reading audience understands stories. The inclusion of bolded text, visual items such as pictures and graphs, as well as the article's placement on the page contribute to the way the events described are socially constructed. The use of various styles of leads, the language of headlines, and the overall discursive organization of a document influence the ways that a reader understands the content of the story (Altheide, 1996; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1978).

Crime news reporting is its own genre of media discourse and traditionally has followed a familiar and redundant discursive pattern. New pieces rely heavily on the repetition of salient details and familiar frames of interpretation, and, in turn, the audience expects to read certain details in the text and is familiar with some of the stylistic and linguistic techniques by which the news media present these details (Dowler, Flemming, & Muzzatti, 2006). Commonly employing the Inverted Pyramid style of reporting, crime news often presents the most salient details first in the article (e.g. who, what, where, when, why) and follows these details with contextual elements that become less and less critical to the audience's understanding of the case. The use of imagery and dramatic language draws the reader's attention to the article early in the document. This language often lessens in intensity as the article progresses, thereby lessening reader attention and interest in turn (Sieff, 2003).

While the research examining language use in crime reporting generally, and IPH reporting specifically, is minimal, a number of authors have noted some common linguistic strategies media use to construct cases for their audiences. Frazer and Miller (2008) examined the use of the passive voice in news media reports of violence against women. They discussed how the passive voice affects the reader's attribution of blame. For example, the headline

“Woman was shot” assigns no blame to a perpetrator. In contrast, a headline reading, “Man shoots wife” assigns active blame. Frazer and Miller (2008) noted that the passive voice not only seems to distance both writer and reader from the violent act, but also seems to draw more attention to the object of the sentence (either the perpetrator or the victim). The authors speculated that passively voiced sentences seemed to reflect social gender roles, for example, presenting women as having been acted upon. They further discussed how the passive voice in newspaper reporting also serves to conceal violence, blame the victim, and absolve the perpetrator.

Language choice in newspaper reporting offers a powerful means by which the audience interprets events. On a larger social scale, Goddard, de Bortoli, Saunders, and Tucci (2005) noted that linguistic choices in media reporting could serve to uphold and subvert notions of power and social control, and that writers could use language to enhance or deny victim rights. They described how, in cases of violence, language choice could take the form of ‘textual abuse,’ whereby word choice was used to further exploit and abuse victims. The authors noted, speaking specifically about child sexual abuse, that the media’s choice to define some sexual abuse cases as ‘relationships’ or ‘affairs’ is an example of textual abuse where authors denied the victims of violence their right to a victim identity in news media documents.

Alat (2006) discussed a similar process of textual abuse, noting how newspapers seemed to minimize the experiences of female victims of IPV by referring to their relationships with their abusers as dating or casual sexual. Alat noted that this tactic served not only to minimize the empathy felt by the reading audience, but also allowed the reader to blame the victim by speculating on her morality. Alat further noted that passively voiced sentences were frequent means by which the news media constructed the victim as deserving in some way the violence she experienced.

The position of the subject and the object within sentences, particularly headlines, in newspaper documents was another discursive means through which the news media constructed victims and perpetrators for the audience. Carll (2003) discussed how, in the case of male violence towards women, a perpetrator's reasons for committing acts of violence were often presented saliently and early in the text. For example, in cases involving a wife's infidelity, her choice to divorce, or her parenting style, this information often appeared in headlines or early sentences of the article as a means of providing explanation for the perpetration of violence. However, Carll noted that a woman's reasons for behaving in such a way often only appeared later in the document, beyond the point of immediate salience, when the majority of casual readers have moved on from the piece. Consalvo (1998) discussed how linguistic modifiers such as *allegedly* or *contended* that described a woman's reasons for her behaviour lessened her credibility as a true victim. Frazer and Miller (2008) stated that media "make choices about sentence structure that may reveal their underlying beliefs about these acts, such as whether the perpetrator is solely responsible for the act, whether the victim is partly to blame, and how much harm the victim suffered as a result" (p. 62).

3.1.3.3 Deviance and crime

While an analysis of linguistic and discursive techniques is important to understand how an audience is meant to read media text, a broader discussion of the theoretical orientation of 'the news' is important to understand how such news is socially constructed. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987) argued that news was generally a report on deviance, human behaviours that strayed from socially defined boundaries of normal and acceptable. Journalists were agents of social control, defining normality and abnormality for an audience and influencing how members of a society understood their social world (Ericson, 1998; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; 1989). Even though crime reporting statistically was only a small portion of the overall newspaper

reporting process, the combination of crime reporting, legal discussion, and an overall discourse of social control and order featured prominently in western notions of 'news.' Good and evil, normal and abnormal, were labels the news media used to construct the actors in the stories they presented. Using factual events, such as an IPH as context, the news media defined morality for the audience and reminds them of the acceptable limits of behaviour within society.

Crime reporting is only one facet of the presentation of deviance within the news media, but it is highly salient and often contains a variety of constructions of morality, good, evil, right, and wrong, that the audience uses to help understand their social world. News media's constructions of crime, often discussed as morality tales, define deviant human behaviour for the audience in such a way that individuals can position themselves in opposition to this presentation which allows them to feel comfortable with their place in the world (Ericson, 1998). As with the othering discussion, prominent in IPH and IPV reporting, the overarching purpose of a discourse of deviance is to define the 'other' as deviant for the audience and thereby reinforces social values of normality and morality (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989).

That 'news' as a discussion of deviance is exemplified by the observations of a number of media researchers, who note that events described as 'news,' particularly crime news, are those with significant dramatic detail (Sacco, 1995). Researchers have noted a hierarchy, particularly in IPH reporting, in the degree of coverage that an individual incident of IPH warrants based upon dramatic and demographic details (e.g. Farden, 1996). The greater the degree of drama in a case, with drama often identified as the deviant behaviour of one or both of the actors, the more media coverage an IPH will warrant. Peelo (2006) noted that the deviant act of murdering another human being in the context of an IPH was insufficient to warrant an increase in media coverage. Instead, a case that involved a significant degree of horror, brutality, or corruption would often garner intensive media and public scrutiny for its rejection of

‘ordinariness.’ The media’s focus on deviance as a means of defining newsworthiness was not used solely to remind the reader of the position of society’s moral compass, but was also a means of entertaining them with extremism.

3.1.3.4 Framing

The purpose of newspaper journalism is not only to relay important information to audiences, but also to sell this information as a product and make a profit from it. The newspaper industry, like most media, is a for-profit venture. News media reports must be informative to readers and sufficiently interesting to capture their imagination or attention. One of the ways newspapers pique reader interest with respect to crime reporting, is by framing the crime in a way that is entertaining to readers (Ericson, 1998). Sief (2003) noted that the process of deciding on a frame for a story and reporting a series of events as belonging to the chosen frame was a critical process in the social construction of news. Without the framing process, news would be unintelligible.

The process of creating a narrative out of a series of events that is deemed newsworthy occurs as reporters and editors use the details of a story and fit these details into a linguistic or literary frame with which the reader of a newspaper is already familiar. Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) noted that the process of writing a news story within the confines of a common frame allows readers to make sense of the details of the story, which helps them make sense of their world.

3.1.3.5 Story-telling

One of the ways in which the news media construct stories for the reading audience, thereby assisting them to make meaning out of the events, is by creating or identifying existing societal archetypes or stereotypes and fitting the actors and events of ‘news’ into these constructions. Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) noted that media documents often identified actors in

news media documents as belonging to existing social roles, such as villain and victim, that were familiar to readers, though the media did not use these classically familiar stereotypes to the point of redundancy. Hilgartner and Bosk noted that, rather, with each manifestation of a character into the classically defined role or archetype, the news media maintain reader interest by presenting these roles as unique and dramatic for the audience.

Lundman (2003) noted that the ways the news media attempted to align characters and stories into literary frames was reflective of the ways that a society defined itself. Describing this process as ‘typification,’ Lundman discussed how it allowed media to fit dramatic details of crime reporting into existing typifications to provide readers with the comfort of a familiar discourse through which they could evaluate their social world. Indeed, Peelo (2006) noted that, at times, the media accomplished this typification symbolically by way of subtle references to lifestyle and personality in the text of a news media document. Authors such as Meyers (1997) have noted that the media often constructed women as either villains or victims in the coverage of IPH. This construction was not accomplished by obvious identification as such, but rather by focusing on a woman’s promiscuity, negative relationship behaviours, or personality. Peelo described this process as a part of the media’s social construction of homicide, whereby the media identified victims and villains to allow society to grieve the homicide but quickly move on after the actors in the case were relegated to their socially constructed identities.

The process of constructing a story out of a series of events is the process of organizing social messages and creating of meaning for an audience. In keeping with the social constructionist epistemology of this project, it is important to remember that while the media actively fit ‘happenings’ into socially prominent frames of understanding, the audience itself is active in creating meaning out of the text of a document as well. Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) noted that audiences could recognize these popular frames of interpretation

because of their prior experience with media documents and could discuss and decode the meanings of these documents based on their own experiences of the culture in which these documents were produced.

3.1.3.6 Audience interaction and meaning making

The social constructionist framework argues that the social construction of reality is not a unidirectional phenomenon, but rather the result of an interaction between social actors who continually engage with the world they are interpreting. Social actors continually construct their reality and the realities of those around them (Crotty, 1998). The process of meaning making via the news media is also interactive and reflexive. Audiences engage with the discourse constructed by the media, and in their interactions with their social world, act in accordance with their interpretation of this discourse which influences the culture around them. This interaction alters the ways the news media makes meaning out of future social events.

The reflexive nature social constructionism purports that audiences do not passively read text and readily accept the interpretations presented to them. Readers of media documents make their own meaning out of the information presented to them, accepting, arguing, or, at times, outright rejecting the interpretations presented (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). While some textual formats encourage the reader's participation more than others do, the reader, being a thinking product of a culture, interprets the presented text through his or her own unique view of the world. Anderson (2003) argued that the process by which newspaper articles were produced was an attempt to preclude audience interaction because the articles often framed the details of a story to encourage audience agreement and understanding. Nevertheless, making multiple meanings out of newspaper texts is possible. The very nature of the printed document requires readers to have some understanding of their social world from which they can

understand the discourse presented to them. Therefore, readers, by virtue of this understanding, construct their own meaning out of a text.

Although a news story is an incredibly powerful medium for shaping public opinion about an issue, the reading public does not universally accept the message of a media document and choose to act based on its content. The reading public is capable of examining documents critically and is aware of when the media are presenting issues sensationally (Olstead, 2002; Sacco, 1995). Even though dominant media messages about IPH and IPV in particular may at times follow the format noted by Meyers (1997) and Berns (2004), where victims of IPV are denigrated, at times, the media themselves work to subvert this dominant discourse (e.g. Consalvo, 1998; Rhode, 1995). The presence of a subversive discourse within a primarily sexist and denigrating presentation of women victims of violence is an area of little previous research.

3.1.3.7 Summary of epistemological framework

The current project is based in a social constructionist epistemological framework whereby knowledge is considered to be constructed between social actors and does exist in any objective form (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 1995). Using media ethnographies also originating from a social constructionist epistemology (e.g. Ericson Baranek, & Chan, 1987; 1989; 1991; Tuchman 1978), I approached the documents in the present study as if they were constructed by the social actions of the print news media and reflective of a specific version of reality. The media ethnographies I consulted throughout the process of the current project incorporated theories of deviance, social control, semiotics, framing, and story-telling into a theory of how the print news media constructs events as news and I considered aspects of these theories into my data analysis. The methodology that I used to examine the documents in the present study, Ethnographic Content Analysis (Altheide, 1996), was consistent with my epistemological and theoretical orientation. ECA posits that the news media construct versions of

events for audiences and a close examination of these constructions is reflective of the news media culture in which they were produced but also the larger social culture that the media purport to describe.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Ethnographic content analysis

As noted above, ECA is a methodology useful in discussing the socially constructed nature of print news media documents while considering the culture in which these documents were produced. As a qualitative methodology, ECA assumes that knowledge and ideas are socially constructed. Analyzing documents from a qualitative perspective is a means of understanding *how* news organizations, political powers, and society construct themselves and their identities (Altheide, 1987; 1996).

An ethnographic researcher examines 'culture' or the social world. An ethnographic media researcher examines documents produced by news media as reflections of the culture in which the documents were produced using an ECA approach to describe *what* a document says about a culture. ECA does not necessarily evaluate the actual content of the text for its rightness or wrongness or adherence to some theory. In an ECA, the researcher, actively seeking immersion in the text, elicits themes and ideas that illustrate how a particular construct is presented in the media and how individuals might understand this construct given their position as members of the culture in which the document was produced (Altheide, 1987; 1996). The strategy of ECA is iterative, whereby the actual process of analyzing data allows for the discovery of new and potentially disconfirming evidence. Researchers examine the same documents numerous times which allows them to recognize new information and interpretations of the data from each examination of those data. Researchers in the ECA methodology, while working from a set of hypotheses, do not allow these hypotheses to be the sole direction for their

work. They are open to previously unidentified ideas and interpretive strategies. ECA is a systematic, empirical approach but is also inherently flexible and designed for discovery (Altheide, 1987; 1996).

Altheide (1996) suggested a 12-stage procedure to follow during the process of an ECA project. For the purposes of the present research, I used these steps to inform data collection and only deviated from them for theoretical or practical reasons on occasion. The first two steps of Altheide's suggested procedure, defining the problem to be investigated and becoming familiar with the ethnographies of media outlets (e.g. Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1978), were discussed above. The third step, becoming familiar with the dataset, was an ongoing process from the beginning of data collection in early 2008. While Altheide suggested that the researcher become familiar with a small number of documents, develop a coding protocol and then expand the sample of documents based on theoretical necessity, I had already decided upon a theoretical sampling strategy and gained some familiarity with the documents under study prior to proposing the present project. Discussed below, this procedure was a deviation from Altheide's suggested format of data collection and analysis. While it was unclear what impact this deviation had on the analysis, my careful reading of the documents and development of an electronic coding protocol that was open to modification was consistent with the spirit of Altheide's methodology.

3.2.2 Sampling strategy and data collection

I selected four cases of male-perpetrated IPH that occurred in Alberta after the year 2000 for the present analysis. The logic of case selection was dictated by both pragmatic necessity and theoretical importance. Altheide (1996; 2000) described a theoretical sampling procedure in which the researcher selects documents for study based on his or her emerging understanding of the construct under investigation. Rather than adhering to a random sampling strategy to ensure

generalizability, a theoretical sample involves the researcher choosing documents for conceptually relevant reasons. For the present study, I wanted to track the discourse of a number of incidents of IPH in Canada to determine how the print news media constructed these cases, in their entirety, for the audience. In order to track the discourse appropriately, a theoretical sample that included all documents related to the cases under study was necessary. By using this sampling strategy, it was possible to determine how a news story of an IPH changed over time and how the print news media constructed the meaning of this story over time. A random sample would not have been theoretically appropriate.

I narrowed the possible pool of cases for my sample by limiting myself to a selection of IPH incidents that occurred in Alberta between 2000 and 2006. I chose the province of Alberta as the site for the analysis because of my own familiarity, garnered from past research experience, with IPV legislation and IPH cases in the province. At the time of data collection, access to both online and corresponding hard-copy versions of various Canadian newspapers prior to the year 2000 was limited. To ensure I would be able to access all the documents in a given case, a requirement of the purposive theoretical sampling method I chose, I decided to investigate only those cases published after 2000. Finally, by limiting my search to incidents that occurred in or before 2006, I ensured that I would be analyzing cases that were tried and adjudicated in the justice system. These cases were ‘complete’ at the time of data collection which allowed me to ‘track’ the discourse from beginning of the case to its ‘end’ (Altheide, 2000).

Following my selection of a geographic and temporal period of data collection, I continued to narrow my selection of cases for investigation based on issues of greater theoretical significance. The first means by which I narrowed the scope of my project was to base my sample selection on the overall ‘size’ of the case, as some incidents of IPH received more media

attention than others did. I based this decision on Meyers's (1997) observation that IPH stories that were more sensational received more media attention. News reports of incidents that the media constructed as unique and deviant defied audience expectations of justice, which made them more worthy of attention as well (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987) and thereby added to their relative 'size.' For example, according to this logic, the homicide of a young, white, upper-class female would receive more attention than that of a lower-class Aboriginal man (Meyers, 1997; Berns, 2004) because such an incident would be an affront to audience expectations of probable victims and perpetrators of violent crime.

The second factor that I considered in my selection of cases was the details about the homicide. I specifically assessed for and excluded cases that were outside the boundaries of the investigation. For example, a small number of IPH incidents in Alberta ended with the murder of a child instead of a female romantic partner despite the presence of IPV in the couple's relationship. While very interesting events worthy of further investigation, these types of family homicides were qualitatively different from IPH events or even homicide/suicides in which the female partner was murdered. I chose not to include these incidents of family homicide because they would expand the interpretation beyond the scope of the present research.

I also considered issues such as the gender and race of the victims and perpetrators in making my selections to obtain as broad a sample of discursive strategies in reporting as possible. However, by adhering to the initial 'size' guidelines as discussed above, my sample was naturally diverse. Therefore, using this strategy, I analyzed the most sensational and heavily covered incidents of IPH obtained from a population of articles that also had theoretical significance to my research questions. Because of the labour involved in conducting a thorough ECA, I limited data analysis to a selection of four cases.

My decision to investigate cases of IPH that were covered heavily by the news media led me to choose sensational cases for analysis. While the representativeness of my sample was not critical to my methodology or my epistemological position, the sample of cases I did choose was unique and not necessarily reflective of demographic characteristics of IPH victims and perpetrators as reported by criminal justice statistics. The nature of the ECA methodology that I chose and my decision to examine ‘large’ cases eliminated the possibility that I would then also examine mundane or ‘typical’ instances of IPH as the coverage of these homicides would likely be smaller, resulting in fewer articles to examine. Future researchers may wish to examine how incidents of IPH that receive less sensational media coverage are constructed for an audience.

Upon determining my initial sampling strategy, I began to collect data identifying all cases of IPH that occurred in Alberta during the specified study period. To identify possible cases for analysis, I conducted a number of searches on the Canadian Newsstand website, a database providing full-text access to major Canadian newspapers. I identified a number of key terms likely to correspond with the language most commonly used in discussing an IPH, including ‘domestic violence,’ ‘murder,’ and ‘homicide.’ This search strategy elicited a larger number of ‘hits,’ including many film and book reviews. To manage the amount of data I obtained with this strategy, I altered my search to limit the results. Using the two major Alberta newspapers, the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal*, as starting points, I examined issues of each newspaper published between December 26 and January 5 (approximately) in the years 2000 to 2006 to access annual summary articles that detailed each city’s homicide statistics for that year. Obtaining a list of all the homicides that occurred in Alberta’s largest cities, I examined each of these cases more closely to determine if any were IPH incidents. When a case

appeared to be an IPH,¹ I searched the names of the individuals involved in the case and obtained all articles that included a reference to one or both members of the dyad. Undertaking this procedure for each year between 2000 and 2006, I obtained a list of IPH incidents that occurred in Calgary and Edmonton, as well as the surrounding areas. I obtained electronic copies of all the articles available on Canadian Newsstand that cited these cases. In reading the articles, I was occasionally alerted to additional IPH cases that occurred in rural Alberta or smaller city centres. These new cases were then included in my data collection procedure. While not exhaustive, this method allowed me to identify the cases that conformed most closely to my sampling strategy.

I made my final selection of cases to ensure that there would be a sufficient volume of articles to analyze for the purposes of a dissertation and to ensure that the cases were theoretically relevant to the topic of study,. Ultimately, I chose four cases of IPH, one in which a husband murdered his former wife and young child, one in which a Métis woman was murdered by her common-law partner, one where a pregnant 17-year-old female was murdered by her boyfriend, and one in which a young woman was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. That all the cases in the present research were male-perpetrated incidents of IPH was an artefact of my sampling strategy. The cases with the most media coverage that occurred in the period that I considered were all male-perpetrated. Had there been a case of female-perpetrated IPH with a similar volume of print news coverage as those cases I selected, I would have considered this case for analysis as well. Upon making this final selection of cases, I contacted *Sun Media*, publisher of the *Calgary Sun* and *Edmonton Sun* newspapers, as they did not provide an archive

¹ I defined a case to be an incident in which one member of an intimate relationship murdered the other member of the relationship. The definition of an intimate relationship was broad, encompassing partners who were married, common-law, dating, divorced, separated, or 'broken-up.' A number of the cases that occurred in Alberta during the identified period of data inclusion (2000 to 2006) involved triangulation, whereby a third party (often a new romantic partner) was killed. Further, in some cases, the only victim was a child of the couple, or there were multiple victims as in the case of a murder-suicide. I considered all of these incidents for potential analysis.

of articles on the Internet at the time of data collection. A list of all articles that included the names of any of the individuals in the identified cases was requested. I obtained microfilm versions of these articles and transcribed them into the same format as the articles obtained from Canadian Newsstand. Finally, I also obtained microfilm versions of all the Canadian Newsstand documents, which were available online as text-only documents, to ensure that I would consider the visual contextual details, such as images and emphasized text, for all the articles in my analysis. In total, I analyzed 381 articles from newspapers across Canada, the majority being from Alberta publications.

Keeping in mind that the news media construct IPH in specific ways, I chose cases not only to analyze how the print news media traditionally covered IPH, but also to examine how the print news media chose to deviate from this formulation. This document, therefore, should be considered as originating from a social constructionist framework itself. In detailing the specific events of each case under study, I acknowledged that there was no universal truth in the interpretation of these incidents of IPH. My descriptions of the IPH incidents in this project were made solely using the details contained within the newspaper documents I studied for this analysis. I did not consult outside sources such as court records or police reports for verification because these documents were also social constructions or versions of the same events and no more or less representative of the ‘truth.’

3.2.3 Data familiarity and analysis

In keeping with Altheide’s (1996) suggested procedure for conducting ECA, I began to develop familiarity with my dataset as I collected it. Reading each article for content, I began to note common ideas, themes, words, phrases, and discursive strategies that I felt warranted further analysis. At this point, I imported my dataset into the computer software program NVIVO 8 for organizational purposes. NVIVO 8 software allows researchers to comment on individual words,

phrases, paragraphs, or documents without changing the content of the document itself. I tracked my thoughts about the various documents using this procedure. While NVIVO offers a variety of sophisticated data analysis options that researchers can use to consider qualitative documents, for the purposes of this project, I primarily used it as a means of organizing my data and for tracking my own thoughts on data analysis.

Following my initial reading of the documents during data collection, I then engaged in a second, more thorough examination of the dataset. I read each article more closely and made notes that were more extensive. I also developed a dataset to track each article based on a number of variables, including document title, author, newspaper, page numbers, word count, inclusion of pictorial details, type of article, and types of sources cited within the article. I began to develop my coding strategy in the NVIVO 8 program by identifying themes, frames, and discourses that I wanted to examine further on additional readings of the documents. Following Altheide's (1996) suggested format for data analysis, I re-evaluated my coding strategy halfway through my second reading to ensure that there would be few oversights or missing data points. Additionally, as data analysis and coding continued, I logged and corrected inconsistencies or oversights in my analysis in my research journal.

Following the second reading of the articles, I fully developed the list of codes that I would use to track the discourse. Using the coding system available in NVIVO 8, I was not only able to track all occurrences of specific words (e.g. estranged, custody, bipolar), but also was able to track phrases and entire sentences relevant to the codes I was interested in exploring. I began my third reading of the documents and continued to code words and phrases of interest accordingly. Because ECA is an iterative process, as my third reading progressed, I was able to recognize numerous angles of inquiry that I was interested in exploring further and coded those as well (Altheide, 1996).

The identification of critical themes, frames, and discourse is a crucial component of an ECA. A theme is, according to Altheide (1996), “the recurring typical thesis that runs through a lot of the reports” (p. 31). In print news media reports of IPH, a recurring theme may be that of victim-blaming (Berns, 2004; Meyers, 1997) or of not mentioning IPV openly but referring to it euphemistically (e.g. Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Ryan, Antasario, & DaCunha, 2006). A frame, however, is a larger ‘super’ theme, a “focus, parameter, or boundary, for discussing a particular event” (Altheide, 1996, p. 31). In the present research, a frame may be criminal justice, mental illness, or feminist; however, a frame may additionally be that of a tragic love story (Ryan, Antasario, & DaCunha, 2006). Finally, discourse “refers to the parameters of relevant meaning that one uses to talk about things” (Altheide, 1996, p. 31). Where a frame is an overarching perspective, discourse is the way by which the article constructs meaning and how it communicates its perspective or its frame. The discourse of an article or of a series of articles determines what is communicated about a case. Using aspects of media semiotic theory, the determination of discourse is accomplished by an examination of linguistic symbols that the media use to present the people and constructs of the cases.

While Altheide (1996) noted that there was no set stage at which data analysis should end in an ECA, he suggested that it would occur at the point of data saturation. Specifically, data saturation referred to the point at which, in qualitative analysis, sampling and thematic coding continued until no new themes emerged from the data. I stopped formal data analysis when I was confident I had a thorough knowledge of the dataset and the information became redundant and did not allow for new or unique interpretations (Szabo & Strang, 1997).

3.2.4 Reliability and validity in qualitative research

The notion that research methods must be replicable and valid in some objective sense is an artefact from a post-positivist system of knowledge. In qualitative research, researchers

cannot ensure traditional concepts of reliability and validity in the same way that they can in qualitative research. Kirk and Miller (1986) discussed how qualitative research, while adhering to conventions of knowledge generation such as hypothesis testing and sound methodology, did so in a way that departed from the traditional deductive process advocated in quantitative research. Positivism assumed there was an objective ‘truth’ that could be ascertained by adhering to strict and rigorous research methods. Post-positivists understood that while perhaps ‘truth’ could never truly be identified, adhering to the scientific method of inquiry, including notions of valid observation and reliable results, would allow the best possible prediction of the ‘truth’ and reality possible. The crux of qualitative research assumed that there was no objective truth, only versions of it that the researcher could ascertain but not generalize (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Despite the lessened applicability of traditional empirical concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative research, the notion of quality control is critical in ensuring that qualitative methodology and the interpretations obtained are valid in the broadest sense of the term, namely, that the results are trustworthy (Whitmore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). In qualitative methodology, a dataset’s relevance, plausibility, and credibility are distinguished from quantitative notions of validity and reliability (Seale, 1999). To ensure quality control in a qualitative document, researchers can engage in a number of strategies to make their research procedures and obtained results stand up to scrutiny.

Keeping one’s data collection methods and interpretation strategies as transparent as possible is an overarching theme in ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. Morrow (2005) advocated that researchers consider using additional coders (as one would in a quantitative study) to minimize bias or errors. However, because bias is often inherent in qualitative research, it is not always possible or desirable to eliminate it. Therefore, Morrow suggested that researchers keep an ongoing journal of their experiences and biases while

analyzing research, and refer to this journal frequently to become aware of any unacknowledged assumptions they may have made in the process of collecting and interpreting data. While I did not use extra coders as a means of ensuring my interpretations were ‘correct,’ I often approached other researchers, both qualitative and quantitative, when I became concerned my interpretations were biased, confused, or perhaps not in keeping with the data. Further, I did maintain a journal throughout the duration of data analysis and writing in order to acknowledge and track my biases and assumptions about the data over the course of the project. Additionally, there were times during data analysis and the writing of this document that I struggled with my own biases and expectations and was concerned they were interfering with my ability to analyze the data. To address this issue, I occasionally included some of these struggles in the text to alert the reader to those occasions.

Morrow (2005) noted that a critical aspect in the trustworthiness of any qualitative inquiry was the adequacy of the researcher’s interpretations about the data. Because these interpretations could not be judged as adequate against any one objective standard, adequacy in qualitative research involved an extremely transparent reporting process. This transparency occurred when a researcher used the language of the participant or document as frequently as possible and provided his or her interpretations of these words. Such a procedure allowed readers to make their own interpretations of the participant’s statements as well. In this way, the researcher maintained a transparent interpretive strategy that allowed readers to scrutinize his or her results (Morrow, 2005). This scrutiny did not necessarily mean others would evaluate the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of the researcher’s interpretations. However, with sufficient evidence provided by the raw transcripts or data collected, any reader should be able to evaluate the plausibility of the researcher’s interpretations (Morrow, 2005; Seale, 1999). I have included,

verbatim, the entire sentence, paragraph, or, at times, article relevant to my analysis in the text of this document which allows the reader to make his or her own interpretations of the discourse.

The results of the ECA are presented below. As an analytic and writing strategy, I chose to discuss each IPH incident as independently from the others as possible. However, because of the nature of data collection and analysis, the interpretations I made about one case likely influenced the ways I interpreted the others. Nevertheless, each case in this project is presented first as an independent study. The final chapter of the results section consolidates my observations and interpretations about all of the cases, linking common themes, frames, and discourses between some or all of the cases examined.

4. Study 1: Fekete

4.1 Rationale

Josif Fekete, aged 45, murdered his wife, Blagica Fekete, aged 40, and their three-year-old son Alex, on September 28, 2003, in Red Deer after Josif returned Alex from a court-mandated custody visit. According to newspaper reports, Josif was returning Alex to Blagica's apartment when he shot Blagica, Alex, and then himself in the lobby of her apartment building. All three individuals died at this time. Witnesses and other sources cited by reporters stated that there was a history of violence between the couple and that Blagica had unsuccessfully attempted to seek help from various sources (e.g. shelters, child welfare, police) to limit Josif's access to Alex. Following this murder-suicide, the Alberta government launched an inquiry to examine RCMP conduct in this case. This inquiry generated many articles covered by the national print news media, including Canada's national newspapers, the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. The results of the inquiry revealed that the RCMP were negligent in performing their duties, and the judge made a number of recommendations for changes to RCMP policies related to IPV. Later, the surviving adult children of Blagica and Josif sued the RCMP for an undisclosed sum. The media had not published the results of this lawsuit at the time of this writing. The Fekete murder-suicide was the impetus for a number of IPV legislation changes. Politicians and IPV advocates often cited the case in generalized discussions of IPV and IPH in the print news media.

I chose the Fekete case for analysis because the IPV discourse presented throughout was a unique means of reporting an male-perpetrated IPH case in mainstream print news media (e.g. Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Taylor & Sorenson, 2002). As noted by Bullock and Cubert, news reports of IPH traditionally did not reference a couple's history of IPV. Often, media imply a couple's history of violence through the use of euphemisms, including descriptors such as

“stormy” or “troubled,” which make it difficult for the reader to ascertain the nature of the couple’s relationship. The Fekete case was a departure from this traditional presentation of IPH because the media, at times, openly discussed IPV as a causal factor in the homicides.

Another reason for my selection of the Fekete murder-suicide was that it became the impetus for a number of changes to public and RCMP policies regarding IPV procedures in Alberta. The lessons the RCMP learned from this incident were applied to the development of specialized IPV courts and IPV specific protection orders. The Fekete case changed the way law enforcement and the criminal justice system responded to IPV and IPH in Alberta. Finally, and importantly, the case also generated a large number of articles that gained the attention of the national print news media which made it relevant to Canadians, not just Albertans.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Ambivalence

Newspaper coverage of the Fekete case was disconcerting to read and to analyze. Throughout my analysis of the 110 articles written about the Fekete case, I struggled to interpret the text in light of the previous research I had read about IPH presentation (e.g. Bullock & Cubert; Meyers, 2001; 2004). Of the four cases I analyzed, the media’s construction of this case was the most representative of an academic discourse of male-perpetrated IPH. While it still drew upon stereotyped presentations of gender and parenting, overall the case presented the actors and dynamics related to IPV and IPH as complex and outside traditional frames of presentation. Was this the reason I struggled to understand the discussion? Did the news media’s failure to disappoint me make me uncomfortable? Had I been hoping for a biased, uninformed presentation of the Fekete family framed by a discourse ignorant of an academic IPV knowledge base? Indeed, this was what I had expected to find, and, certainly, my analysis became more challenging when this was not the result. However, I think my discomfort with the construction

of the Fekete case originated from a more basic place than a reluctance to abandon my biases. My discomfort came from ambivalence. I did not know the answer. I did not know if Josif was a ‘bad’ man and Blagica was a ‘good’ mother. While some of the articles attempted to simplify the couple’s relationship in this way, most did not. The presentation was uncomfortably ambivalent.

The cause of some of this ambivalence might have been that the discussion was not stagnant. The print news media’s construction of the case began in September 2003 and continued into 2007. There were four years of information, generated by a variety of reporters and editors that reflected a variety of reporting styles. Sometimes the news media constructed Blagica as selfish and neglectful of her son Alex, but other times, she was portrayed as a hard worker, empowered by North American roles for women in the workplace and the family. The print news media presented Josif, the perpetrator in this case, with the same ambivalence. He was, at times, a tragic hero and, at other times, a reactive, dangerous, and frightening man. The discomfort I felt in ‘answering’ my questions about the case came from my inability to identify a clear villain in the case because of the changes in the presentation over time.

4.2.2 Josif Fekete

As an uninformed reader, approaching the Fekete case from any single time point, Josif Fekete seemed the obvious choice of villain. Described as jealous, angry, controlling, and impulsive, the print news media constructed him as a man who had lost touch with reality. In one of the first articles published on the case, reporter van Russell quoted a neighbour of the couple who noted that, “Betty² had told friends she was ‘petrified’ of her estranged husband, while another neighbour said that the RCMP had been showing up at the apartment ‘almost nightly’” (2003a, September 30, *Calgary Herald*, p. A9). The headline of the *Calgary Sun* on the same

² Blagica was at times referred to in news articles as “Betty.”

day read, “‘Lunatic’ killed his family: Cowardly dad taunted three-year-old son with death threats against his mom” (Enevold & Bachusky, 2003a, September 30, p. 7). As the discussion continued through the fatality inquiry, the print news media focused heavily on reports that Josif had told Alex that he was going to kill both him and Betty, “‘Daddy’s going to kill me,’ Just days after Alex Fekete, 3, told a social worker of his fears, he was killed by his father” (Richards, 2005, May 7, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1). Similar summaries appeared regularly in headlines, jump lines³, and picture captions throughout coverage of the fatality inquiry. While this language might have cued the reader to identify Josif as a villain, the print news media also presented him as a sympathetic individual, which made the simple construction of Josif as villain inadequate.

Specifically, a small number of sources referenced Josif’s mental state and his humanity. Even Enevold and Bachusky’s (2003a, September 30, *Calgary Sun*, p. 7) linguistic choice of the word *lunatic* led to ambivalence about the nature of Josif’s assumed villainy. The word *lunatic* minimized some of the monstrosity of his actions and linked them to his mental state rather than his personality. Further, a statement made by the couple’s adult son in the *Calgary Herald* exemplified a discussion of deterioration rather than villainy, “‘My dad started getting bothered because he knew he was falling apart,’ he says. ‘He was such a hard-headed person. It was his way or the highway. I don’t know what changed him.’” (Wilson, 2003, October 4, *Calgary Herald*, p. A4). While this presentation only occurred in a small number of articles, the print news media’s inclusion of it was important to understanding the process by which they constructed ambivalence about Josif’s characterization as victim or villain.

³ A jump-line is an emphasized piece of text, appearing on the second page of a continuous newspaper article. Different from the headline of the piece, a jump-line is a secondary headline designed to guide readers in their reading of the article as it continues from another page.

The ambivalent presentation of the case did not occur only through a mental illness discourse but also in the way the print news media presented Josif sympathetically at times. Print news media described him as a father who fled from Yugoslavia in the 1980s with his young family; he found himself unable to find meaningful work in Canada and eventually lost touch with his entire family. A picture caption in the *Calgary Herald* on the day of the funerals for the Feketes poignantly read, “Josif and Betty Fekete came to Canada to start a new life and escape the hardships of their native Yugoslavia” (Wilson, 2003, October 4, *Calgary Herald*, p. A4). Further, the jump-line on the second page echoed this tone, “Family: Grim death marked the end of a hopeful Canadian dream” (p. A4) and identified the angle of the story as one about a family, not about a homicide.

The print news media constructed the Feketes as struggling to manage in Canada and the reader was drawn to the empathic presentation of the couple,

Josif found work as a truck driver and Betty continued the janitorial work she had done since arriving in Canada.

By 1998, says Jozef, his mother and father’s relationship began to deteriorate. The family fell behind in their bill payments; Josif quit his job and became more demanding and controlling. The situation worsened with the arrival of baby Alex in June 2000 (Wilson, 2003, October 4, *Calgary Herald*, p. A4).

The print news media framed Josif as alienated from his family and Canadian culture. They presented his eventual murder of Blagica and Alex as unnecessary and tragic but, at times, the only option he believed was available. The print news media constructed Josif as reaching a point of desperation. They did not present him as a psychopath or monster, as might have been expected in the media’s construction of a man who murdered his child. An example of this desperation appeared in the *Edmonton Sun*, “In April 2003, Blagica told another officer that Josif

had threatened to kill her and Alex if she ‘didn’t change her mind’ about coming back to him” (Coolican, 2005, May 4, p. 5). This statement exemplified Josif’s desperation at not being able to control the circumstances of his life. He had lost almost everything he valued. His solution was to reclaim as much of it as possible by way of murder-suicide. While perhaps not constructed as a sympathetic character, the presentation of Josif as struggling father and husband made him recognizable to the audience. This construction was summarized aptly by Faulder,

Josif’s legal troubles weren’t limited to custody issues. Betty told police that the provincial government’s maintenance enforcement branch was taking away Josif’s cab licence because he refused to make \$250 monthly child support payments as ordered by the court. He had also quit making payments on the marital house. Betty had her name removed from the title and foreclosure was a virtual certainty.

“He was losing everything. He had nothing to live for,” says his son, Joe (2005, July 3, *Edmonton Journal*, p. E6).

This discursive strategy led me to identify with Josif. I saw the humanity in his struggle to adapt to the changes in his life over which he might have felt he had no control. At this point, I reflected more generally on how the print news media constructed the case for the audience. While, arguably, my immersion in the documents might have led to my feelings of empathy for Josif, ultimately, the print news media constructed my reaction through language and content choices. Faulder’s in-depth analysis of the case in her article “Their cries for help went unheeded” (2005, July 3, *Edmonton Journal*, p. E6) was a summarization of how Josif and this case was presented for the audience. Faulder wrote the article using storytelling techniques and constructed Josif as a complex character. This construction was discomfoting and off-putting. Initially, the article presented him as manipulative, neglectful and selfish as described by his adult daughter,

Angela says her dad actually didn't want to see more of Alex, but rather used the boy to get to her mom. Angela frequently dropped by her father's house when he had Alex on weekends, only to find her dad watching television as the toddler wandered aimlessly in a dirty diaper. Often he developed a painful rash (Faulder, 2005, July 3, *Edmonton Journal*, p. E6).

However, as Faulder's 'story' progressed, Josif became worthy of sympathy, particularly when his vulnerability was discussed,

When she looks back, Angela thinks her father was saying "stop me" when he publicly threatened to kill her mother and little brother. He had been depressed. The week before he committed the murder/suicide, Josif had given up going to work, complaining of a cold and taking to his bed. Angela suspects he planned the murders well before they happened. At her wedding three weeks before the tragedy, her dad was unusually emotional. When he danced with the bride, he clutched her like a man who knew his time with his family was running out.

"He hugged me and he wouldn't let go. I think he was saying goodbye. The whole night he cried when we danced," recalls Angela. "My dad wouldn't ever ask for help. He wasn't the type. He's the smart guy, the one with all the answers" (Faulder, 2005, July 3, *Edmonton Journal*, p. E6).

Josif was not constructed as an evil man and a murderer. Instead, the print news media constructed him with complexity, which made his violent actions difficult for the audience to understand within a familiar 'good and evil' frame of interpretation.

4.2.3 Blagica Fekete

An important part of journalism education for new reporters is to learn how to identify angles from which to report a case (Hennessey, 2006). Sometimes these angles may shift

throughout the course of an article, a story, or a discourse, but the way that reporters construct the characters provides the reader with a firm sense of justice, deviance, good, evil, right, wrong, and fairness in a complex world (Berns, 2004; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991). Without it, readers feel uncomfortable and confused, perhaps unsure of the world and their position within it. In the case of the Fekete presentation, since the print news media did not construct Josif as a true villain, it was logical to expect that Blagica, the other adult in the case, would have filled this role for readers. Indeed, such a vilification of female victims of male-perpetrated IPH is a common angle for reporters to adopt. If a male perpetrator elicited feelings of sympathy, then the media should have presented the female victim as the true villain (Berns, 2004). However, unexpectedly, this vilification of Blagica did not occur as dominant in the Fekete case.

The print news media constructed Blagica's identity in many ways. Specifically, she was presented as an Anglo-Saxon Caucasian, a Yugoslavian immigrant, a hard-working new Canadian, a loving mother, a neglectful mother, a selfish ex-wife, a sexually curious new divorcee, and a good friend. Similarly to Josif's sympathetic presentation, these often-contradictory identities were at times uncomfortable and difficult to understand. Although the print news media constructed her as one of the primary victims of Josif's descent into homicidal and suicidal rage, she was also a catalyst of it. The print news media constructed her as flawed, though not entirely responsible for her own death and that of her child.

The print news media's construction of Blagica early in the case proceeded as predicted given previous research (Berns, 2004; Meyers, 1997). The media used victim-blaming and mother-blaming frames, including the following example that appeared in van Russell's (2003a, Sept. 30) *Calgary Herald* article, citing an RCMP officer,

Calvert said most of the complaints dealt with how the boy was being cared for, saying one centred around whether Betty was using a proper car seat. “There wasn’t any direct physical violence between the two that we were aware of,” Calvert said. (p. A9)

Van Russell cited evidence of Blagica’s neglect of Alex in the context of explanation for her homicide and specifically stated that IPV was not a known concern in the relationship. The audience was then led to believe that the blame for this homicide rested with Blagica.

Over the reporting period, Blagica moved in and out of the sympathetic sphere of coverage. She was both idealized and denigrated. She was idealized because she was a mother, victim, hard-worker, and good friend, as in the words of her co-worker, ““Blagica was a good worker, very dedicated to her family and her job and loved by everyone on the floor.”” (van Russell, 2003a, Sept. 30, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1). However, the print news media also vilified her because she was not exemplary of any of these roles. For example, Faulder highlighted her relationship with live-in boyfriend Byron Harpold in a way that implied Blagica might have been impulsive in her relationships with men, yet at the same time, a doting, responsible mother.

Monday saw Betty pick up Alex after work, and head home to make supper. Byron, an oilfield worker who had moved in with Betty shortly after they met at a single’s club in the late spring of 2003, was still home before leaving for an out-of-town job in

Drumheller on Tuesday. (2005, July 3, *Edmonton Journal*, p. E6)

Blagica’s characterization was more complicated than a simple construction of good and evil. Her construction left the reader feeling ambivalent about her identity as victim or villain. The print news media constructed this ambivalence by way of two discursive techniques. The first was the inclusion of a feminist discourse in the process of reporting on this case, and the second was the print news media’s determination to find a true villain.

4.2.4 Feminist discourse

As noted previously, the Fekete IPH was an exceptional case in Alberta for a variety of reasons, including the way the print news media covered the story from beginning to end. Indeed, this case was likely a unique discourse in the context of IPH reporting across North America, which, according to a variety of researchers, followed a traditional formulation of sexism, victim blaming, and avoidance of overt discussion of IPV (e.g. Berns, 2004; Meyers, 1997; Bullock & Cubert, 2002). The Fekete case began in the same way, where police even denied a history of IPV between the couple, “‘There wasn't any direct physical violence between the two that we were aware of,’ Calvert said” (van Russell, 2003a, September 30, *Calgary Herald*, p. A9), despite source statements in the same article that maintained this was inaccurate. For example, Betty’s neighbour revealed that “Betty had told friends she was ‘petrified’ of her estranged husband, while another neighbour said the RCMP had been showing up at the apartment almost nightly,” (van Russell, 2003a, September 30, *Calgary Herald* p. A9). If this incident had been a traditional episode of IPH, particularly one that involved a murder-suicide in which there was no perpetrator left alive to be tried, sentenced, and jailed, it was likely that that the media coverage of the Fekete case would have ended following the funeral of the victims. Indeed, on October 4, 2003, the family was buried, and the headline of the *Edmonton Journal* read, “Murder-suicide victims laid to rest as a family: Brother, parents finally at peace, says oldest son” (Myers, 2003, October 4, p. A6). This discussion provided a succinct closure to the case. However, because of the emergence of a feminist discourse in the case, the traditional ending attempted by the *Edmonton Journal* was not sufficient.

Van Russell seemed to have initiated the feminist angle of the presentation when he included in his article (2003a, September 30, *Calgary Herald*) the revelation that Blagica had resided in a women’s shelter while she and Josif were separated. Citing Moriah Boyd, director of

a women's shelter where Blagica stayed at one time, the discussion offered a highly critical interpretation of the case,

“Everybody in this room's hand is dirty. Family violence is a societal issue.”

Boyd said the answers lie in strengthening existing supports for victims and broadening programs that have enjoyed success where they have been tried, such as Calgary's dedicated court for resolving domestic violence cases.

“RCMP are short-staffed, we're short-staffed—there are no resources. We have the answers, we need the resources to be able to put them in place,” she said.

“We have some excellent resources that we could model ourselves after if the political will was there” (van Russell, 2003a, September 30, *Calgary Herald*, p. A9)

In this case, the discourse identified the failure of social systems to intersect in ways that would have been helpful to prevent the tragic IPH of Blagica and Alex Fekete. Further, this discourse linked the Feketes' experience of IPV to broader social structural problems and was consistent with a feminist perspective.

The above decisive statement made by Moriah Boyd, a women's shelter spokesperson, prepared the audience that the article included an IPV discussion. The day after Josif Fekete murdered Blagica and Alex, the *Edmonton Journal* reported on a press release issued by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which released the results of a study of IPV in Canada. The *Edmonton Journal's* headline read, “One in four women suffers spousal abuse: 1999 study released earlier this week” (Cormier, 2003, October 1, p. A6). While the study had actually been released two days prior to the Fekete IPH, newspapers did not publish its results until after the Fekete IPH. In the context of the murder-suicide, these research results had new meaning and relevance to Albertans. Linking statistics of IPV prevalence in Alberta to the Fekete IPH specifically, Cormier cited a local IPV advocate, “Carolyn Goard, president of the Alberta

Council of Women's Shelters, said the Fekete murders are a result of the same problems that lead to Alberta's high spousal abuse rates." Such a discursive strategy enabled readers to understand more clearly how violence in relationships could lead to homicide.

Following Cormier's article in the *Edmonton Journal* (2003, October 1), IPV became a more prominent frame by which subsequent media constructed not only the Fekete case, but also similar cases in the province. For example, in a series of public-interest articles appearing before Christmas to help local Calgary charities solicit donations, the media used the Fekete case to illustrate the pattern of escalation of IPV to IPH. Scotton (2003, December 23, *Calgary Herald*) wrote of a Calgary women's shelter,

While the Red Deer episode is an example of the very worst of family violence, the Sheriff King Home might be described as the very best; helping women, men and children live without violence by breaking the cycle that curses too many families (2003, December 23, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1).

Scotton sought the input of the Calgary women's shelter community and constructed their voice as informed, elegant, rational, and correct. This strategy allowed for a feminist discourse in the Fekete case that the media maintained throughout the four-year reporting period of the case.

The specific expert sources who media cited in the Fekete case also allowed for the emergence of a feminist discourse. Specifically, Jan Reimer, former mayor of Edmonton and head of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, was frequently cited in editorials. Constructed as an expert in family violence, Reimer was also a feminist source, though never identified overtly as such. By virtue of her public position in the community, her access to the media was assured and she was provided numerous opportunities to present her opinion regarding the Fekete case and IPV. In an editorial about gun control, Reimer linked guns to IPH and provided

an alternative position to critics who were cynical of the Canadian gun control movement. Citing the Fekete case as exemplary, she wrote,

But there is still more to be done. And changing Albertans' attitudes to gun control is part of it. Opponents of the law have used examples of tragic shootings, like the Fekete family murder/ suicide in Red Deer, as reasons why the registry is not working. However, if the program had been properly utilized in this case and our fellow Albertans had shared pertinent and dangerous information regarding guns in that home, three lives could have been saved.

On Sept. 28, 2003, Betty Fekete and her three-year-old son, Alex, were murdered with an unregistered firearm by the estranged husband, Josef [sic], who then killed himself. It was common knowledge that Josef [sic] Fekete possessed unregistered guns. (Reimer, 2004, January 21, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A13).

When she linked the IPH of Blagica and Alex Fekete to the national gun registry, Reimer enacted a feminist discourse that was informed and non-confrontational. Further, she discussed women and children without an explicit declaration of her own feminist perspective. She thereby constructed herself through editorials as a dominant and well-informed source in the print news media's ongoing coverage of the IPH of Blagica and Alex Fekete. Reimer made IPV accessible to the average reader because she linked it clearly to IPH for the reader and caused the print news media to feature a feminist perspective in a prominent discourse.

4.2.5 RCMP as villain

The print news media constructed the Fekete case as a male-perpetrated IPH within a feminist framework, thereby eliminating a victim-blaming presentation. With Josif and Blagica already constructed as sympathetic, the news media still required a villain in the case to satisfy the audience's need for a presentation of order and attribution of blame (Ericson, Baranek, &

Chan, 1991). The expected actors could not be constructed in this way, therefore, the print news media were required to place blame for the tragedy on another source. At this point, the news media constructed systemic factors as blameworthy, a presentation consistent with a feminist discourse. Most prominently, the discussion of blame implicated the Red Deer RCMP as responsible for the deaths of all three members of the Fekete family. However, the print news media also implicated provincial and legislative policies related to IPV, including issues related to judicial and child welfare systems.

The very first headlines in the coverage of the Fekete murder-suicide alluded to the couple's known history of IPV, where the early edition of the *Calgary Herald* carried the front page headline, "Murder, suicide stuns Red Deer: Police knew of couple's quarrels" (van Russell, 2003a, September 30, p. A1). The final edition of this article in the same newspaper enacted a more tragic presentation, "Slain wife feared for her family: Victim needed police escort days before" (van Russell, 2003b, September 30, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1). At this point, the text did not explicitly hold the RCMP responsible for the Fekete IPH, though it did imply that their role in preventing it was insufficient. The second day of reporting made the presentation explicit. The print news media used statements made by Blagica's current partner, Byron Harpold, to hold the RCMP accountable. The headline of the *Calgary Herald* read, "Boyfriend blames police in killings: RCMP forced final visit, says bereaved man" (Wilson, 2003, October 1, p. B1) and provided an indication of the *Herald's* position regarding the role of the RCMP in the tragedy. Indeed, later in the article, Wilson included the statement,

Police said Monday they had intervened between Josif and Betty Fekete on several occasions, but said the majority of the complaints centred on how Alex was being cared for.

“Although you like to put a certain amount of weight in (an allegation), sometimes there isn’t enough to run it up the flagpole with a Crown prosecutor,” said Cpl. Bucky Buchanan of the Red Deer RCMP (2003, October 1, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1). The print news media used linguistic techniques in these sentences to construct the RCMP as avoiding responsibility by way of victim-blaming and minimization. That media specifically chose Corporal Bucky Buchanan’s quotation to represent the RCMP in the tragedy was important. Namely, his choice of language in the context of the rest of the article constructed him, and subsequently the RCMP, as bumbling, ambivalent, insensitive, sexist, and villainous. Further, the final sentence in the article, which appeared immediately after Buchanan’s statement read, “The government is studying a move that would see court-appointed lawyers act on behalf of children at the centre of contentious custody battles” (p. B6), and implied that RCMP protection alone was insufficient in custody battles, such as that of the Fekete case. This statement affirmed the author’s critical position against the RCMP but also served to link the murder of Alex Fekete to a failure of systemic variables.

The inclusion of a discussion of the systemic variables causally related to the Fekete murder-suicide continued on November 22, 2003, when the *Calgary Sun* printed an article detailing the call for an inquiry into the Fekete IPH. Specifically, the article cited two reasons for the inquiry; the first was public opinion, “‘Because of the amount of public interest in this file, we reviewed it this week,’ Colley-Urquart said,” (Martin, p.20). The second was to investigate possible police misconduct by way of the following sentence, “Byron Harpold, who was dating Blagica, 40, at the time, said an inquiry should be held into why police didn’t arrest the killer before he went on his bloody spree.” (Martin, 2003, November 22, *Calgary Sun*, p. 20). Interestingly, there was no further discussion of an inquiry into the case until February 2004, when the official announcement of the inquiry was released to the public.

On the first day of the official inquiry, the early edition of the *Edmonton Sun* carried the headline, “Mounties messed up: Tragic case handled badly, officer tells inquiry,” (Coolican, 2005a, May 3, p. 3), and the late edition read, “‘This was a total disaster:’ Siblings say system failed to prevent killings despite repeated calls to cops” (Coolican, 2005b, May 3, p. 3). Similarly, in Calgary, the front page of the *Calgary Sun* featured large pictures of Alex and Blagica Fekete and a textbox read, “RCMP slammed over murders: Inquiry outrages family of slain mom and child” (*RCMP slammed over murders: Inquiry outrages family of slain mom and child*, 2005, May 3, p. 1). The headline of the article that accompanied the picture and textbox read “Mounties’ conduct slammed by family: RCMP admits errors in case that ended with murder suicide” (Coolican, 2005c, May 3, p. 3). The *Calgary Herald* chose to run a less inflammatory headline that read, “Fekete fatality hearing opens today” (Singleton, 2005, May 3, p. B3), and the *Edmonton Journal* did not carry any information on the case. Whereas the *Calgary Herald* might have attempted to present its coverage of the inquiry in a non-provocative way, the position of the *Edmonton Sun* and *Calgary Sun* was clear—the Red Deer RCMP were to blame and they were not spared criticism.

The presentation of RCMP blame and vilification continued throughout the inquiry. Lasting less than one week, 32 articles in newspapers across Canada carried stories about the inquiry. The actual news of the Fekete IPH in 2003 had elicited only 18 articles, and most of them were in Alberta newspapers. Clearly, the print news media perceived the inquiry with its frame of serious police misconduct to be more interesting to readers than the homicide itself. Indeed, the fatality inquiry generated a series of letters to the editors of the various newspapers that carried the story. *Calgary Herald* reader Jean Dowson (2005, May 12) wrote,

I spent several years as one of a collective dealing in family violence issues; over a 10-year period, we educated more than 1,300 Calgarians in understanding and helping those

suffering from domestic violence. Due to a lack of funding, that program is now discontinued. Does anybody care? (p. A19)

Dowson constructed her understanding of the Fekete case as related to disinterested politicians and underfunded public programs. In a more pointed statement, Brenda Clark's letter to the editor on the same day succinctly stated, "If only Josif Fekete had threatened Blagica and her son while in an airport" (2005, May 12, *Calgary Herald*, p. A19), implicating misplaced RCMP and government priorities as causal factors in the Fekete case. These readers understood the construction of the case as intended by the print news media. The true villain was law enforcement personified by RCMP inaction.

4.2.6 System as villain

The acknowledgement of some of the institutional failures that led to the deaths of Blagica, Alex, and Josif Fekete was another unique presentation in the construction of these homicides. The print news media's willingness to maintain this discussion well into 2005 and 2006 contributed to this uniqueness. The print news media covered the case over four years, and allowed space and time to examine the Fekete murder-suicide as an in-depth social problem rather than an isolated incident between individuals. Indeed, John Gradon, a social commentary columnist for the *Calgary Herald*, constructed the Fekete case as an example of continued institutional reluctance to protect IPV victims. He wrote,

The case in question is the fatality inquiry into the circumstances surrounding a woman called Blagica Fekete, who more than once told Red Deer RCMP officers that her estranged husband, Josif Fekete, had, during a "longstanding dispute" over custody and access, frequently threatened her and/or her children to the point of death.

Nevertheless, Josif had been granted visitations—and it was after one of these court-sanctioned get-togethers that he shot and killed his wife and their three-year-old

son, Alex, with a sawed-off shotgun, then killed himself (2005, May 16, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3).

Later the same month, the *Calgary Herald* (Koszegi, 2005, May 27, p. A23) included an article entitled, “We can no longer accept the status quo,” about a program in Calgary designed to provide services to child victims or witnesses to IPV. Citing the Fekete case as exemplary, the article took a different angle on the construction of IPV for the audience when it reminded readers that IPV was not only a problem that affected members of a couple, but children as well. Koszegi (2005, May 27, *Calgary Herald*, p. A23) began the article stating, “There is a massive gap in services for children from homes where there is a history of family violence, as the murders of Cole Harder, and Alex and Blagica Fekete illustrate.” Koszegi cited statistics about child witnesses of IPV and discussed how IPV could at times lead to increased homicide risk. Koszegi also commented critically on a variety of systemic variables, such as antagonistic divorce and custody conditions, and issues about parental access to children in cases of IPV.

Koszegi constructed IPV as a problem between individual members of a couple that was exacerbated by societal and institutional failures. She discussed how institutions failed to serve IPV victims and perpetrators effectively, and how this failure impacted the psychological well being of children in these families. She stated,

These children may use aggressive behaviour with other children and adults; they may experience significant emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, and their academic and social development can be affected because they are traumatized and preoccupied with the violence. (p, A23)

The article ended with a detailed discussion of possible solutions to IPV in custody and access situations. Koszegi called for children to have their own representation in contentious custody situations, specifically stating, “Admittedly, these are not simple cases. However, arguing against

a child's right to legal representation simply promotes the myth of children as liars and parents' fears of false accusations" (p. A23). In fewer than 600 words, Koszegi presented IPV from a variety of different individual and systemic angles. Namely, Koszegi used individualized examples of the ways that systemic legal organizational issues, such as child custody and access laws, were dangerous and damaging to children. Koszegi used the cases of Alex Fekete and Cole Harder, another young child murdered by his parent in a custody battle, as examples of systemic conditions conducive to IPH. Further, Koszegi linked contentious divorce proceedings to a variety of mental and emotional conditions in children that she noted might be minimized by providing children with their own legal representation in custody proceedings.

Overall, in considering the variety of ways the print news media constructed systemic factors as blameworthy in the Fekete IPH, the notion of 'system' was presented as just that, a large organizational umbrella consisting of a variety of agencies and individuals working towards a variety of ends. As noted above, the legal system and child welfare services were implicated as systemic causes of the Fekete murder-suicide. Not constructed as agencies made up of individuals who failed or succeeded in preventing the deaths of Blagica and Alex Fekete, the print news media constructed these agencies as lacking humanity. Language such as 'court,' 'services,' and 'legal representation' removed individual agency from the construction of these systems. In contrast, the RCMP, also constructed as a systemic variable, was presented to the audience as a large organization representative of 'law and order,' but also, interestingly, as an organization made up of individuals. The print news media named individual RCMP officers and then blamed them for their role in the murders of Blagica and Alex. The print news media personified the RCMP, constructing individual officers as ineffective members of a damaged system, for the reading audience, whereas the legal and child welfare systems were not personified, despite the news media holding all these agencies accountable for the murders. This

strategy allowed the identification of some human agency as responsible for the deaths of Alex and Blagica, when, as already noted, Josif could not play that role.

4.2.7 Alex Fekete

Without a human villain in the Fekete case, could there be a human victim? The media presented Blagica and Josif ambivalently as people with flaws but not inherently evil, leading to the question, was either one actually a victim? Blagica was certainly the sympathetic character, but the print news media did not construct her involvement in the custody dispute without criticism. Josif was not relieved of responsibility despite his construction as a pitiable character. The only true victim of all of the actors in this story, then, was Alex. Alex was constructed as a victim of warring parents, “Local police had been called to intervene many times between Fekete and his estranged wife and defuse conflicts over their son since they separated a year before the deaths” (*Fatality inquiry to be held into murder-suicide*, 2004, February 19, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2), RCMP neglect,

The police responded to Josif’s complaints that Betty was transporting Alex without a car seat (in taxis and buses). But the police, knowing guns are the weapon of choice in family violence, did not investigate Betty’s assertion that Joseph kept several in his home and threatened to kill them with one. These unregistered guns were quickly found after the murders. And there it is, the cold fact brought to light through this inquiry (Reimer, 2005, August 1, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A14),

and judicial failure,

Blagica had been staying at a women’s shelter, but had to return home to comply with a court order forcing her to hand Alex over to Josif for the weekend. He was returning the child to her that Sunday night when he opened fire (Coolican, 2005a, May 3, *Edmonton Sun*, p. A3).

Alex, as a three-year-old child, was the only possible true victim in this case. Because Alex was an innocent child too young to be capable of wrongdoing, his death was constructed as senseless, wasteful, and a provincial tragedy. Ultimately, the print news media used Alex's murder as a lesson to readers about the intersection of public and private spheres and how failures in the public sphere can have a devastating impact on the private.

4.3 Discussion

One of the most striking observations I made in my analysis of the Fekete case was the prominence of a feminist discourse throughout the case. What was also striking to me was that the print news media did not label this discourse as feminist, and it was perhaps only immediately recognizable to me owing to my familiarity with feminist theory and my sensitivity to its presence or absence in the news media. I am uncertain if the average reader would identify some of the feminist discussions in the current selection of articles as such. However, the print news media's citation of women's advocates, particularly from the shelter community, and their framing of the case as a systemic failure, rather than an individualized incident, was consistent with a feminist construction. This observation led me to wonder why, given the prominence of this type of construction throughout the case, the print news media did not name it, 'feminist'?

The question 'Where is feminism?' in the present cases, but also in media discourses in general, was not an easy one to answer within the confines of this discussion. In terms of the Fekete case specifically, despite the inclusion of a number of feminist sources in the text of the documents, media never used the word 'feminism,' which likely had something to do with the audience of these newspaper articles. All the major newspapers cited, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Sun*, and the *Calgary Sun*, had a conservative readership who might have felt alienated by an open discussion of feminism. In combination with the small space available to discuss the details of the case and the awareness of the audience, it is perhaps

not surprising to see feminism alluded to, though never discussed, in the context of the Fekete IPH. It was a pattern consistent with other research examining the presentation of feminism in mainstream news coverage (Lind & Sallo, 2002). Further, an examination of the ways that feminism was constructed in news and popular media might have been reflective of the current zeitgeist of the movement itself.

4.3.1 Feminism in popular media

In their examination of academic analyses of popular media, including the print news media, Hollows and Moseley (2006) noted that feminist scholars traditionally evaluated popular culture from an external lens of feminism. Indeed, the work of Meyers (1997) and Berns (2004) was consistent with this observation. Hollows and Moseley (2006) argued, however, that this perspective distanced feminism from the media it actually sought to evaluate. Hollows and Moseley encouraged researchers to examine the media's presentation of feminism itself, rather than examining texts from a feminist theoretical orientation. They noted that feminist researchers might have found value in examining what the popular media said about feminism and specifically suggested that researchers examine feminism as the media presented it *within* the popular culture.

Orr (1997) discussed some of the ways feminism has changed over time and some of the ways its presentation in the media has also changed. Specifically, Orr (1997) discussed the third wave of feminism, which emerged in the 1990s, and noted the ways in which this 'new' feminism diverged from that of the 1970s and 1980s. This 'new' feminism included a great deal of media saturation, and, according to Raven (2010, March 6), a great deal of frivolity. Constructed in the media as in opposition to 'old' feminism, which Raven described as "unglamorous and inhibiting," the 'new' feminism of the 1990s seemed to become a competitive place for women to prove their degree of commitment to the movement. Walters (2010,

September 17) placed some responsibility for this perception on various forms of media, noting that they had “created an alternative feminism—a stereotypical almost caricatured image of the feminist. The highly unfortunate result being that [women] don’t want to live like, or look like feminists.” However, Walters also discussed the various ways that feminism, by spending energy defining what was and what was not ‘feminist,’ may have alienated its supporters.

Orr (1997) acknowledged the struggle many so-called ‘new feminists’ of the 1990s had finding their place within the movement. Rather than being a holistic and welcoming meeting of men and women for a common good, Orr (1997) discussed how the third-wave of feminism seemed to include an anxiety about defining what it meant to be a ‘real’ feminist. Indeed, as feminism managed mainstream presentation while attempting to maintain its integrity as a grassroots movement, it seemed that it also experienced some theoretical fractures in what it meant to be a feminist.

My perception of the difficulty that feminism might have had defining itself in a new generation led me to an examination of feminist weblogs (blogs) on the Internet. I wanted to gain some awareness of what authors who wrote for a general audience were saying about feminism and how they were defining it. Indeed, I learned that the feminist struggle to define itself in academic literature was also an active topic of discussion within the Internet blog community, where a variety of bloggers discussed and debated what it meant to be a ‘real’ feminist and whether there was such a thing. As a result, a growing topic on feminist blogs seemed to be a discussion of the feminist disgruntlement with feminism itself (e.g. *Bad Feminist UK*). Women who had self-identified as feminist were finding themselves less and less comfortable with this label and more and more distanced from what they perceived to be ‘true’ feminism, as opposed to the one they actually choose to practise. Take Walters’s (2010, September 17) argument from the blog *Bad Feminist UK*, “To many women in the 21st century the word feminism has come to

mean nothing less than a particular lifestyle choice. Synonymous with lesbianism, the anti-sexual and man-hating, women find that they cannot reconcile feminism with their own lives, regarding it as a movement that doesn't respect their choices or address their concerns." Given the tone and accessibility of this discussion, it is perhaps unsurprising then that the mainstream news media and culture have chosen to distance themselves from such a construction.

While perhaps an inaccurate or unnecessarily cynical view of feminism, Walters's (2010, September 17) description of her perception of it seemed to capture the way society and the news media constructed feminists and the movement itself. Regardless of the verity of this construction, the inclusion of the word 'feminism' or 'feminist' in the news media had symbolic connotations consistent with Walters's description. Perhaps the print news media's choice not to identify the arguments put forward by the feminists in the Fekete case as *feminist* was a way for the print news media to present such a perspective without distracting the reader from the crux of the discussion. Specifically, by not referencing the word 'feminist,' the print news media thereby prevented defensive readers from minimizing or discounting the points made by the feminist sources cited. The print news media, in not naming feminism, might actually have done feminism a favour by focusing the reader's attention on the context of the case rather than the politics of the position. Rather than being exclusive or sexist, perhaps the print news media were actually acting as allies to the feminist movement.

Conceptualizing the news media as potential allies of the present wave of the feminist movement was an interesting and unfamiliar idea for me to consider. Certainly, the media had engaged in offensive and sexist reporting practices in the past and continued to do so at the time of this writing. Nevertheless, when I considered the print news media a reciprocal agent of culture, namely one that constructed and one that was constructed by culture, it was easier to look at the news media as reflective of the zeitgeist of its own society (Altheide, 1996). Perhaps,

by not labelling feminism, the media provided an important service to the movement itself, a reflection of society's perception of it. Considering it from Hollows and Moseley's (2006) suggested strategy of examining how feminism was presented in the news media, perhaps the linguistic elimination of 'feminist' from the texts of our society was reflective of the needs of a culture that had grown weary of the movement and the way it was presented in society. If the media both constructed and reflected culture, then perhaps they were communicating a need for feminism to reconceptualise itself and to become more relevant and in focus with its audience. While certainly only one example, the discourse of the Fekete case was so unique in its inclusion of an invisible feminist discourse, it was worth considering what this invisibility meant about the movement itself and how our culture constructed it.

5. Study 2: Moreside

5.1 Rationale

On February 13, 2005, Brenda Moreside, aged 44, was murdered by her partner, Stanley Willier, aged 50, in their High Prairie, Alberta, home. Both Moreside and Willier were of Métis descent. Approximately four months following the initial brief reports of her death that appeared in both the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Edmonton Sun*, national print news media outlets reported that the RCMP had not responded to Moreside's call to 9-1-1 the evening she was murdered. When a confidential RCMP memo was released to the news media, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) revealed that the RCMP attended the couple's residence only after Moreside's adult daughter contacted them, having not heard from her mother for a number of days. Upon investigation, RCMP found Brenda Moreside murdered, undiscovered in her own home, 12 days after the 9-1-1 phone call. Her partner, Stanley Willie allegedly had stabbed her to death.

The trial of Stanley Willier garnered no print news media coverage until he was acquitted of Moreside's murder. According to this coverage, RCMP officers had not taken sufficient care to ensure Willier was able to access a lawyer of his choosing following his arrest. The judge in the case ruled Willier's confession to Moreside's murder inadmissible because the RCMP had violated his Charter rights. At the time of this writing, following an appeal, Stanley Willier was being re-tried for the murder of Brenda Moreside. The outcome of this trial is unknown.

I chose the Moreside case for analysis because of its similarity to, and difference from, the Fekete case. The print news media constructed both cases as preventable incidents of male-perpetrated IPH that involved some form of police misconduct. The important distinction

between the two cases was that the Fekete family was Caucasian, and Stanley Willier and Brenda Moreside were Métis .

5.2 Results

Although I originally chose the Moreside case to compare it to the Fekete case, ultimately I realized this focus of analysis was misguided. While the similarities and differences between the two cases were interesting, this type of analysis would add very little unique content to the academic discourse of IPH reporting in North America. A number of researchers have examined the differences in the way the print news media cover the IPH of minority women compared to Caucasian women (e.g. Lundman, 2003; Farden, 1996). Rather, the Moreside case was unique owing to the extensive print news media coverage of the case (56 articles were published about Brenda Moreside's murder), a rare pattern of reporting in cases where both victim and perpetrator were Aboriginal (Farden, 1996). My focus shifted to an investigation of the Moreside case as a unique discourse in the landscape of Alberta male-perpetrated IPH reporting.

5.2.1 Headline analysis

5.2.1.1 Elimination of the victim

Throughout the process of this analysis, I considered the various ways that the headlines of the cases under study contributed to the construction of each case. Often, the content of the headlines was slightly different from the way the full-text of the articles constructed the cases. Understanding how a case is constructed through headlines is a critical way to understand how the print news media frame the content of a story. In fact, the headline is often the only part of a story the average newspaper consumer reads. Dor (2003) described that the purpose of a headline was to “optimize the relevance of the story by minimizing processing effort while making sure that a sufficient amount of contextual effects are deducible within the most appropriate context possible” (p. 705). Dor further noted that headlines were designed to encourage readers to scan,

rather than read, the text of an article. For the Moreside case, I chose to analyze the headlines separately from the article text for one section of my analysis.

As with the Fekete case, the news media constructed the murder of Brenda Moreside as exemplary not only of the way the Alberta RCMP respond to domestic violence, but also of how the Alberta RCMP respond to domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. The headlines of articles about the Moreside case incorporated a presentation of criticism and scepticism. They were critical of the inaction of the RCMP, though not necessarily critical of the fatal consequences of this inaction. For example, early in the case, the *Edmonton Sun*'s headline read, "Police would not respond to 911 call: memo" (2005, July 28, p. 5), while the *Globe and Mail*'s headline from the same day, read, "Police didn't respond to 911 call, CBC says" (2005, July 28, p. A7). Further, the *Whitehorse Star*'s headline read, "Family questioning why 911 call unanswered" (2005, July 28, p. 8). While differing in their levels of sensationalism and critique, all three headlines implicated systemic factors in the case, though none acknowledged the fatal outcome. By not referring to Moreside's murder in the headline, the stories became primarily about RCMP inaction. The actual murder, the victim, and the perpetrator became contextual details. Indeed, newspaper headlines did not refer to Stanley Willier, the alleged perpetrator, until his acquittal for Moreside's murder. The construction of the case was virtually unrelated to his guilt or innocence. Instead, the media constructed the case as exemplary of the RCMP's failure to protect Moreside and other female victims of IPV.

In response to an official internal investigation, the Alberta RCMP issued a formal statement summarizing the results of this investigation and admitted they had erred in not responding to Moreside's 9-1-1 call. On December 30, 2005, many Canadian newspapers reported on this statement. The *Victoria Times Colonist* headline read, "RCMP admit error in shunning 9-1-1 call: Caller said she was in danger from boyfriend, 12 days later she was found

stabbed to death” (Kleiss, 2005, December 30, p. A7). The *Ottawa Citizen*’s headline read, “Alberta: RCMP admits error in ignoring 9-1-1 call” (2005, December 30, p. A3), and the *Globe and Mail*’s read, “RCMP admit error in 9-1-1 snub” (Harding, 2005, December 30, p. A10). These powerful word choices, including “snub” and “shunning,” constructed the articles as critical of the RCMP and their behaviour. Notably, only the *Victoria Times Colonist* headline noted specific details about Brenda Moreside herself. The majority of the headlines in the case did not reference her actual death at all, and she was lost almost entirely from the presentation of the coverage of her murder.

The print news media further marginalized Brenda Moreside by using IPV advocates as sources to construct her death as exemplary of the systemic issues in Alberta that exacerbated IPV and IPH incidents in the province. Articles such as “Women, children often not believed until it’s too late: Death Review Committee should make system accountable in deadly cases of domestic violence,” by Jan Reimer in the *Edmonton Journal* (2005, August 1, p. A14), were critical of how victims of IPV were treated in Alberta. These articles offered Moreside’s victimization as a contextual detail, but did not necessarily include it as a variable worthy of independent discussion. It seemed that, for the print news media’s purposes, Moreside’s murder became symbolic, consistent with Peelo’s (2006) observation the individuals in homicide cases specifically can be constructed as “symbol[s] in which the actuality of death is eclipsed by the range of current and past political ills which it is held to represent” (p. 168).

The construction of Brenda Moreside’s murder as an ‘RCMP failure’ did not end when the RCMP admitted their error. In December 2006, when Stanley Willier was acquitted because of the inadmissibility of his confession upon his arrest, the media engaged in further criticism of the RCMP and the Canadian justice system. For example, the headline in the *Calgary Herald*, “Man goes free after admitting he killed wife” (2006, December 9, p. A1), presented the

incompatible notion that the justice system could find an individual not guilty following his or her admission of guilt. Quickly garnering newspaper coverage from across the country again, Brenda Moreside's murder was depicted by the print news media as a systemic failure of legal institutions in Alberta. The headline of Paula Simons's *Edmonton Journal* editorial column read, "RCMP neglect, errors mean dead woman gets no justice" (2006, December 12, p. B1), and the scathing headline of Beazley's *Edmonton Sun* editorial read, "'The law is an ass': Changes must be made to prevent another murder confession fiasco" (2007, January 10, p. 12). While Simons's headline identified Brenda Moreside's death as the tragic result of a systemic failure, Beazley did not mention her; instead, he constructed the case as a fiasco, a humiliating failure of the justice system. In this headline and in the larger article, Brenda Moreside was an extraneous detail. Indeed, even in Simons's headline, Brenda Moreside occupied the marginal identity of a "dead woman."

Brenda Moreside's absence from the headlines of her case might not have impressed as a critical point of examination given that the overall text of the same articles did provide more details about her identity. However, her absence from the headlines was important to consider in light of reader behaviour. Headlines are the most accessible part of a newspaper, and their content allows readers to make decisions about which articles they will read more closely (Dor, 2003). If the print news media constructed stories for their audience beginning with their consumption of headlines, the choice not to include Brenda Moreside in this presentation effectively served to relegate her role in this story to the periphery.

5.2.1.2 IPV as a social problem

While the primary discussion of the Moreside headlines seemed to be the issue of RCMP response to IPV, the news media also constructed her death as a social problem. The elimination of Brenda Moreside from the text of the headlines and the frequent reference to the RCMP as an

organization and institution rather than a collection of individual police officers, served to construct Moreside's death as reflective of a social or systemic problem rather than an isolated incident between two individuals.

By using editorial articles and statistical data, the print news media constructed Moreside's murder as an IPH that was a direct result of an ongoing history of IPV between the couple and part of a larger problem of IPV in Alberta. Bhardwaj described IPV as a "pandemic" in the *Calgary Sun* headline, "Domestic killings on rise: Alberta women's group says family violence a pandemic" (2006a, January 20, p. 21), and provided an alternative to the prominent presentation of RCMP failure. Where the RCMP was an identifiable institution on which blame could be placed, the issue of family violence was less tangible. This pattern of discourse constructed IPH as a social problem, one in which objects of blame and possible solutions were less identifiable.

The format of newspapers makes them awkward forums for discussing long-term, complicated social problems. By definition, the newspaper's mandate is to present *news*, occurrences constructed as interesting or important to know. While larger social problems are often reflected in the news of the day, newspapers are not ideally suited as a forum for an in-depth discussion of these problems (Sacco, 1995). Nevertheless, the print news media actively constructs social problems as relevant to ordinary citizens in the way they choose which stories to report and the angles from which to report them. In the case of Brenda Moreside's murder, IPV was one frame through which the press constructed the case; they thereby construct a presentation that constructed IPV and IPH as socially problematic issues relevant to Albertans. That it was done prominently in the headlines of the case was a unique strategy, given the historical invisibility of IPV discourse in the print news media (Berns, 2004). For example, Bhardwaj's article, "Domestic killings on rise: Alberta women's group says family violence a

pandemic” (2006a, January 20, *Calgary Sun*, p. 21), identified IPH and represented it as a problem caused by IPV. Bhardwaj accomplished this construction by citing experts who conceptualized the issue as a “pandemic,” thereby reifying it for the audience.

The *Edmonton Sun* constructed the same story slightly differently with the headline, “Domestic death spike: Number of killings doubles over single year” (Bhardwaj, 2006b, January 20, p. 5). In this case, Bhardwaj constructed IPH, a social problem, as a problem that has “spiked” rather than as a “pandemic.” IPH was identified as abnormal and unexpected, rather than as an escalation requiring immediate intervention. The *Edmonton Sun* used the same source as the *Calgary Sun*, though it chose to cite numerical data in its headline to make the increase in IPV seem less of an ongoing social problem and more an unpredictable and unexplainable “spike” in a generalized problem of “killings.”

The process of using the headlines of Brenda Moreside’s case to construct IPV as a social problem continued in March 2006, when the *Calgary Herald* carried the article, “Alberta family slayings on rise: Domestic abuse leads to four in 10 killings: Stats” (Richards, 2006, March 9, p. A1). Using a powerful headline linking IPV and IPH, the article again defined the issue as a societal problem by citing statistics. Followed later by a story by Richards on May 13, 2006, in the *Calgary Herald*, “Domestic Violence: A Herald special investigation: When help doesn’t come: Three women called RCMP seeking assistance. All three died violently. Now the families are left wondering: why?” (2006a, May 13, p. A1), the murder of Brenda Moreside was a catalyst for renewed attention to the issue of IPV and IPH framed by a discussion of RCMP negligence. Unlike the case of Blagica Fekete, which was constructed as a case of IPH related to divorce and custody issues, the cause of Brenda Moreside’s murder was presented as the result of a long history of IPV coupled with systematic failings of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions.

5.2.1.3 IPV as a resolved social problem

An interesting discursive angle that the print news media adopted towards the end of the Moreside case was one of resolution. Up to this point, the print news media, in headlines and in body text, had constructed Moreside's murder as exemplary of a larger social problem, namely one of IPV and RCMP negligence. Moreside was the identified victim, Willier was the perpetrator, and these roles were unquestioned until Willier was acquitted of her murder. In assuming Willier would be convicted of Moreside's murder, the print news media had a natural resolution to their construction of IPV as a social problem in the context of RCMP negligence. The conviction of the perpetrator would mitigate the fatal consequence of the RCMP's failure to respond to Moreside's 9-1-1 call. However, the outraged headlines upon Willier's acquittal, for example, "Man acquitted of stabbing wife" (Richards, 2006, December 9, *National Post*, p. A8) and "Mounties slammed: Alleged killer's confession to cops tossed out" (Bhardwaj, 2006, December 9, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 5), indicated that the print news media needed to seek out other sources of resolution.

To resolve the issue of RCMP negligence in Alberta, the print news media chose to focus their attention on Brenda Moreside's adult children. Initially, Moreside's adult children, like Moreside herself, received little print news media attention, particularly in the headlines of the case. However, upon Willier's acquittal, her children became a sympathetic angle from which to discuss the case and develop a new angle for resolution. Initially constructed as angry, as in the headline, "Answers sought in 911 death: Mounties could have prevented slaying, woman's daughter says" (Bhardwaj, 2005, July 29, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 3), their statements of anger were absent from headlines in the context of Willier's acquittal. Rather, headlines did not cite Moreside's children until their statements were useful in constructing the case as resolved. For example, on January 9, 2007, the *Edmonton Sun's* headline read, "Family grateful for appeal"

(Castanga, p. 12). One year later, at the beginning of a new trial for Willier, the *Edmonton Sun* carried the headline, “Daughter sees silver lining in mother’s death: Says RCMP now take suspected abuse cases more seriously” (Thomas, 2008, January 13, p. 7), thereby constructing Moreside’s adult children as pleased with the systemic changes made as a result of their mother’s death. In a case constructed as both personally and politically contentious, the print news media chose to use Moreside’s family as the marker to measure resolution. The print news media’s construction of Moreside’s family as satisfied with the case allowed them to present RCMP negligence in the context of IPV as a resolved social problem.

The resolution of the problem of RCMP negligence did not only come from the construction of Moreside’s family as pleased with changes made to police policy regarding IPV. The print news media also chose to discuss IPV and IPH itself as waning social problems to provide further evidence of the problem’s resolution. As the retrial of Stanley Willier approached, both the *Calgary Sun* and the *Edmonton Sun* newspapers altered their perspective from one of problem construction to one of bittersweet problem resolution. These papers constructed the problem of IPH and IPV as decreasing, as demonstrated by McGinnis in the *Edmonton Sun* headline, “RCMP happy at drop in rural homicides” (2007, January 22, p. 18). Further, consider the *Edmonton Sun*’s final two headlines in the case, “Daughter sees silver lining in mother’s death: Says RCMP now take suspected abuse cases more seriously” (Thomas, 2008, January 13, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 7) and “New murder trial pleases family of victim: Police ignored 911 calls” (Blais, 2008, April 4, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 4). The first presents Moreside’s family as altruistically optimistic about the future of IPV intervention by the RCMP. The second presents the family as vindicated in their quest for justice. The decision to hold a new trial was presented as retribution for the errors made in the original management of the case, including the RCMP’s failure to respond to Moreside’s telephone call. These two headlines discursively

solved all the problems previously identified in earlier headlines of the Moreside case, including the murder of Brenda Moreside, the failure of the RCMP, the failure of the justice system, the mistrial of Stanley Willier, and the systemic problem of IPH in Alberta.

5.2.2 Media strategies of blame ownership and deflection

The critical presentation of RCMP conduct was salient in the Moreside case. However, the case also included other discussions. The media acknowledged themselves as actors in the case when they noted they had been negligent in covering IPV and IPH in Aboriginal communities. At this point, a small but uncomfortable discussion began. For example, the title of a special section in the *Edmonton Journal* that discussed IPV in Aboriginal communities was “Battered and Forgotten: Uncovering the Epidemic of Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities” (Kleiss, 2005, October 21, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A1). This headline alluded to the print news media’s lack of coverage of IPH against Aboriginal women. It also seemed to be a self-critique of how the print news media might be responsible for constructing violence against Aboriginal women as unimportant by not including it in regular mainstream crime reporting.

5.2.2.1 Acceptable negligence?

While the print news media included themselves in some of the critical discourse of Brenda Moreside’s murder, overall, the lack of news media coverage of male-perpetrated IPH in Aboriginal communities was constructed as a form of negligence. Namely, that while undesirable, it was acceptable because the murder of Brenda Moreside conformed to stereotyped notions of violence in relationships. For example, the following excerpt from the *Edmonton Sun* was critical of RCMP conduct, but also maintained a subtext of passive acceptance of IPV stereotypes that provided readers with a contextual understanding of why the RCMP ignored Brenda Moreside’s 9-1-1 phone call. Bhardwaj (2005, July 29, *Edmonton Sun*) wrote:

Moreside, 44, was stabbed to death Feb. 23. According to documents obtained by CBC, Moreside called 911 and told the operator her boyfriend was drunk and was smashing a window to get into the house.

Police told Moreside they couldn't come because the accused was breaking into his own house and couldn't be charged with damaging his own property.

Flaata says the four-year relationship between her mother and Stanley Willier was turbulent.

According to documents, on Aug. 15, 2004, Willier became intoxicated and assaulted Moreside.

"Afterward my mom changed her story and didn't want him charged," Flaata said.

Willier who's at the Edmonton Remand Centre, admitted to the *Sun* the relationship was rocky but says he never struck his girlfriend, whom he planned to marry.

(p. 3)

As the case was constructed, the print news media framed the relationship between Moreside and Willier as that of perpetually violent substance abusers. The print news media noted that Moreside and Willier sought police intervention on a number of occasions but did not make any changes to their behaviour following these interventions. The print news media constructed Moreside as a stereotypical battered woman who was reluctant to leave her partner and Willier as a stereotyped substance-abusing perpetrator.

In addition to referencing IPV stereotypes as a means of excusing the RCMP's non-action, the print news media occasionally identified Moreside as Métis. This identification allowed the reader to enact his or her own stereotypes about IPV in Aboriginal communities and provided further justification for RCMP inaction. For example, Simons's (2006, December 12, *Edmonton Journal*, p. B1) article identified Moreside as Métis. It presented positive stereotypes

of Métis and Aboriginal people both to explain Moreside's death and to excuse the RCMP's decision not to respond to her 9-1-1 telephone call. Beginning with a summary of Moreside's life and some of the difficulties she experienced, Simons (2006, December 12, *Edmonton Journal*) wrote,

Moreside was a 44-year-old Métis woman from High Prairie. She had not had an easy life. She had dropped out of high school, had her first of three children at the age of 17, struggled to support her family by taking a job in rough northern work camps. At 44, she was back in school, taking classes at North Lakes College in High Prairie, hoping to become a social worker or youth counsellor. (p. B1)

By referring to Moreside's early pregnancy, lack of education, and financial struggles, the reader's negative stereotypes about Métis or Aboriginal people may have been enacted.

However, by framing her ethnicity positively with reference to Moreside's attempts to improve her life by returning for schooling, Simons avoided language that readers might have identified as openly prejudiced.

While Simons (2006, December 12, *Edmonton Journal*, p. B1) constructed Brenda Moreside positively within the boundaries of racial stereotypes, her construction of Moreside as an abused woman also occurred within a victim-blaming frame of interpretation. Combined with the discussion of Moreside's race as presumably relevant to the story, Simons used a discussion of Moreside's race to justify the RCMP's non-response and to hold Moreside accountable for her own death. Consider the following example,

In 1999, [Stanley Willier] was convicted of mischief, housing breaking and threatening to cause damage. In 2000, he was convicted of uttering threats, mischief, assault and assault with a weapon.

Moreside's grown children tried to convince their mother to leave Willier for good—without success.

On Feb. 13, 2005, just before 6 a.m., Moreside called 911 to report that Willier had broken her window and was trying to get into her home. She asked police for assistance because he was drunk and she didn't want to deal with him. (p. B1)

The first two sentences identified Willier's violent history. The third sentence constructed Moreside's actions in opposition to the seemingly more logical perspective of her children and was written in a tone of mild exasperation. Finally, the oddly worded final sentence described Moreside as not wanting to "deal with" Willier and blamed her for being in the situation that eventually caused her death. Willier had a violent history that included violence towards Moreside. Moreside was aware of it and refused to listen to the advice of her children to leave him which left her decisions to be open to criticism and blame. She was either unaware of or unwilling to admit the danger she was in, and was not able to communicate it to police, which allowed the reader to blame her at least partially for her own death and excuse the RCMP for their non-response.

The victim-blaming frame was further emphasized when Simons (2006, December 12, *Edmonton Journal*, p. B1) reported Brenda Moreside's 9-1-1 telephone call. Noting that Moreside did not want to "deal with" Willier minimized the reader's ability to understand the degree of danger that she was in, perhaps reducing the empathy they may have felt towards her. This choice of language constructed Moreside as using RCMP resources to solve her relationship problems, possibly leading readers to feel less urgency about the situation, despite their knowledge of the fatal outcome. Indeed, the final sentence supported the reader's stereotypes of the 'domestic disturbance' as wasteful of RCMP resources. By constructing Moreside's

demeanour during the telephone call as impassive, the media also allowed the RCMP some degree of forgiveness for ignoring her phone call.

5.2.2.2 Unacceptable negligence?

While Simons's article was an example of how the print news media condoned the RCMP's decision not to respond to Moreside's 9-1-1 telephone call, alternatives to this presentation occurred in other articles about the case. While these presentations were at times ambiguous in their direction of blame, I attempted to identify what discourse the author intended as dominant by examining the final sentences in the articles. Given that the final sentences of hard news articles are summative (Grenato, 2002) and designed to leave the reader with a sense of the tone of the piece, their content offers insight into the thesis of the article's author. In the case of Bhardwaj's article (2005, July 29, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 3), an RCMP spokesperson was cited for the final sentence,

“We want to find out as much as anyone what happened,” Oakes said. He added
Mounties were going to release a report about the incident March 3 but were forced to
hold off because James Roszko shot and killed four RCMP officers that day.

Oakes's professed desire to find out what happened juxtaposed with his explanation of why the RCMP did not release the report in March may have left readers sceptical of Oakes's sincerity. Bhardwaj could have ended the article with Oakes's statement, “We want to find out as much as anyone what happened,” and his choice to include a reference to James Roszko's murder of four RCMP officers could be interpreted as one way the RCMP attempted to justify or excuse their inaction.

While presumably critical, the above statement was still ambivalent; it left room for interpretation. However, other documents in the Moreside case indicated some media were critical of the case and wanted to challenge the discourse of acceptable negligence offered by

police or constructed by other authors. For example, in December 2005, RCMP released a public statement admitting that their decision not to respond to Brenda Moreside's 9-1-1 telephone call was a mistake. Many newspapers cited RCMP superintendent Marty Cheliak, who stated, "the lack of attendance was clearly an error" (e.g. *Fatal stabbing: Mounties admit mistake in days preceding woman's death*, 2005, December 30, *National Post*, p. A10). Local and national newspapers chose to construct the context of this statement in various ways. For example, Harding of the *Globe and Mail* (2005, December 30, p. A10), in her pointedly titled article, "RCMP admit error in 911 snub," quoted Cheliak in the first line, "More than 10 months after Brenda Moreside was found stabbed to death in her home, the RCMP have admitted they committed an 'error' by not responding in person to her frantic 911 calls" (p. A10). Harding's use of the word "error" and her decision to include that word on its own rather than as part of the larger quotation allowed the sentence to be understood as sceptical of the apology offered by RCMP. Indeed, the choice to place the word "error" in quotations indicated that the word choice was not hers and that its inclusion was for emphasis and pointed criticism.

Cheliak's use of the word "error" was the focal point for the critical discussion of the Moreside case. Bhardwaj (2005, December 30, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 5) used it, along with quotations from Moreside's family, to criticize the RCMP. In his article "Grave Error: RCMP admit failure in High Prairie woman's death" (p. 5), he quoted Moreside's son, "'This is not an error, this is a scandal,' said Moreside's angry 23-year-old son Craig Flaata, who said the Mounties' admission brought only a small measure of comfort" (p. 5). By using a quote from Flaata that included a criticism of the RCMP, Bhardwaj constructed the article as disapproving yet objective.

Letters written in response to the Moreside case referenced Cheliak's word choice as well. D. A. Taylor (*Edmonton Journal*, 2006, January 3) wrote,

It is disturbing that the police officers' decision to brush aside their duty to help a citizen who was clearly in danger only has resulted in a mild admission of an "error" being made.

And incredibly, Brenda Moreside's body was not found until two weeks after her 911 call. And she had been dead all that time.

This failure to do their job seemed to contribute very directly to the murder of the person in distress.

It seems to me that police officers are exempt from the principle of negligence contributing to death—a charge that ordinary citizens sometimes face.

I don't think that the RCMP's response—that they have changed their operating procedures and instituted some training on handling domestic violence—is sufficient. Ordinary citizens are subject to legal punishment for negligence, why shouldn't police officers be held accountable in the same way? (p. A13)

Further, the *Edmonton Sun* published a letter from Lorraine Shaw (2006, January 4) that read, I just finished reading the story Grave Error, Dec. 30, 2005. I was sickened and hurt for the pain and suffering that my friend Brenda Moreside had to endure to her last breath. I could not understand why the RCMP did not respond to her call. This makes me very angry. Do I now have to be as scared as she was when she phoned our High Prairie detachment, when and if I ever encounter what she did? (p. 10)

This author's comment was followed by a statement from the editor maintaining, "The story angered many," (p. 10) summing up the general tone of the letters received.

The print news media and the readership of the articles seemed angered by the way the RCMP handled Moreside's call for help. Overall, the print news media constructed Moreside primarily as a battered woman who was overlooked by the criminal justice system. They also

constructed her, albeit less frequently, as a battered Métis woman by occasionally referencing her race. In doing so, the print news media acknowledged that her race might also have been a factor in how the RCMP handled her murder.

5.2.3 Public opinion and editorializing

The volume of editorial, public opinion, and human-interest articles published about Brenda Moreside's murder was unique. While the number of 'hard news' items reporting the 'facts' of Moreside's murder were minimal, the case garnered public attention which also resulted in the publication of more 'soft' news and editorial pieces than any of the other cases in the current study.

The first of these pieces appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on July 29, 2005. Listing a number of female victims of IPH in Alberta, "Brenda Moreside. Betty May Kozak. Brittany Raquel Smith. Cari Gaulton. Catharine Joan Schacker. Kelly Anne Quinn. Mary Ida Periard. And of course, Liana White" (p. A18), the editorial "Fast action needed on domestic violence" (p. A18) called attention to the lack of law enforcement and social service response to IPV in the province.

Most of the deaths received little attention. None of the victims' names are familiar to most of us, except Liana White. Even then, her death attracted widespread interest only because, initially, it was feared a stranger might have abducted or killed her. This week, the February death of Brenda Moreside in High Prairie made headlines because police reportedly didn't respond to her 911 call for help. (p. A18)

The print news media offered a critical perspective of themselves in this article by acknowledging that they ignored most IPH incidents unless they were exceptional in some way,

as were the murders of Liana White⁴ and Brenda Moreside. Further, by drawing attention to Brenda Moreside's death, the author acknowledged news media and criminal justice negligence in responding to cases of IPH. Moreside's murder would not have been reported if the RCMP had not been negligent in their response to her telephone call.

Another editorial piece on Moreside's murder appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on July 30, 2005. Written by columnist Paula Simons, the headline, "Woman's cry for help should have raised warning bells: Boyfriend charged with murder had violent history" (p. B1), was clearly critical of the conduct of the RCMP and specifically critical of the systemic issues that made Alberta women more vulnerable to IPH. In the article, Simons wrote,

Since July of 2001, eight women in the sparsely populated north Peace country have been murdered. Seven of them were Aboriginal, including Brenda Moreside, who was Métis.

At the Peace River shelter, about 75 per cent of all the clients are aboriginal—not surprising, perhaps, given that Statistics Canada estimates that one-quarter of all Aboriginal women are victims of domestic violence.

"These are the women we're losing, and there's very little publicity. They're just a blip on the news," says Brenda Brochu, executive director of the Peace River shelter.

"People are dying violent deaths and there is no analysis of what's happening." (2005, July 30, *Edmonton Journal*, p. B1).

The inclusion of Brochu's statement in both the text and as a separate, emphasized textbox made this critique one of the most prominently accessible parts of the article. The headline, the inclusion of a photo of Moreside, and the article's placement on the front cover of the local news

⁴ Liana White was a pregnant Edmonton woman murdered by her husband in 2005. The case was covered heavily by news media across Canada because of its similarity to the murder of Laci Peterson, an American woman murdered by her husband in 2002. Peterson's husband, Scott, was being tried for murder at the same time that Liana White was reported missing and subsequently found murdered.

section, ensured that even those who did not read the entire article could recognize how social institutions and the news media marginalized victims of IPV, particularly those of Aboriginal descent.

The use of editorial and social commentary to illustrate the problem of IPV in Aboriginal communities continued in a lengthy human interest piece entitled, “Horrorified kids saw mother knifed in heart” (Kleiss, 2005, October 21, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A1). This article appeared as part of a larger series of articles in the *Edmonton Journal* titled, “Battered & Forgotten: Uncovering the Epidemic of Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities” (p. A1). The title drew readers’ attention to the systemic ignorance of IPV in the Canadian Aboriginal population. While the article itself made only passing reference to Brenda Moreside, the media used her murder as an example of how law enforcement and social service institutions have failed Aboriginal victims of IPV.

When Stanley Willier was acquitted of Brenda Moreside’s murder, the focus of both editorial and hard news stories shifted almost entirely back to a discussion of RCMP and judicial failure. IPV was subsequently eliminated from the presentation of the case (e.g. “Husband acquitted despite confessing to killing,” Richards, 2006, 9 December, *National Post*, p. A8). An editorial piece, “‘The law is an ass’: Changes must be made to prevent another murder confession fiasco” (2007, January 10, p. 12), by Doug Beazley of the *Edmonton Sun*, constructed the acquittal of Stanley Willier as a travesty. Beazley discussed the case as a failure of the justice system coupled with systemic policing problems. Beazley wrote the piece as a scathing critique of Canada’s justice system and a defence of the RCMP. He eliminated consideration of race, gender, social class, and social inequality from his discussion.

Beazley (2007, January 10, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 12) wrote, “Sometimes it’s just random whining. Sometimes it’s the truth. In the case of Stanley Willier, it was the system that screwed

up—not the police,” noting specifically, “It’s tempting to blame the whole mess on the RCMP, given how badly they bungled the case while Moreside was still alive” (p. 12). The crux of Beazley’s discussion was not how the police failed Brenda Moreside when she was alive and also failed her family after she had died, but how the justice system failed in its duty to uphold justice. Beazley’s article was a condemnation of the criminal justice system, which he labelled “an ass.” Further, his article provided an example of how the Willier case was ““another one of those legal decisions that just convinces Canadians the system is warped, bizarre and out of touch with reality. This is not the way the law is supposed to work”” (p. 12).

One of the final editorial articles written about Brenda Moreside’s murder appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* and was, like Beazley’s discussion, an examination of the notion of justice, crime, and punishment in the context of Willier’s acquittal. Entitled, “RCMP neglect, errors mean dead woman gets no justice” (Simons, 2006, December 12, *Edmonton Journal*, p. B1), the article discussed the various ways that justice was not served in Brenda Moreside’s murder. Constructed as a story, Simons began the article by comparing Moreside’s case to that of another IPH victim, Edmonton woman Liana White. Using the notion of justice as a frame for interpretation, Simons constructed the two cases in opposition to each other. Specifically, Simons constructed the murder conviction of White’s husband as an example of an intact and competent judicial system and the events of the Moreside case as a massive failure. “In convicting White of second-degree murder, I wrote, the justice system got things absolutely right. Today, let me tell you the equally tragic tale of the murder of Brenda Moreside. A case where everything went absolutely wrong” (Simons, 2006, December 12, *Edmonton Journal*, p. B1).

Editorial and public opinion pieces were common in the presentation of the Moreside case, and they were instrumental in defining the tone of the discourse. The overall discourse was

at times ambiguous in its acceptance or rejection of IPV and racial stereotypes. The authors of various articles contributed to this ambiguity by condemning and commending the systems and individuals framed as relevant to the case (e.g. Simons, 2005, July 30; Simons 2006, December 12; Beazley, 2007, January 10). However, the print news media's choice in selecting letters to the editor and editorial critiques provided some focus to the discussion. The opinion of the public was constructed as representative. It was critical of the RCMP, and commented on notions of justice, crime, and punishment to acknowledge the possible systemic policies that might have contributed to her death.

5.3 Discussion

The presentation of race in the context of Brenda Moreside's murder was a difficult topic for me to understand as I examined the documents. Because I chose Moreside's murder primarily because of her ethnicity, a discussion of it was, of course, necessary to my analysis of the coverage of her murder. Overall, I approached my analysis of her case expecting to find blatant examples of racism in the text of the documents, given the news media's historical presentation of Aboriginal people (Harding, 2006). This result was not actually what I found. Instead, I noted a complicated and, at times, confused and ambivalent discourse that presented Moreside as both stereotypically Métis and also as a complex victim of systemic failure. I think my difficulty in conceptualizing this case under any single frame of interpretation was reflective of the news media's similar struggle with this case.

The news media have historically ignored or minimized the murder of Aboriginal women by their romantic partners (Farden, 1996). I chose the Moreside case specifically because it was unique in the breadth and depth of coverage the media provided. Had I sought a case 'representative' of how the male-perpetrated IPV of Aboriginal women was covered by the news media, I would have chosen a case with very little news coverage.

The uniqueness of the Moreside case was in its depth of coverage, which lent itself to a variety of critical arguments. The coverage of the Moreside case included a critical discussion of gender, systemic failures, sexism, and the legal system itself. Journalists could have used each of these topics alone to discuss the case; however, at times, all of them appeared together in the same articles. This collection of complex social issues presented in a space-limited forum combined with the careful way that the news media presented Moreside's Métis ethnicity seemed to have led to the ambivalent and confused framing of the case. There were so many different frames that I never got a sense of one prominent discourse that linked the articles together. Instead, I attempted to interpret the smaller frames I noted in my analysis.

Historically, the news media have presented Aboriginal people in a negative frame. Where the confines of political correctness prevented overtly racist discussions within newspapers, these representations continued to appear within the modern news media's presentation of Aboriginal people (Harding 2006). However, from the present data, it seemed as if the print news media managed their discussion of race extremely carefully. Treading a thin line between inappropriate and appropriate reporting, the mention of race was almost entirely absent from any overt discussion, yet it appeared throughout the text of the documents in a subtle form, euphemistically identified for perceptive readers. Just as the print news media alluded to violence in relationships discursively, Brenda Moreside's race was handled the same way. The print news media referenced her ability to cook bannock and her residence in a northern Alberta community. Pictures published of her family identify her as likely belonging to a racial minority, yet the documents rarely directly identified her as a Métis woman.

By not linking Moreside's murder to her race in a causal way, the print news media avoided accusations of racist reporting. However, not identifying her as such and alluding to stereotypes about her ethnicity had other implications, which included making the problem of

violence towards Aboriginal women invisible. It seemed, that in the current age of political correctness, the print news media faced a challenging conundrum when discussing Moreside's race because critics and readers could interpret both the discussion of race or the elimination of race from a discussion as racist. In the present research, discussion of gendered violence towards racial minorities without many overt references to the actual race of the subjects of the articles made the discussion confused. I certainly had difficulty managing my own confusion after many in-depth readings of the case, and casual readers might have experienced the text in the same way. Perhaps in a desire to be inclusive, the print news media had actually excluded or alienated readers looking to the news to help them understand their culture and the variety of groups of people and subcultures existing within it.

6. Study 3: Gaulton

6.1 Rationale

Cari-Lynn Gaulton was murdered by her boyfriend, Robert Scribner, on the evening of February 12, 2005, in Calgary, Alberta. Gaulton was 17 years old. She and 21-year-old Scribner had been dating for 18 months. Gaulton was two or three months pregnant with Scribner's child at the time of her murder. On the evening of her death, according to newspaper reports, Gaulton, Scribner, Scribner's brother, and his girlfriend had all returned to the family home of Robert Scribner after a night at a local drinking establishment. The two couples went to separate bedrooms, at which point Scribner and Gaulton began to have sexual intercourse. Complaining of pain, Gaulton requested that Scribner stop when he became angry. He accused her of infidelity and began to threaten suicide. Gaulton became exasperated and attempted to go to sleep, at which point Scribner attacked her. Scribner fatally stabbed Gaulton and injured himself in a suicide attempt. Police arrived and took Scribner to a Calgary hospital, where he received treatment for his injuries.

Scribner's legal defence relied heavily upon his claim that Gaulton had provoked him. His lawyers argued that by rebuffing his suicidal gestures, Gaulton caused Scribner to experience uncontrollable rage. They also constructed his case from the angle that Gaulton herself might have been attempting suicide. Ultimately, Scribner was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to 10 years before being eligible for parole.

I chose the Gaulton case for a number of reasons. The most salient was because research literature on IPV and IPH consistently maintains that pregnancy increases a woman's risk for IPV and IPH victimization. Homicide is the third leading cause of death among pregnant women according to mortality data in the United States (Chang, Berg, Saltzman, & Herndon, 2005) with

some authors reporting a threefold increase of homicide victimization risk when women are pregnant (e.g. McFarlane, Campbell, Sharps, & Watson, 2002). Cari-Lynn Gaulton's murder is therefore exemplary of common sequelae of IPH in North America and analysis of it can help to elicit the ways in which the news media construct this type of IPH. Another reason I chose Gaulton's case for analysis was that she was an adolescent at the time of her murder. Her death was thereby sensational and unique and resulted in a unique set of print news media interpretations throughout the case.

6.2 Results

My analysis of the 83 articles written about the Gaulton case began after I thoroughly read all the other articles in this project. I was struck by the differences between print news media reports of Gaulton's death and those of Blagica Fekete or Brenda Moreside. While some of these differences might have been the result of Gaulton's young age at the time of her murder, I also noted that media in the case seemed to incorporate more gender stereotypes and clichés into the story than in the other cases. While there was a brief IPV discussion, the Gaulton case was the most consistent with previous research, where the print news media presented women victims of violence in sexist and stereotyped ways. Consistent with past research, the Gaulton case included prominent themes of victim-blaming, designed to construct Gaulton as a "bad girl," partly responsible for her own death (Berns, 2004). In addition, other frames of interpretation were also present, including the construction of the case as a tragic love story.

6.2.1 Romantic tragedy

As noted above, an emergent frame of construction in the Gaulton case was that of a dramatic, emotional romance. Gaulton and Scribner's relationship was constructed as troubled at times, such as in D'Amour's (2005, February 14, *Calgary Sun*, p. 3) article, which quoted Gaulton's friend, Nikki Ganos, "the teen was carrying the baby of her boyfriend, Robert

Scribner, but things weren't rosy for the couple. 'They had an on-again, off-again relationship,' said Ganos." However, the print news media also idealized the relationship. The *Calgary Herald* included a brief article in the *Five Minute Herald*, a separate section of the newspaper with brief summaries of all the major stories of the larger edition of the paper. This article read,

Pregnant Teen's Murder puzzles Family, Friends

Days before her stabbing death, Cari Gaulton and her boyfriend were going over names for her unborn child. Now family and friends wonder what happened to destroy the future the young couple was planning together (Quigley, 2005, February 14, *Calgary Herald*, p. B6).

Readers who chose to read only the *Five Minute Herald* coverage of Gaulton's murder would have been left with a presentation that constructed the murder as unpredictable and contextually unrelated to any ongoing relationship issues the couple might have been experiencing. Noting the couple's excitement over Gaulton's pregnancy without an acknowledgement of some of the discord in the relationship, the print news media constructed Gaulton's murder as romantic and unpredictable. D'Amour cited a witness who noted, "'They weren't even fighting when this happened,' said Scribner's brother, Gordon, who called the cops the morning Gaulton died," (2005, February 14, *Calgary Sun*, p. 3), which further added to the frame of romanticism in the story.

Occasionally, the language the print news media used to describe the case was reminiscent of William Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. They began to use the proceedings of Scribner's murder trial to frame the case as a tragic love story. For example, Slade (2006a, November 21, *Calgary Herald*, p. B5) used the headline, "Accused killer was suicidal, say police," and the following first sentence,

Just minutes after fatally stabbing his pregnant 17-year-old girlfriend and a failed attempt to kill himself with the same dagger, an angry Robert Oliver Scribner tried to provoke a city police officer into finishing the job, the constable testified on Monday. (p. B5)

The reference to Scribner's suicide attempt early in the article was the central frame for the article. The use of the word "dagger" in the first sentence seems to have been an allusion to Shakespeare's text in which Juliet, preparing for her suicide, said "Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger! / This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die" (Shakespeare, 1595, Act V, Scene III).

The coverage of Scribner's trial continued similarly. Quoting Scribner, Slade (2006, November 22, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3) wrote, "I just remember waking to the traumatized state like I just didn't want to live. I wanted to go with my girlfriend. That's what I was at." Later, Martin of the *Calgary Sun* (2006a, November 30, p. 8) further quoted Scribner's testimony,

"I said...if you don't want to be with me, if you want me to end my life, if you want to take the child, then do whatever, then I will end it right now," Scribner said. "She said if you're going to do this Rob, then just (get lost)," the accused said. "And that's when I just felt like worthless, nothing, anything, and I attacked her." (p. 8)

Martin constructed Scribner as a victim of his own intense emotions. Further, Martin described his behaviour as motivated by his intense love for Gaulton, which she rebuffed. In response to the perceived rejection, Scribner claimed to experience emotional devastation. The print news media constructed him as having murdered Gaulton in a heartbroken rage. Gaulton was the victim of Scribner's intense love for her. Quoting Scribner's aunt, Slade wrote,

"Rob is wishing he could have died instead of Cari. If they had a death penalty, I'm sure he'd have preferred it" (Slade, 2006, December 21, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1).

Finally, again reminiscent of the play *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Cari Gaulton's mother made the statement, "'So ends the story of Cary-Lynn Gaulton and Robert Oliver Scribner. The lesson to be learned from their story is intervention,' said Cheryl Davis, Gaulton's mother, as she took off her glasses to wipe away tears" (*Calgary man who stabbed pregnant girlfriend eligible for parole in 10 years*, 2007, March 20, *Whitehorse Star*, p. 8). This statement echoed the Prince's final lecture to the Montague and Capulet families in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, which read "Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished / For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (Shakespeare, 1595, Act V, Scene III). The print news media treated the death of Gaulton and the imprisonment of Scribner as a tragic end to an intense love story.

The print news media used a romantic tragedy frame to make meaning out of the murder of Cari-Lynn Gaulton. However, if they had not constructed the case this way, the story would have resembled an IPH as it would be constructed in an academic discourse. It involved a male partner, who, threatened at the prospect of losing his partner, murdered her. However, in choosing to construct the case as a romance, the print news media made it difficult for the reader to understand that the relationship was possibly one-sided, abusive, and controlling.

An additional implication of this romantic tragedy frame was that both Gaulton and Scribner were constructed as active in deciding Gaulton's fate. Therefore, Gaulton was constructed as having had an active role in her own homicide. In *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet chose to die rather than live without Romeo. Cari-Lynn Gaulton, however, had no choice, and was, from most accounts, planning to leave Scribner. However, the print news media, by way of legal discourse, attempted to hold her accountable for her own death. For example, when Slade wrote, "Robert Oliver Scribner should be found not guilty of second-degree murder because his pregnant 17-year-old girlfriend, Cari Lynn Gaulton, provoked him

before her death, his lawyer argued Tuesday” (2006, December 6, *Calgary Herald*, p. B4), he was using Scribner’s defence as a means of including a victim-blaming discourse in the coverage of the case.

6.2.2 Victim-blaming and ‘bad girl’ frames

The choice to construct the murder of Cari-Lynn Gaulton as a romantic tragedy rather than an act of IPV implied some mutual accountability on behalf of the victim and the perpetrator for the events. Necessarily, a discussion of blame would follow, and on closer examination, there were a number of contextual details about Cari’s life and death that the print news media used to construct her as responsible for her own murder. Most saliently, her identity as a pregnant 17-year-old served to reinforce a number of stereotypes about female victims of violence. That the word *pregnant* was the second most frequently used word in the entirety of the articles in the case was indicative of its salience in the construction of Gaulton’s identity. The words *pregnant* and *seventeen* occurred in the same sentence in 35 of the 82 articles written about Gaulton’s murder, with 70 articles noting that Cari was pregnant and 73 articles noting that she was seventeen years old.

Early in the presentation, the print news media constructed Gaulton’s pregnancy sympathetically. Gaulton was glorified for her suitability for motherhood as exemplified by D’Amour (2005b, February, 13, *Calgary Sun*, p. 3), “While young herself, Cari—who worked as a hostess at the northeast Calgary Olive Garden restaurant—was absolutely thrilled she was pregnant and was devoting herself to her unborn child.” At this point in the discussion, the dialogue of victim-blame was subtle, where the reader was reminded that Gaulton was “young herself,” as a pregnant 17-year-old. The frequent construction of these facts as relevant to her identity explained the tragedy of her death; she was murdered because she did not conform to societal standards of adolescent female behaviour. Interestingly, prior to Gaulton’s funeral and

Scribner's trial, the print news media did not overtly vilify either member of the dyad; indeed, the print news media constructed both of them somewhat sympathetically.

The sympathetic presentation of Gaulton and Scribner early in the articles may have been due to the contextual nature of the events. Gaulton was an easily identified victim, pregnant and murdered at the age of seventeen. Scribner, interestingly, was also constructed as a victim at this point in the discussion, possibly by virtue of his suicide attempt. That Scribner seriously injured himself was a prominent theme in early reporting of the case. The headline of the *Calgary Sun* on February 13, 2005, (p. 1) took up the entire front page of the newspaper and read, "Pregnant teen slain; Stabbing victim Cari Gaulton, 17, was heard screaming for help in S.E. area. Boyfriend rushed to hospital with self-inflicted wounds." The print news media might have constructed Scribner more sympathetically because of the injury he sustained while he murdered Gaulton.

The sympathetic presentation of Gaulton and Scribner did not continue as the case progressed to the trial and verdict. At the start of the trial coverage, the print news media inverted the couple's roles as victim and villain and actually constructed Gaulton as a villain and Scribner as her victim. The *Calgary Sun* headline read, "Accused murderer felt worthless: Killer tells court he thought pregnant teenage girlfriend was cheating on him" (Martin, 2006a, 30 November, p. 8). The construction of blame also included a construction of Gaulton herself as suicidal, "Victim suicide alleged: Pregnant woman stabbed" (Martin, 2006, 22 November, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10), and as responsible for Scribner's actions, "Girlfriend provoked Scribner: lawyer" (Slade, 2006, 6 December, *Calgary Herald*, p. B4).

Blaming a female victim of IPH for her own death and constructing her as a villain has been studied and discussed extensively by other researchers (e.g. Farden, 1996; Berns, 2004; Howe, 1997) and will not be discussed in great depth here. What was unique about the Gaulton

case was how subtle variations in language allowed for different interpretations of this victim-blaming frame. I present an analysis of these linguistic variations as they provide an alternative to the dominant feminist discourse about the print news media's misogynistic presentation of female victims of violence.

A frame of victim-blame is, in print news media presentations of IPV, very common according to researchers such as Berns (2004) and Meyers (1997). In the case of IPH, the print news media's role is to answer the *Who, What, Where, When, and Why* questions for their readers in ways with which their readers are familiar. In the case of IPH, perhaps the print news media's pattern of coverage actually reflects the larger social belief that in a violent relationship, there are two social actors and both have played a role in the dynamic that eventually led one to murder the other. By adopting what feminist scholars describe as a victim-blaming frame, as noted in the examples above, the print news media may be responding to their audience's need to answer the *Why?* question. Where these responses might be misogynistic, they may also be a reflection of the larger values of society, which these media then perpetuate. What is relevant for the purposes of this study, then, is how the print news media construct these values and whether these constructions present their commitment to the status quo of IPH reporting or whether these constructions actually challenge this status quo.

Reporters and editors face constraints in the ways in which they are able to discuss IPV and IPH within traditional and expected media formats (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1978). Victims and perpetrators, and villains and heroes, must be identified. The question of *Why?* must then be answered in such a way that reaffirms the moral code of the audience and reaffirms readers' belief in the social order. In the case of Cari-Lynn Gaulton's murder, the audience wanted to know *why* it happened. In answering this question, the print news media presented Gaulton as responsible for Scribner's sadness and anger, feelings that they

constructed as leading him to murder her. One article noted, “Gaulton insulted his client as he was attempting suicide and he was in emotional distress” (Slade, 2006, December 6, *Calgary Herald*, p. B4). The news media, having constructed her as provoking him, were required to describe how it occurred.

Within this same article, there were challenges to the construction. For example, the article began with the headline, “Girlfriend provoked Scribner: lawyer” (Slade, 2006, December 6, *Calgary Herald*, p. B4). The actor in this case was Gaulton. She provoked him. Her actions were those that resulted in a response by Scribner. However, the inclusion of the word ‘lawyer’ constructed an important exception to the victim-blaming frame. The author of this headline clearly noted that this statement was what the lawyer said about the case. The headline, written this way, fulfilled reader expectations of the answer to the *Why?* question. Yet, the author denied ownership of the statement. By attributing the victim-blaming interpretation of Gaulton’s murder to the ‘lawyer,’ the print news media denied culpability for the frame. Arguably, the very inclusion of this statement was an example of sexist reporting; however, when Slade attributed it to a lawyer, it was indicative of his recognition of the problematic nature of the lawyer’s language. Not owning this language was a subtle way the reporter challenged the notion that IPH victims were in some way responsible for their own deaths. While certainly not a dominant frame in the case, such a discursive strategy illustrated an alternative to the assumption that all misogynistic language in reporting is necessarily a reflection of misogynistic social attitudes (e.g. Meyers, 1997).

6.2.3 Titillation

Cari-Lynn Gaulton’s adolescence, pregnancy, and under-age substance abuse made her murder interesting to the audience. The print news media used these salacious details to answer the audience’s *Why?* questions in ways that could be described as voyeuristic. They not only

constructed Gaulton's refusal to engage in intercourse with Scribner as explanatory for his decision to murder her, but also referenced details about the couple's sexual behaviour for reasons beyond providing the reader with information. Martin wrote in the *Calgary Sun*,

Feelings of anger, jealousy and suspicion of infidelity raced through murder suspect Robert Scribner's mind just before he plunged a hunting knife into his girlfriend, court heard yesterday. Scribner admitted experiencing those emotions as he knelt beside his naked and pregnant girlfriend and threatened suicide after she complained of soreness during lovemaking. (2006, December 1, p. 8)

This selection used specific language, including the words *naked*, *soreness*, and *lovemaking* to titillate the reader with details of the couple's intimate life while answering the *Why?* questions. The print news media frequently noted that Scribner attempted to have sexual intercourse with Gaulton but that she rebuffed him, complaining of physical pain. Taking it to be indicative of her unfaithfulness, Scribner then murdered her, leaving her body naked on his bed as he then attempted suicide. These details were included to intrigue, titillate, and satisfy the voyeurism of readers.

The print news media constructed sexuality and violence as relevant to the case and referred to them frequently. Consider the following examples,

When he got into Robert's room, he saw his brother kneeling on the bed and holding a knife in his hands. "He jumped at me and said, 'You don't want to see this,' probably twice...He was stressed out," said Gordon Jr. "Cari is at the end of the bed, naked, face down." (Slade, 2006, November 28, *Calgary Herald*, p. B5),

and

Earlier testimony detailed Gaulton's dalliances with two men who worked with her and Scribner at an Olive Garden restaurant in the fall of 2004.

Scribner's suspicions persisted after she became pregnant and the couple continued to argue about it.

"There'd be little picks at each other," Scribner said.

"There'd be comments like (another man) had a bigger penis than me" (van Russell, 2006, December 1, *Calgary Herald*, p. B5).

Although these details were not critical to understanding the case, they were included to pique readers' attention. The inclusion of a discussion of her naked, pregnant, dead body was sensational, titillating, and even troubling, particularly in light of her age. At the time of her death, she was a minor. These details were arguably included for reasons beyond a reporting of straightforward facts about the case, namely, to increase reader interest at the expense of Gaulton's dignity and protected status as a minor.

Sacco (1995) argued that news media coverage of violence and sexuality in general had shifted in recent decades. The print news media began to write about violence and sexuality with less internal and external censorship. In the past, these details were too salacious or lurid to publish publicly. Topics of discussion that previously might have been taboo, such as sexual violence against minors, became acceptable information to include in discussions of crime. Gaulton's pregnancy and her relationship with 21-year-old Scribner seemed to override any issues of censorship related to her protection as a minor. Her violent death was discussed in a sexualized context. The print news media subtly declared Gaulton an adult in order to sensationalize her death.

In death, Gaulton's sexuality was an accessible frame by which the print news media constructed the case. In coverage of her funeral, Richards cited Gaulton's former assistant principal, who euphemistically referred to Gaulton's sexuality by noting that Gaulton had a "reputation for being a loyal friend, a girl who loved to laugh and loved to party, and one who

was ‘in a hurry to leave her childhood,’” (2005, February 19, *Calgary Herald*, B3). This statement, in combination with the sensationalism that predominated the headlines of the case, “Crime: Teen stabbed to death” (2005, February 20, *Calgary Herald*, p. B6) and “Pregnant teen slain” (2005, February 13, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 4), linked sexuality, violence, and adolescence together in a way that was reminiscent of a horror movie. The imagery of Gaulton, naked and stabbed to death, following her refusal to have sex with Scribner in combination with the frequent inclusion of pictures of Gaulton, allowed readers to imagine how such an event might have looked. The print news media constructed Gaulton’s life and death for the reader’s entertainment. In the articles, authors often described her as being 17 years old, but the print news media never described her as ‘a minor.’ In this way, the audience was encouraged to imagine a young woman’s sexuality and link it with the violence of her death.

6.2.4 IPV

Unlike the Fekete and Moreside cases, coverage of the Gaulton case included very little discussion about IPV or IPH, and, at the outset of reporting, the print news media eliminated it as a possible motive in Cari-Lynn’s death. Specifically, D’Amour cited Scribner’s brother who maintained, “‘They weren’t even fighting when this happened,’ said Scribner’s brother, Gordon, who called the cops the morning Gaulton died” (D’Amour, 2005, February 14, *Calgary Sun* p. 3). Further, the headline of the *Calgary Sun* on February 15, 2005, constructed the murder as mysterious, “Motive unclear in teen’s killing” (D’Amour, p. 4), rather than an IPH. This presentation implied that IPV involved only physical aggression, as noted by Slade, “Gordon Jr. testified Monday that his brother ‘wasn’t violent physically’ with Cari, but they did argue.” (Slade, 2006, November 28, *Calgary Herald* p. B5). By defining IPV in this way, the media eliminated the possibility that Scribner murdered Gaulton in the same sort of circumstances as Stanley Willier murdered Brenda Moreside or Josif Fekete murdered Blagica Fekete, namely, as

part of a historical pattern of violence and aggression. Rather, the print news media constructed Gaulton's murder as mysterious and romanticized it for the audience. If the print news media's discussion of Gaulton's death was in a context of IPV, such a romantic tragedy presentation would be inappropriate, given that IPV was often constructed as a social problem requiring a solution. On the other hand, the romantic death of a teenage girl at the hands of her boyfriend was merely tragic.

Although infrequent, as Scribner's trial progressed, a presentation of IPV occurred that allowed readers to take an alternate perspective on Gaulton's murder. Inspired primarily by the prosecution strategy of the Crown, a complex discussion about the insidious nature of emotional and psychological partner abuse emerged in the trial. Crown Prosecutor Patricia Yelle's closing arguments, as summarized by Slade (2007, March 15, *Calgary Herald*), broadened the media's construction of IPV. Although this construction appeared as a dominant frame of interpretation in only a single article, this article was striking in its disparity from the predominant frame of this case. I present an in-depth analysis of it to understand how it subverts the dominant discourse of the case.

6.2.4.1 Slade, 2007, March 15

Pregnant teen's killer called controlling, abusive: Girlfriend stabbed to death in rage
(Slade, 2007, March 15, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1, B4)

Slade's March 2007 article summarized the closing arguments of Crown Prosecutor Patricia Yelle. On this day of the trial, both lawyers presented their sentencing arguments. Choosing to present the arguments of the Crown as primary, the *Calgary Herald's* article included a salient discussion of power and control, linked clearly to abuse and murder. A frame of victim-blame was absent. The use of the words "controlling" and "abusive" in the headline immediately linked the notions of physical and psychological abuse to IPV and reminded the

reader that even if Scribner had never physically assaulted Gaulton, as noted by Slade in an earlier article, “Gordon Jr. testified Monday that his brother ‘wasn't violent physically’ with Cari, but they did argue” (28, November 2006, *Calgary Herald*, p. B5), she most certainly had been abused.

Slade’s March 2007 article featured a number of strategic font and picture placements to lead readers to a particular construction of the case. Appearing on the front page of the *Calgary Herald*’s City and Region section, the first part of the article was a larger box of text reading, “‘He was living the life of a blackmailer to get her to stay. He was acting on suspicions she was unfaithful but had no proof’—Crown prosecutor Patricia Yelle of Robert Scribner” (p. B1). Immediately next to the box of text was a picture of Robert Scribner consuming a beer. The unflattering picture had appeared in earlier stories of the case, but in this particular instance, it seemed chosen specifically to construct Scribner as buffoonish and to limit reader sympathy. He was presented as a villainous character, perhaps not sophisticated enough to be a master manipulator, but rather a controlling, dominating, beer-swilling man insecure in his relationship with his pregnant girlfriend. Indeed, Slade’s article presented a very different person than that presented in other articles, such as one in the *Edmonton Sun*, whose headline on the same day read “Killer reduced to tears” (2007, March 15, p. 35).

The text of Slade’s (2007, March 15) article began alongside a large photo of Gaulton’s mother and Scribner’s stepmother walking into court together. Within the body of the text was a smaller picture of Gaulton. Beginning the article with, “Crown Prosecutor Patricia Yelle painted an ominous picture on Wednesday of killer Robert Scribner. She described him as a jealous, controlling person, who threatened suicide to keep his 17-year-old girlfriend from leaving him, before he fatally stabbed her” (p. B1), Slade summarized Yelle’s closing arguments. While appearing similar to the headline previously discussed, “Girlfriend provoked Scribner: lawyer”

(Slade, 2006, December 6, *Calgary Herald*, p. B4), in which reporter Slade limited his own culpability for the inflammatory nature of the statement by attributing it to a lawyer, the opening lines of his March 15, 2007 article were different in tone and level of contextual information. The headline, “Pregnant teen’s killer called controlling, abusive: Girlfriend stabbed to death in rage” (p. B1), as well as the first sentence of the March 15, 2007, article, the textbox noted above, and the unflattering picture of Scribner all served to construct Yelle’s argument as genuine and perhaps “right.” Finally, Slade included no alternative interpretation of Yelle’s closing arguments on the first page of the article, which continued from page B1 and onto page B4 in the *Calgary Herald*. Such a strategy suggested Slade constructed his article as a means of ensuring that the reader understood that Yelle’s perspective had greater validity than that of the defence.

The inclusion of the defence’s closing arguments was minimal in Slade’s March 15, 2007, article, “Defence lawyer David Andrews, calling it a ‘sad, tragic case,’ argued for the minimum 10 years before his client can face the National Parole Board,” and appeared only on page B4. This sentence was followed shortly by a series of additional statements reaffirming Yelle’s earlier argument. Nevertheless, the second page of Slade’s article was an attempt to portray Scribner slightly more sympathetically than he was on the first page,

Andrews agreed with Yelle that Scribner should receive counselling for domestic violence while behind bars.

“Is there evidence on two prior occasions he threatened suicide? Yes,” said Andrews. “Contrast that against an extremely young man, 21 at the time, with no criminal record.

“He had, by all accounts, a hard-working lifestyle. He has extreme support from friends and family. They didn’t see this coming. There’s nothing in his background or

prior actions of the relationship that suggested this outcome” (Slade, 2007, March 15, *Calgary Herald*, p. B4).

In presenting this more balanced view of the case, Slade fulfilled his requirement of objective reporting. He cited the defence’s argument but chose to include only those statements that most closely corresponded with the IPV frame of the piece and his overall thesis. This strategy served to emphasize his position that emotional manipulation, emotional blackmail, power, and control issues were related not only to IPV, but also, in Gaulton’s case, her IPH. The article presented IPV as a more complex issue than the physical abuse of one partner by another.

One of the most subversive discursive techniques in Slade’s March 2007 article was the rejection of the sexual and violent imagery that was present in many other articles. Slade described the murder,

It ended tragically on Feb. 12, 2005, Yelle said in her sentencing argument, when Scribner flew into a rage after Cari-Lynn Gaulton, lying in bed with him at his southeast home, scoffed at his threat to kill himself. He responded by grabbing a knife and stabbed her several times, killing her and the two-month-old fetus she was carrying (*Calgary Herald*, p. B1).

These sentences occurred on the first page of the article and included no reference to Gaulton’s refusal to have sex with Scribner or titillating claims of soreness. Further, at the end of the article when describing the murder scene, Slade made no mention of Gaulton’s nudity in death when he stated that Scribner’s brother and girlfriend “found Scribner with a large knife trying to kill himself and a blood-covered Gaulton slumped over the edge of the bed” (p. B4).

The rejection of the titillation discussion seemed to be the result of Slade’s inclusion of a presentation of IPV. Sex and violence is appealing to readers for the purpose of amusement and vicarious voyeurism, but when this sex and violence occurs in the context of a long-term

relationship in which an abusive boyfriend murders his pregnant girlfriend, the sexual appeal of the crime is lessened. The case became more mundane with the inclusion of an IPV discussion, but also elicited more sympathy from the audience than did the other articles, which authors wrote to provide readers with an occasion to imagine the lurid details of a young girl's murder by her boyfriend. In the absence of the romantic tragedy presentation, this article rejected the traditional sexist discourse common in print news media reports of violence against women. A unique presentation occurred that held the male accountable for his actions without an attempt to blame, denigrate, or shame the victim.

6.3 Discussion

The most striking part of the Gaulton case to me was the sexualisation of Gaulton's murder despite her status as a minor. An under-researched area generally in the field of news media presentation research, there was little academic research I could find to help me understand the way the print news media constructed Cari-Lynn Gaulton in a sexualized way. While Goddard and Saunders (2000) discussed how child victims of sexual abuse were often re-abused linguistically when their experiences are chronicled as news, there was surprisingly very little written about how women were similarly sexualized in death, unless these women were sex workers or victims of a sexual assault (e.g. Carrington & Johnson, 1994; Los & Chamamrd, 1997).

My analysis of Cari-Lynn Gaulton's murder and my speculations about her presentation in the print news media led me in two directions. The first was a generalized feeling of outrage as to how the print news media sexualized her in death, particularly given her age. Specifically, her body became media fodder. In the interest of presenting 'the facts,' the news media were able to discuss intimate and sexual details of her and Robert Scribner's last night together before he murdered her. Seemingly relevant to the case, particularly in the context of Scribner's trial when

Scribner's lawyer constructed her as deserving of her victimization, the discussion of her sexuality was central to her presentation. Cari-Lynn Gaulton, at the age of 17, had no identity in the print news media beyond that of a sexually active teenager murdered by her boyfriend. That her identity was so tersely defined was a line of inquiry that might be worthy of follow-up in future studies. Indeed, the presentation of adolescent female victims of violent crime seemed to be a subject of little academic research, despite the acknowledgement that the print news media often presented female victims of violent crime, particularly sex crimes, in sexualized ways (e.g. Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008). Where there is a large body of psychological research examining the presentation of adolescent females in popular fictional texts (e.g. Thiel-Stern, 2009), there is little discussion of similar presentations of sexualized reporting practices in non-fiction texts.

As already noted many times, the relationship between society and the news media is not unidirectional. The news media shape society, and society shapes news media. It was necessary to consider the possibility that the print news media were accurately reflecting the reality of our social world in their presentation of sexualized violence against women and, in this case, adolescent females. Given the wealth of research about media presentation of adolescent females as highly sexualized, this argument seemed to carry some legitimacy (e.g. Wolf, 2006, March 12).

The sexualization of adolescent victims of violence in the news media could be criticized from a variety of theoretical and moral vantage points, all of which were beyond the scope of this research. It may be misogynistic to sexualize a female's murdered body, and it may be morally wrong to present a discussion of frank sexuality in the context of an adolescent female. However, because this project was aimed to discuss *what* the print news media presented to their audience, both of those critical areas of investigation were extraneous to the present discussion. What was

relevant was that the print news media presented Cari-Lynn Gaulton as sexualized. She was seventeen at the time of her death, and the scrutiny of her sexual behaviour in the news media was a prominent frame of interpretation. In choosing to report ‘the facts’ of the case, the media also made the choice to interpret her death through a sexual frame and made the choice *not* to report her death through the variety of other frames available, including IPV. Certainly it was a reporting strategy consistent with previous representation research (e.g. Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008); the choice to report Gaulton’s murder in this way indicated to the audience that the sexualization of adolescent females was acceptable within society. The opportunity to subvert this discourse, which did occur in Slade’s (2007, March 15) article, was then perhaps indicative of a growing weariness of this representation, or at least the recognition that other frames of interpretation were available from which to discuss violent crimes against women.

7. Study 4: Quinn

7.1 Rationale

On September 25, 2004, newspapers in Calgary and Edmonton reported the disappearance of Kelly Quinn, aged 25, who had been missing for 10 days from her Calgary home, where she lived with her father. Quinn had reportedly been walking her dogs late at night one evening and not returned home. Her father, John Quinn, was alerted to her disappearance when her dogs woke him up by scratching at the door of the house. As details about the case emerged, newspapers reported Kelly had been at a local pub that evening and had left with an unknown male. Kelly's father and her ex-boyfriend, Arden Diebel, both made public statements of concern for her well-being. Diebel and Quinn had ended their relationship days before her disappearance.

Following one month of searching, Diebel confessed he had murdered Quinn and left her body in a farmer's field. He was arrested and psychologically assessed before being found fit to stand trial. His trial, as constructed by the print news media, revealed horrific details about Kelly's murder. Diebel beat Kelly to near-death with a hammer in the playground of an elementary school. He then loaded her body into the back of his pickup truck, intending to dispose of it outside of town. On his way, he stopped for coffee while Quinn lay dying underneath a tarp in the back of his vehicle. Upon realizing she was still alive, Diebel reportedly stopped his truck on the side of the road and continued to beat her with a hammer until she died. He disposed of her body in a field near Hanna, Alberta.

Arden Diebel's defence at his murder trial relied upon psychiatric evidence, which suggested he was in a manic state when he killed Quinn and not fully in control of his actions. On August 6, 2006, he was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to 12 years in

prison on November 30, 2006. This decision upset Quinn's family, and, following a review of the judge's decision, Diebel's sentence was eventually increased to 20 years.

I selected the Quinn case for analysis for a number of reasons. Firstly, it elicited the second largest amount of print news media coverage of all the IPH incidents in Alberta occurring in the predefined period of data collection.⁵ This case was also interesting because it included very little discussion of IPV or IPH, despite the couple's history of mutual aggression towards each other. Rather, the discourse of the case relied heavily on sensational details of the crime, including a prominent presentation of mental illness, unique among the cases in the current study.

7.2 Results

The coverage of Kelly Quinn's murder occurred over a number of years in local and national newspapers. The case consisted of 132 articles and contained a variety of frames over the course of the reporting period between September 25, 2004, and December 20, 2007. The presentation at times resembled a fictionalized narrative, with a cast of characters, a plot, and a final resolution. Even though different reporters covered the case from different angles over time, its overall construction was as a 'true crime' drama. I decided to use this construction as a starting point of analysis.

7.2.1 True crime: A cast of characters

In many fiction and non-fiction accounts of a crime story, authors often construct a case by way of a defined cast of characters identified to the audience as belonging to typical archetypes. The print news media's construction of the Quinn case followed this formula in that

⁵ The IPH of Edmonton resident Liana White by her husband Michael was the most heavily covered IPH in the period of data collection. As already discussed, this case was not chosen for analysis because the volume of print media coverage discussing this case exceeded the scope of the present project.

media constructed villains, heroes, and victims. An important part of the analysis of this case was to understand the ways the print news media constructed the individuals as representative of these literary roles and the case itself as a story.

7.2.1.1 Kelly Quinn

Kelly Quinn, 25 years old, Caucasian, and attractive was the first victim in the case. Her disappearance, reported by her father in September 2004, was troubling to Calgary residents. The headline of the *Calgary Herald* on September 25, 2004, read, “Missing: Kelly Anne Quinn ‘My daughter has been taken from me’: Calgary vanishes walking dogs” (White & van Rassel, September 2004, p. A1), and implied that Quinn had likely been abducted, perhaps by a stranger. To further emphasize the disturbing features of her disappearance, the media drew attention to some of the poignant, or sadly ironic features of the case, by referencing her youth, beauty, and the “tattoo of a shamrock on her left shoulder with the inscription ‘Vaya Con Dios’—Spanish for ‘God be with you’” (White and van Rassel, 2004, p. A1).

As reporting progressed, the construction of Kelly Quinn as an innocent dog-walker changed. Various sources described her as a troubled woman with a probable drinking problem. Arden Diebel, her ex-partner and murderer, was quoted, “‘It was good except for the drinking part,’ said Diebel, talking about their relationship” (van Rassel & Chapman, 2004a, October 19, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1). The print news media further constructed her as sexually promiscuous, “Kelly Anne Quinn arrived at the Bent Elbow Neighbourhood Pub on Canyon Meadows Drive S.W. with a male companion. She reportedly left with another man at 12:30 a.m.” (Poole & McGinnis, 2004, September 28, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1), and later, a perpetrator of domestic violence, “Couple had stormy past: Victim assaulted accused killer – ‘My heart is broken,’ dad says” (van Rassel & Chapman, 2004b, October 19, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1). The print news media’s construction of Quinn as an innocent victim of a stranger attack became more complex

as they constructed her in both vilified and sympathetic ways. The print news media used Quinn's noted history of alcohol abuse, perpetration of domestic violence, and sexual promiscuity as relevant frames to understand her character. Interestingly, they frequently constructed Quinn for the audience through the statements of others. The print news media used John Quinn's perception of his daughter to construct a sympathetic victim in Quinn. However, the print news media also used Diebel's descriptions of her to construct her very differently. Ultimately described as a troubled young woman in a difficult relationship but working to improve her life circumstances, Kelly Quinn was innocent and guilty, sympathetic and maligned, and played the role of both victim and villain.

7.2.1.2 Arden Diebel

Arden Diebel, 34 years old and Caucasian, was the perpetrator in this story and the obvious villain. Having recently experienced the end of his romantic relationship with Kelly Quinn, he became enraged at the idea of her dating other men and subsequently murdered her. Valerie Fortney pointedly constructed his character, thought process, and overall identity in an editorial piece in the *Calgary Herald* on May 9, 2006,

Standing no more than about five foot five in his government issued blue sneakers, Arden Diebel could pass for the little guy in the 1960s body-building ads, who, until he started pumping iron, would get sand kicked in his face at the beach and lose his girl to the burly muscle man.

But that won't even happen to Diebel because the love of his life, the beautiful 25-year-old woman he preferred dead over being with someone else, is just that.

He made sure of it by taking a hammer and clubbing her head a half-dozen times. And in the true spirit of Lizzie Borden, when he heard grunting and gurgling noises from where she lay dying in the back of his truck, he gave her another 20 to 30 whacks.

Monday, Diebel was back in court in his first-degree murder trial, which began on May 1.

Over the past week, the court has heard stomach-churning testimony about how Diebel lured his former girlfriend, Kelly Anne Quinn, to a playground near her home on Sept. 15, 2004, ambushed her, attacked her with a hammer, then stopped at several locations—you know, get a cup of coffee, shoot the breeze with the buddies—before finally dumping her body in a field in Hanna (p. B2).

Fortney constructed Diebel as both pathetic and psychopathic. Her description of him as “the little guy in the 1960s body-building ads, who, until he started pumping iron, would get sand kicked in his face at the beach and lose his girl to the burly muscle man” was contrasted with her later observation that “Diebel lured his former girlfriend, Kelly Anne Quinn, to a playground near her home on Sept. 15, 2004, ambushed her, attacked her with a hammer, then stopped at several locations—you know, get a cup of coffee, shoot the breeze with the buddies.” Diebel’s identity as the villain in this case was rarely questioned except in one article that revealed that Quinn had assaulted him early in their relationship. Stating that he considered himself Quinn’s victim, Diebel was quoted from one of his interviews with police, “He said several times during the interview that Kelly had a dark side and ‘when she drank, she was evil’ (Slade, 2006, May 5, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2). Despite this anomalous sympathetic presentation, Diebel mostly occupied the role of psychopathic villain throughout the construction of the case, until the revelation that he experienced bipolar disorder, “Accused may have been manic: doctor,” (Slade, 2006, June 15, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2), which lent some complexity to his presentation. The revelation of Diebel’s mental illness allowed his construction not as a pure psychopath, but as a man with significant interpersonal and mental health problems.

7.2.1.3 John Quinn

John Quinn, Kelly Quinn's 61-year-old father, shared a home with her and her pet dogs. Presented as grieving, stoic, and heroic, John Quinn was constructed as a true victim in the story, more sympathetic a character than even Kelly herself. A constant figure throughout the entirety of the case, John Quinn's torment at the loss of his daughter was an ongoing angle the print news media used to frame Quinn's murder. Headlines such as, "Missing Woman: Cherished memories give Kelly's father hope" (van Rassel, 2004, October 12, p. B3) and "Killing takes father's 'light'" (Gradon, 2004, October 19, p. A4), elicited reader sympathy. The print news media's frequent quotations of John Quinn allowed for the presentation of Quinn's murder as more than a fatal lover's quarrel; it was a family tragedy that affected innocent victims such as her father. The print news media constructed John Quinn as a man without fault, described by various articles as heartbroken but brave, grieving but rational, and a man who loved his daughter. Further, the print news media presented Kelly Quinn herself to the audience by way of John Quinn's descriptions of her. His perception of her was how the print news media constructed her as well. They constructed his continued presence at Diebel's trial as a father's pursuit of true justice for his beloved daughter, not punitive retribution.

As with any well-written account of true or fictionalized crime, a protagonist is required, and he or she must experience a struggle or conflict. In November 2006, John Quinn experienced a heart attack⁶, which, according to the print news media, was caused by the judge's decision to give Diebel a shortened sentence based on mental health evidence,

⁶ While most often referred to as a heart attack, in some articles, the medical issue John Quinn experienced is called a stroke. For the sake of consistency, I will reference this medical issue as a 'heart attack.' However, in direct quotation of sources which describe the same medical issue as a 'stroke,' I will leave the text unchanged.

After the verdict, he expressed his disappointment that Diebel didn't get convicted of first-degree murder and a life sentence without chance of parole for 25 years. However, he said he was hoping the judge would give close to the same amount of time before parole for the lesser offence. While everyone in John Quinn's family is still hoping for what they believe is a fair sentence, they have turned their attention to his critical medical situation" (Slade, 2006b, November 21, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1).

The print news media constructed John Quinn as having succumbed to the stress of his daughter's murder, exemplified by the headline of the *Calgary Herald* on November 21, 2006b (Slade, p. A1), "Murder victim's father in hospital: Family says stress led to heart attack." Following John Quinn's heart attack, the construction of the case changed, where justice was sought not just for Kelly Quinn, but also for John Quinn. John Quinn, who was not an active character in the drama because of his medical health problems, continued to be actively constructed as the one true victim of the case, as someone with no major personality or behavioural flaws.

7.2.2 True crime: Plot

A typical fiction plot follows a structural pattern, which includes an exposition, rising action, a climax, falling action, and a resolution. The print news media constructed the Quinn case in the same way, perhaps not purposely in initial reporting, but over the course of the discussion. Media capitalized on sensational details of the case to construct Quinn's murder and Diebel's trial as a drama. This style of presentation was relevant to understanding how the print news media dramatized details for constructing the case as a 'story.'

7.2.2.1 Exposition

The beginning of the drama occurred when Kelly Quinn was reported missing to the news media. Police admitted they had trouble with the case, "We're seeking the public's

assistance for any and all information” (White & van Russell, 2004, September 26, *Ottawa Citizen*, p. A6), and reporters took the role of investigative journalists, assisting with the effort to locate Quinn. As the exposition of the story continued, the police and the print news media lost hope that Quinn was alive. The *Calgary Herald* included a large article entitled, “Tracking Kelly Quinn’s final hours: Police now fear the 25-year-old was the victim of foul play as they follow her trail from a pub in the southwest to a late-night phone call” (Poole & McGinnis, 2004, September 28, p. A1), which incorporated pictures of locations Quinn was known to have attended on the night of her disappearance and small textboxes of the times of her suspected arrivals and departures from those locations. The effect was dramatic. Visually constructed as investigative, the pictures and text combined to construct a fictionalized narrative of the last hours of Kelly’s life. Additionally, direct quotes from relevant sources, such as a server at the pub Quinn last attended, added to the fictionalization of Quinn’s murder, “‘It’s a horror story as far as we’re concerned. To think we may have been the last people to see her,’ she said. ‘We literally lose sleep over it. It scares us’” (Poole & McGinnis, 2004, September 28, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1).

Thematic and linguistic strategies used in the construction of the exposition of the story served to pique reader interest and sympathy. Beginning with the focus on Kelly Quinn’s dogs, her construction as sympathetic was exemplified by White and van Russell (2004, September 26, *Ottawa Citizen*, p. A6), who wrote,

Ms. Quinn, who works as a secretary for her father’s trucking company, was last seen at about 2:15 a.m. Sept. 15, walking Ginger, Sammy and Heidi. The dogs ran home at about 3 a.m. without Ms. Quinn. It didn’t take long for her father to realize something was wrong. “She was always with (the dogs). They were her precious possessions,” said Mr. Quinn (p. A6).

The role of dogs in not only alerting John Quinn his daughter was missing, but also the ominous implication that they were likely present at the moment Kelly Quinn was murdered, contributed serendipitously to the fictionalized frame from which the print news media chose to construct the case. Details such as Quinn's tattoo, her father's heart attack, and the role of her dogs in alerting John Quinn to her disappearance were as all examples of foreshadowing, a literary device used to alert readers to a change in the plot of a story. Retrospective ironic reflection constructed Quinn's death as perhaps unsurprising given the preponderance of such details. She was attempting to improve her life in the weeks and days before her murder. Van Rassel noted (2004, October 12, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3), following an interview with John Quinn, that, "In the past year, Kelly had begun working out, had taken an interest in organic foods and had rediscovered a love of running that first blossomed as a child attending Harold Panabaker Junior High." The exposition of the case presented Kelly Quinn as a complex character, a reformed 'bad girl' murdered before she could realize her potential.

7.2.2.2 Rising Action

The rising action of the plot encapsulated most of the print news media's coverage of the trial of Arden Diebel. Written in the fashion of high drama, the trial began with detailed, gory descriptions of Kelly's murder and the condition of her body when it was recovered one month later. Up until this point, Diebel's eligibility for a first-degree murder charge was unquestioned in the print news media, as noted in a headline from the *Calgary Sun*, "Charge raised to first degree: Man accused of killing Kelly Anne Quinn" (Laye, 2004, December 11, p. 8). However, in what the print news media constructed as a dramatic legal manoeuvre, Diebel's lawyer revealed that Diebel had a history of bipolar disorder and had once been designated Not Criminally Responsible on Account of Mental Disorder (NCRMD) for his commission of a home invasion years earlier according to a headline from the *Calgary Sun*, "Killer was ruled

insane: Man who confessed to slaying girlfriend with hammer had bipolar disorder” (Martin, 2006, June 15, p. 10). At this point, both lawyers presented mental health evidence, and Diebel was eventually found guilty of second-degree murder. The sentence of 12 years in prison before being eligible for parole was the precursor to the climax of the story, which occurred shortly following sentencing.

7.2.2.3 Climax

Diebel’s guilt of the reduced charge of second-degree murder was constructed by the print news media as a judicial failure, but interestingly, was not the climax of the story. The *Calgary Herald* (Slade, 2006, August 2, p. A1) reported the verdict using powerful language indicating their disagreement with the judge’s decision, “Arden Leslie Diebel did not have the capability to plan and deliberate the heinous hammer bludgeoning death of girlfriend Kelly Anne Quinn nearly two years ago, because of a mental deficiency, a Calgary judge ruled Tuesday.” The print news media, however, constructed John Quinn as stoic. He expressed disappointment at the reduction in Diebel’s conviction to second-degree murder, rather than shock and outrage as other members of Quinn’s family did. As the protagonist of the story, John Quinn remained a character worthy of admiration for the reader. The climax of the story occurred when he experienced a heart attack that resulted in a coma and eventual brain damage just days before Diebel’s sentencing hearing. At that point, the plot changed to focus on the character of John Quinn; Kelly Quinn’s death and Arden’s guilt became subplots. The remaining action of the story was motivated by a search for justice on behalf of John Quinn, the one true victim in the case.

7.2.2.4 Falling Action and Exposition

The resolution of the print news media’s construction of Kelly Quinn’s murder was accomplished when they constructed the Crown’s appeal of the case as the appropriate

administration of justice. The appeal was seen as a response to the injustice done to John Quinn on behalf of his murdered daughter, when a second-degree murder verdict was determined in the case. Eventually, Diebel's sentence was increased from 12 years to 20 years, and, though John Quinn never recovered from the brain damage he experienced as a result of his heart attack, the appeal was considered a victory for both him and Quinn's family as exemplified by the headline of Slade's *Calgary Herald* article, "Harsher term for woman's killer; 'Prayers have been answered,' says mother" (Slade, 2007, December 20, p. B1). The print news media constructed the revised sentence as an example of justice in the face of tragedy. The following sentences constructed the appeal as justice for John Quinn,

John Quinn attended the trial, but was always stressed out. He suffered a crippling stroke on Nov. 18, 2006, what would have been Kelly Quinn's 27th birthday.

He was in court for the verdict, but never found out the sentence. He suffered severe brain damage and has been placed in a long-term care facility. Quinn's mother lamented his state on Wednesday.

"The sad part is I can't even tell John," she said. "I'm sure he'd like to hear that, but doesn't even know Kelly is dead. He always asks Dawn (her sister), 'Is Kelly with you?'" (Slade, 20, December 2007, p. B8).

Serendipitously enhancing the drama of the case, John Quinn's heart attack and the poignant revelation that he no longer remembered Kelly Quinn's death was a tragic but fittingly dramatic end to the story. The final articles in the Quinn case constructed the story as a movie plot with a bittersweet resolution.

7.2.3 Psychopathy

A dominant frame of the Quinn case was that of a fictionalized drama; however, a number of other themes were also present within this frame, including a mental illness discourse.

As already discussed, the revelation that Diebel experienced bipolar disorder changed the way the case was constructed. Prior to this revelation, the media used a construction of psychopathy to frame Diebel's character.

7.2.3.1 Headline Analysis: Psychopathy

An analysis of the headlines of Diebel's murder trial revealed how the print news media constructed Diebel's personality as psychopathic. Even if the audience chose not to read any of the articles in the case and focused only on the headlines, they likely would have been able to identify the psychopathic descriptors used to construct Diebel in a dramatic and frightening way. Without access to the actual content of the articles, Diebel's construction as a psychopath was perhaps most obvious and dramatic within the content of the headlines alone. Below are all the headlines from Diebel's trial prior to the revelation that he experienced bipolar disorder, when his linguistic presentation as a psychopath was most salient,

"Hammer used in deadly attack, judge told" (Quigley, 2006, May 2, *Calgary Herald*, p. B8);

"Hammer blows killed Quinn, prosecutor said" (Slade, 2006, May 2, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1);

"Suspect's ex killed with hammer: Crown says suspect bought coffee for a trip out of town to dump body" (Martin, 2006a, May 2, *Calgary Sun*, p. 4);

"Man beats ex with hammer, goes for coffee, court told" (Martin, 2006, May 2, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 22);

"Murder Trial: Quinn beaten earlier: witness" (Slade, 2006, May 3, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1);

"Kelly Quinn was victim of earlier assault, trial told" (Lau, 2006, May 3, *Calgary Herald*, p. B12);

“Court told skull parts offer proof of beating” (Martin, 2006, May 3, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10);

“Court: Accused killer begged Quinn to return: tapes” (Slade, 2006, May 4, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3);

“Accused ‘loved’ victim: Murder suspect calmly told cops slain woman was his best friend” (Martin, 2006, May 4, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10);

“Accused told police he ‘just lost it’” (Slade, 2006, May 5, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2);

“Girlfriend's bloody body left in field: Court hears accused’s confession” (Slade, 2006, May 6, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1);

“Court hears confession: Man who said he hit girlfriend 20 or 30 times with hammer ‘not a monster’” (Martin, 2006, May 5, *Calgary Sun* p. 10);

“Hell fears gripped accused” (Martin, 2006, May 6, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10);

“Accused Murderer Told Sister He’d Do It Again” (Quigley, 2006, May 9, *Calgary Herald*, p. B10);

“Killer boasts he’d ‘do it all over again’” (2006, May 9, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1);

“Accused says he’d kill her again” (Slade, 2006, May 9, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1);

“Accused has ‘peace of mind’ knowing dead women can’t cheat” (Fortney, 2006, May 9, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2);

“Jury hears murder plot: Court told brother planted idea” (Martin, 2006a, May 9, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10);

“Family phone calls damning: Court hears wiretap evidence in murder case” (Martin, 2006b, May 9, *Edmonton Sun*, p. 26).

Frequent reference to Diebel’s use of a hammer to murder Quinn, the use of violent words such as “blows” and “attack” along with reference to “beatings” and the gory image of “skull parts” made it difficult for the reader to construct Diebel in any way other than evil. Although the

audience might not have had the clinical background or linguistic knowledge to recognize this construction was consistent with that of the clinical personality pattern of psychopathy, the audience would have been able to identify these traits and behaviours as consistent with lay constructions of individuals who are ‘disturbed’ or ‘evil.’

Even though the print news media never mentioned the clinical construct of psychopathy in the text or headlines of the articles in the current study, the language of the headlines alone was consistent with clinical discourse, though sensationalized. The construct of psychopathy as described by Hare (1993; 2004) is a constellation of personality traits characterized by a lack of empathy, lack of remorse, difficulty accepting responsibility for his or her actions, deceitfulness, and superficiality. Certainly, the degree of vicious violence and the way Diebel behaved following his murder of Kelly was consistent with at least some of the traits of psychopathy as constructed in clinical discourses.

The news media’s role in the social construction of concepts of evil or psychopathy was salient in the analysis of the headlines in the Quinn case. Even when Diebel’s statements provided some possible evidence of emotional lability, guilt, or remorse, the media presented these statements ironically or cynically. The reader was guided not to have any sympathy for him. For example, both of Martin’s headlines, “Accused ‘loved’ victim: Murder suspect calmly told cops slain woman was his best friend” (Martin, 2006, May 4, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10) and “Court hears confession: Man who said he hit girlfriend 20 or 30 times with hammer ‘not a monster’” (Martin, 2006, May 5, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10), used Diebel’s own words, “loved” and “not a monster,” in quotations to ensure the reader knew these statements were Diebel’s and therefore worthy of scepticism. Combining these statements with linguistically powerful phrases such as “slain woman” and “20 or 30 times,” the headlines constructed Diebel’s genuineness as false and implied that a person who could behave in such a way could not also feel strong

positive emotions. Even though the headlines in this section of the case did include some passing reference to Diebel's capacity for emotion, the dominant construction of Diebel in headlines was of a psychopath. Given that these headlines were the most accessible portions of the documents for readers (Dor, 2003), it seemed clear it was the print news media's intended presentation.

7.2.3.2 Body text: Psychopathy

The print news media never named Diebel a psychopath in any of the articles available to the current study. Nevertheless, they constructed him as cold, lacking remorse, unable to demonstrate strong emotions, lacking a conscience, and, at times, evil. Such a presentation was consistent with psychological and lay constructions of psychopathy in the print news media (Burnett & Presse, 2006) and was accomplished by the use of powerful descriptive language designed to evoke the reader's emotions.

Beginning with the way Diebel disposed of Kelly Quinn's body, the print news media constructed him as callous. By focusing on how he disposed of Quinn's remains, leaving them in a farmer's field where "most of [her] bones had been significantly chewed by animals" (Slade, 2006, May 3, *Calgary Herald*, p. B6), readers were left with a powerful imagery of the indignity of Quinn's death. Gradon (2004, October 18, *Calgary Herald*, p. A6) noted that Quinn's body was "found icily abandoned by a killer in fields to the east of Calgary," with the imagery of the word "icily" used to refer both to the cold weather and to the callousness of the act.

The print news media further constructed Diebel as a psychopath by including descriptors that presented him as cold and unfeeling. For example, Fernandez of the *Calgary Sun* (2004, October 20, p. 3) wrote, "stone-faced and still, the man charged with the murder of a young Calgary woman made his first court appearance yesterday." Later, the *Calgary Sun* included the following description of Diebel's demeanour in court, "in shackles and grinning nervously in court yesterday, the man accused in the slaying of Kelly Anne Quinn was ordered to undergo a

30-day psychiatric assessment” (*Test ordered for accused*, 2004, October 27). The print news media implied Diebel’s psychopathy using phrases such as “stone-faced” and the observation that he was “grinning nervously.” Given that the interpretation of facial expressions and nervous mannerisms is subjective to the observer, these constructions were likely purposeful. The print news media did not describe him as thoughtful, solemn, staid, or sombre. Nor was he described as anxious or worried. The inclusion of the detail “grinning” led the reader to conclude Diebel embodied traits of evil given the context of the case.

Slade (2006, August 2, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1) commented on both Diebel and John Quinn’s demeanours on the day Diebel was found guilty of second-degree murder. Slade contrasted Quinn’s behaviour, “‘Can’t talk, can’t talk,’ said a stone-faced Quinn, holding back his emotions,” with Diebel’s, “Diebel, 34, had shown no emotion throughout the trial that began May 1, but appeared to be relieved following the verdict as he was led away to a cell” (p. A1). The print news media differentially interpreted very similar behaviours of each man in keeping with how they had constructed each character’s identity as protagonist or antagonist. Diebel’s presentation as a psychopath was further enhanced by the print news media’s construction of John Quinn as the protagonist of the story. They used Quinn’s behaviour and mannerisms for the purpose of contrast. Whereas John Quinn was stoic and holding back emotion, Diebel, earlier described as “stone-faced,” was constructed as cold and psychopathic.

The print news media’s construction of Diebel as psychopathic was further accomplished by frequent references to the violent way Diebel murdered Quinn. Valerie Fortney’s summation of Kelly’s murder as discussed earlier was an editorialized version of the events and was purposely constructed to present Diebel as cold, callous, brutal, and evil. However, even the more objective ‘hard news’ articles in the case used Diebel’s actions during his murder of Quinn

to construct him as vicious and psychopathic. For example, Slade (2006, May 2, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1) noted,

“When (friend) Bernie Meszaros dropped her off at the schoolyard, the accused was waiting for Ms. Quinn,” said Hagglund. “The accused hit Ms. Quinn numerous times on the head with the hammer.

“Then he picked Ms. Quinn up by her belt and put her in the back of his pickup truck...then he hit her again with a hammer.”

Hagglund told Court of Queen’s Bench Justice Peter Clark that Diebel, 34, then stopped at a coffee shop and gas station en route to Hanna.

The prosecutor said Diebel heard moaning sounds from the victim, so he stopped near Langdon, east of the city, went to the back and again hit her numerous times with the hammer (p, B1).

The headline of the *Calgary Sun* on the same day (Martin, 2006, May 2, p. 10) read, “Suspect’s ex killed with hammer: Crown says suspect bought coffee for a trip out of town to dump body.” Diebel’s coffee stop, his choice of weapon, the number of times he beat Quinn with the hammer, and that he stopped to ensure she was truly dead on his way out of town were the key means by which the print news media presented Diebel as a psychopath without openly naming him as such. The impact of this vague presentation served to make the case dramatic and to construct Diebel as ‘other,’ anomalous in his embodiment of traits of evil. While presented as frightening and evil, this construction also allowed the audience some distance from this presentation. If the existence of ‘evil’ was constructed as rare in society, the audience could take vicarious pleasure in reading about such evil without feeling endangered by it. Alternately, if the print news media described Diebel openly as a psychopath, a disorder sufficiently well known as to have a clinical diagnostic category, the audience might not feel vicariously frightened but genuinely frightened

without any corresponding closure or resolution from the print news media to alleviate their concerns.

7.2.4 Bipolar Disorder

Because Arden Diebel was the only perpetrator in the current study whom the print news media constructed as having a mental illness, an analysis of this construction was critical to understanding how they presented mental illness in a context of IPH. Understanding the ways the print news media wrote about Diebel's experience of bipolar disorder provided important insight into what might influence reader perceptions of crime and punishment, guilt and innocence, and the dangerousness of the mentally ill.

Upon the revelation that Diebel experienced bipolar disorder and had formerly been found NCRMD of a home invasion, the print news media's earlier psychopathic presentation of him lessened. Faced with a concrete explanation for his behaviour, the news media were able to soften their focus on Diebel's monstrousness, viciousness, and inhumanity in favour of a 'real' explanation for the violence of his attack on Quinn. He was mentally ill. All other explanation and context related to his personality functioning became unnecessary and extraneous.

The print news media constructed Diebel's bipolar disorder as characterized by impulsivity and, on a broader level, as an illness of uncontrollable impulses triggered by the behaviour of others. They generally constructed mental illness in the Quinn case as an external, uncontrollable force that had the ability to control a person's actions. Martin summarized the courtroom discussion of Diebel's mental illness, stating, "Dr. George Duska said evidence suggesting Diebel's bipolar disorder caused him to act impulsively instead of in a planned manner when Quinn was killed" (Martin, 2006, June 15, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10). The use of active and passive voice in this sentence provided the reader with a way of understanding Diebel's behaviour. Martin stated that the "bipolar disorder caused him to act impulsively..." (p. 10),

implying Diebel's actions were not within his own control but rather under the control of some other malevolent force. By combining the lack of human ownership of action with the passive voice statement, "Quinn was killed" (p. 10), without any attribution to who killed Quinn, the print news media relieved Diebel of responsibility for his actions.

The print news media presented mental illness as an unpredictable, dangerous, external entity. Yet they also constructed it as something observable, and with its visibility, something that could appear and disappear without notice or logical reason. Martin (2006, June 17, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10) quoted a psychiatrist, "I looked at that tape and I watched for an hour and a half and I can say unequivocally...there was no signs of mental disorder,' Hashman said of the police interview of the accused," whereas other witnesses described Diebel's behaviour very differently. For example, "Three of Diebel's family members testified that he was very hyper, talking and moving quickly before and shortly after the killing" (Slade, 2006, June 17, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3). That such variation in presentation was represented as possible among people diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and the symptoms were constructed as able to appear and disappear without warning, led to a confused and frightening portrait of mental illness and bipolar disorder specifically.

The print news media continued to present bipolar disorder inconsistently in the Quinn case following Diebel's conviction of the lesser charge of second-degree murder. With the judge basing the decision on what the print news media constructed as contradictory psychiatric evidence and citing the possibility of a "cure" for bipolar disorder, the print news media constructed bipolar disorder as an external entity, much like an infection or a virus, which, with the right combination of treatment, could be eliminated. Quoted by Martin (2006b, November 30, *Calgary Sun*, p. 3), Judge Hagglund's rationale for sentencing reflected the way bipolar disorder was constructed in court and by the print news media in this case,

“I’ve considered the fact that Mr. Diebel had been diagnosed with having bipolar disorder...which may have contributed to his actions,” the Queen’s Bench judge said. “We’ve heard that it’s not curable, but it’s treatable. In 12 years, there might well be a cure.”

The print news media’s construction of bipolar disorder as an unpredictable, external entity and a form of mind control was not unique to the case and was a familiar discourse in news media presentations of severe mental illness (e.g. Wahl, 2004; Allen & Nairn, 1997; Baldessarini, 2000). What was unique in the construction of the Quinn case was that this discussion emerged in a presentation of bipolar disorder rather than schizophrenia. The print news media constructed Diebel’s bipolar disorder as a hybrid of ADHD and schizophrenia. Noting Diebel’s previous NCRMD judgement, his lawyer was cited in the *Calgary Sun*, “‘He thought he was a prophet,’ Duska said” (Martin, 2006, June 15, p. 10), a presentation usually associated in the popular media with schizophrenia. Additionally, the print news media referred to Diebel’s impulsivity and energy level in a way that was reminiscent of a lay discussion of ADHD, as exemplified by Slade’s description of the psychiatric evidence from the trial,

Crown prosecutor Harold Hagglund called Crowle and John Quinn, the victim’s father, to the stand to testify Thursday. The move came after Hepner called Diebel’s sister-in-law and two sisters the previous day to testify the accused had been very hyper and speaking very quickly around that time period (2006, June 16, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3).

While the presentation of bipolar disorder as constructed in print news media documents was unspecified and perhaps confusing to lay readers, their presentation of bipolar disorder as a disease lacking specificity is consistent with what Baldessarini (2000) discussed as a troubling loss of integrity in the psychiatric community’s construction of bipolar disorder. The presentation of bipolar disorder in the print news media was an example of the bidirectional

nature of media and culture's influence on each other, where the print news media was reflecting genuine disagreement and confusion about the concept in the field of psychology.

Overall, the print news media's construction of bipolar disorder in this case left the reader with a number of impressions about the disorder. One was that bipolar disorder was characterized by impulsive behaviour, the definition of which was never provided to the audience. Impulsivity was discussed in the trial as a means of determining intent to kill, and its presence provided a rationale for convicting Diebel of second-degree murder rather than first-degree murder. Martin's article noted,

A defence psychiatrist testified Diebel was likely in a state of hypomania—in which his behaviour was frenetic and thoughts disjointed—making the killing an impulsive act. If so, he would not have been able to have planned the murder, reducing it to second-degree” (2006, June 16, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10).

The larger frame of this discussion was one of mind-control, whereby the condition of 'impulsivity' leaves an individual unable to plan his or her behaviour and at the mercy of disjointed and frenetic thoughts. By presenting only portions of information without adequate explanation or interpretation, the print news media did not provide readers with a means of reducing their sense of anxiety about the unpredictability and dangerousness of people with mental illness.

The sense of uncertainty elicited by the print news media's construction of mental illness was further exacerbated by the very nature of court proceedings. A criminal trial is not conducive to helping audiences understand mental illness and its relation to violent and non-violent crime. Arguments and counter-arguments, while well informed and based on clinical and research data, are challenged by lawyers, who dispute their verity. One argument often emerges victorious. Such a process, when presented to the public through the discursive strategies of the news media,

breeds confusion about mental illness and the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry.

Specifically, consider the following sentences:

Slaying wasn't impulsive, psychiatrist testifies (Slade, 2006, June 17, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3);

Hagglund called the expert witness after another forensic psychiatrist, Dr. George Duska, told defence lawyer Alain Hepner that Diebel may have been suffering from hypomania, a mental disorder characterized by impulsivity, when he killed Quinn on Sept. 15, 2004, drove her to a remote bluff northeast of Hanna and dumped her body. (Slade, 2006, June 17, *Calgary Herald*, p. B3);

"I looked at that tape and I watched for an hour and a half and I can say unequivocally...there was no sign of mental disorder," Hashman said of the police interview of the accused (Martin, 2006, June 17, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10);

Hagglund dismissed the defence theory that Diebel may have been suffering from hypomania, a mental disorder in which a key symptom is impulsivity. Dr. George Duska, a forensic psychiatrist called by the defence, had testified it could not be ruled out. Crown psychiatrist Dr. Kenneth Hashman, who reviewed all the evidence including an interview police had with Diebel, said that was highly unlikely (Slade, 2006, June 22, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1).

The print news media constructed the psychiatric expert witnesses as unable to agree about the nature of bipolar disorder, Diebel's expression of it, and whether or not his symptoms affected his decision to kill Quinn. The print news media's account of this expert testimony served to confuse the topic by presenting a complex discussion in a few short sentences within an article designed to be sufficiently sensational and interesting enough to be marketable. However, a large volume of mental health information often emerges during criminal trials such as Diebel's, but

the choice of what information to include and how to construct it within a short article is a process inconsistent with one of public education. Instead, the article is entertainment, and, on some level, informational but not educational and furthers public misunderstanding of mental illness.

7.2.5 IPV and IPH

The dominant construction in the Quinn case was one of mental illness, impulsivity, and uncontrollable anger. There was very little discussion of violence in the couple's relationship, with the exception of an early discussion of Quinn's IPV arrest in 2003. The headline of the *Calgary Herald* on October 19, 2004, noted, "Couple had stormy past: Murder suspect was assaulted" (van Rassel & Chapman, 2004, 19 October, 19, p. A1), and presented Diebel as the victim of Kelly's violence. Within the article itself, the print news media continued to present Diebel as a victim. Specifically, van Rassel and Chapman stated,

The two had lived together for about a year at the time of the incident. Diebel said in a recent exclusive interview with the *Herald* he wasn't really physically assaulted by Quinn but she threatened him with a knife.

"It was good except for the drinking part," said Diebel, talking about their relationship (p. A1).

While this discussion quickly disappeared when Diebel admitted to murdering Kelly, its inclusion in a story describing an IPH is important. Looking for an interesting angle from which to construct the story, the print news media eschewed the statistically probable possibility that Diebel murdered Quinn in a final escalation of a physically violent relationship, as would be consistent with most academic discourses of IPH (e.g. Campbell et al., 2003). Rather, in their investigative search for answers, the print news media chose to interview Diebel and publish evidence of Kelly's violence towards him. Further, following the revelation that Quinn had been

violent towards Diebel, there ceased to be any IPV presentation until Diebel's trial, despite the concordance of Quinn's murder with the common sequelae of IPH.

During Diebel's trial, an IPV discussion did occur. The testimony of Kelly's friend implicated Diebel in at least one historical incident of physical abuse towards Kelly, as noted by Slade, (2006, May 3, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1), "Arden Diebel assaulted Kelly Quinn three or four months before he allegedly clubbed her to death with a hammer, a male friend of the victim testified Tuesday." While the admission of a history of violence between the couple was relevant to the trial by virtue of its inclusion in witness testimony, its relevance to the public was unclear. The notion that the couple's relationship was violent was not contextualized or explained in such a way that readers might have understood the link between IPV and IPH. In this article specifically, the discussion quickly moved from this one noted instance of physical violence to a forensic discussion of the condition of the remains of Kelly Quinn's body. The presentation of IPV and IPH was again lost in favour of the more sensational details, though it was referred to euphemistically, consistent with other research about the construction of IPV in the news media.

7.2.5.1 Euphemisms

There was very limited overt acknowledgement of the history of violence between Kelly Quinn and Arden Diebel. Any acknowledgement of it as relevant occurred through the use of euphemisms; for example, a number of articles described the couple's relationship as "estranged." Constructing the relationship in such a way implied the couple was experiencing an ongoing level of conflict beyond the norm in typical relationship breakups, but did not actually accuse either member of physical violence. In Slade's article, reference to the couple's relationship as "stormy" during Diebel's cross-examination, "Burke also played to Diebel's emotions regarding his stormy relationship with the deceased" (2005, May 5, *Calgary Herald*, p.

B3), also implied a higher level of conflict than in an average relationship but did not necessarily refer to violence specifically.

The print news media were not solely responsible for these euphemistic constructions of Quinn and Diebel's relationship. The print news media also reported these euphemisms as direct quotes throughout the legal discourse of Diebel's trial. Slade's (2006, June 22, *Calgary Herald*, p. B1) citation of the judge indicated that this discourse was constructed not only by the print news media, but also by the legal system, "'This matter chronicles the unspeakable tragedy of the untimely death of a pretty woman at the hands of her boyfriend after a rocky and unstable relationship,' Hepner told Court of Queen's Bench Justice Peter Clark." Hepner's statement demonstrated that when a legitimate source such as the legal system is responsible for constructing a discourse, the audience might determine that a forthright discussion of IPV, even in a formal legal setting, is unnecessary and perhaps even inappropriate.

However, the use of euphemisms in the construction of Kelly Quinn's murder seems less directed at preserving privacy and more directed at constructing the case as a form of psychopathic obsession. Fortney's summary statement, which quoted Diebel, was demonstrative of the print news media's construction of the relationship, "I have peace of mind," he says in the tapes, quashing for once and all any doubt that there is a shred of love in his heart for his one-time girlfriend, "knowing she is not cheating on me" (Fortney, 2006, May 9, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2).

The construction of the case as one of psychopathic obsession, as opposed to a romantic tragedy, occurred in the discourse by way of a number of subtle euphemistic language choices. The headline, "Police charge woman's ex-lover in her killing" (2004, October 19, *Ottawa Citizen*, p. A6) was exemplary. The choice of the word "lover" as opposed to "boyfriend" was

important, because the word “lover” implied passion, obsession, and sexuality, which would have been absent if the headline had read, “Police charge woman’s ex-boyfriend in her killing.”

The use of euphemisms such as “stormy” and “troubled” served to construct Quinn and Diebel’s relationship as passionately violent rather than viciously violent. Despite Diebel’s eventual murder of Quinn, the print news media did not construct their relationship as one of victim and aggressor, but rather as a passionate, mutually aggressive, and consensual relationship. The construction of the aggression between Quinn and Diebel in their relationship was not linked to the vicious way Diebel murdered her and this construction did not then provide the reader with a direct link between IPV and IPH. Because the print news media primarily discussed the violence in the relationship by way of euphemisms, the audience may not have understood the relationship to be violent at all.

7.3 Discussion

Throughout my analysis of the Quinn case, I noted a number of frames of discussion that were present in addition to the frame of mental illness, which was the initial reason I chose this case for study. While these frames, such as the fictionalization of the narrative and the euphemistic discourse that constructed the couple’s relationship, were interesting avenues of interpretation, the most striking presentation to me remained that of psychopathy and mental illness. Surprisingly, however, the thought-provoking aspect of the case was not how the print news media presented mental illness and how psychology was, and was not, constructed for the audience. Rather, the ongoing mental illness presentation in the absence of any direct citation of psychological resources was one of the striking components of this case.

The print news media’s discussion of bipolar disorder occurred in the absence of any direct citation of an expert source such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or medical doctor, which had important implications regarding the presentation of mental illness. The testimony of the mental

health experts who appeared for the defence and the Crown prosecutor during Diebel's murder trial provided a specific discussion of mental illness in a legal context, not an audience education context. Both of these experts discussed symptoms, which the print news media described in a vague and confused way. Both presented arguments related to the degree of planning of which a person with bipolar disorder was capable. However, neither provided the news media with a description of bipolar disorder that was entirely consistent with clinical discourses on the topic.

The bipolar disorder described in Arden Diebel's trial and the bipolar disorder described by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR, APA, 2000) were very different. The way the news print news media constructed bipolar disorder during Diebel's trial was as a collection of vague and unrelated symptoms that left him vulnerable to uncontrolled angry behaviour. In psychiatric discourses, however, none of the symptoms of bipolar disorder included preclusion to homicidal behaviour. That bipolar disorder was presented in the context of homicide without the inclusion of a clinical construction of the disease from independent mental health experts had important implications for the way the public would likely understand psychology and mental illness.

The challenge of writing about the ways the print news media presented psychology to the public was maintaining a social constructionist perspective while doing so. Coming from a clinical psychological background, my experience with mental illness urged me to discuss the presentation of psychology in the print news media, particularly in the context of the Quinn case, as a misrepresentation. While my understanding of psychological knowledge was different from that presented by the news media, it did not make one right and the other wrong. What was important to discuss, given my background, was *why* the print news media presented psychology to the public in a way so inconsistent with my own knowledge of the topic. I expect the answer to this question lies with psychology itself and its tendency to avoid news media exposure, particularly

related to clinical work (Giles, 2003). However, there is surprisingly little academic discussion about how the media presents psychology. Whereas psychological research has focused a great deal on explaining the various ways the news media misrepresent psychology and mental illness particularly, there is significantly less discussion of *why* this is the case.

Giles (2003) noted that psychologists are the most frequently cited social scientists in the news media, cited in discussions of politics, health, lifestyle, and crime news. Giles (2003) discussed how psychologists are often cited in the news media to provide evidence for an existing argument, rather than as ‘makers’ of news themselves, and they rarely seek news media attention for their work. However, it seems clear that the news media recognize the value of psychology, and, further, that audiences find psychological information interesting. It might be valuable for psychology to consider new ways of presenting knowledge to the public as a means of managing the ways in which the public understands psychology.

While researchers have lamented the misrepresentation of psychology in the news media, given that the news media and society are reciprocal agents, psychology and psychiatry seemed at least partly to blame for these misunderstandings. If psychologists do not work with the news media to clarify their statements, the news media have little hope of resolving what they perceive as misrepresentations effectively. As was the case with the presentation of IPH and IPV, without an expert source to guide the news media in understanding the context of these crimes, it seemed impossible that they would present them to an audience in ways consistent with academic knowledge. As evidenced by the Fekete case, a vocal source, in that case, women’s advocates, can dramatically alter the way a discourse is presented to the public. In the case of Kelly Quinn’s murder, perhaps if a vocal psychological source had sought out the news media to clarify the legal construction of psychopathology in Arden Diebel’s trial, maybe the case would have constructed mental illness in a way consistent with clinical discourses. While the relationship

between the news media and psychology may be tenuous, the print news media did not maliciously misrepresent psychological knowledge. It did so out of ignorance, and it is the responsibility of psychology as a discipline to help resolve this ignorance should it want to be presented more accurately in the press.

8. Study 5: Consolidation

8.1 Rationale

Each of the 381 articles I chose for the current study had its own frame of presentation that the print news media used to obtain, maintain, and direct the reader's attention. The print news media constructed the murder of Blagica Fekete as the story of an alienated father who murdered his former wife, toddler son, and himself. They constructed Brenda Moreside's murder as a failure of the police and the justice system to respond to her needs as an abused woman. Cari-Lynn Gaulton's murder was constructed as a tragic love story in which a pregnant teenager was murdered by her boyfriend in an act of uncontrollable anger. Conversely, the print news media constructed Kelly Quinn's murder as an act of obsession perpetrated by a mentally ill psychopath. Within these constructions, however, smaller frames of interpretation, including family violence, mental illness, and psychopathy, were also present and guided the reader's understanding. My examination of these frames led me to note a number of themes common to some or all of the four cases under study. The following is a discussion of some of the prominent or interesting discourses I noted during my analysis.

8.2 Results

8.2.1 IPV as illness

A small but important construction that I noted across the cases was the construction of IPV as a form of illness. The print news media constructed IPV as a physical manifestation of a rogue virus, discussing it as a problem to which the proper solution had yet to be found. They presented the construction of IPV as a physical disease or infection to elicit both anxiety in readers but also to provide them some comfort in constructing it as a physical entity. While it

was spreading by unknown means and perhaps infecting readers' closest friends and family members, the right intervention could also stop it.

A discussion of IPV as a tangible 'thing' was present only in longer articles about IPV. It did not appear in 'hard news' discussions of the cases themselves. In December 2003, shortly after the murders of Blagica and Alex Fekete, the *Calgary Herald* included a 732-word piece about the YWCA Sherriff King Home, a Calgary shelter for battered women. Presented as a part of a larger series featuring charities in the city, the article, "Sheriff breaks cycle of violence" (Scotton, 2003, December 23, p. A1), referred to disease and illness in its presentation of IPV. The second sentence read "and yet it is a Calgary organization—the YWCA Sheriff King Home—that is at the leading edge of programs and facilities to combat family violence, a scourge that, sadly, is particularly common in this province" (p. A1). The use of the word "scourge" was a rich descriptor and elicited images of plague and rampant disease. Later in the same article, Scotton cited a further example of IPV as illness, "'The volume is growing and family violence is an epidemic in our community,' says Arlene Adamson, the YWCA's director of fund development." This sentence constructed IPV as prevalent and possibly a contagious danger to society.

The words "scourge" and "epidemic" constructed IPV as some form of physical manifestation with an identifiable cause. However, the following sentence, also from Scotton's (23 December, 2003, p. A1) article, named IPV as a health problem that its victims, in this case women, suffered from in much the same way that individuals suffer from serious physical disease. Specifically, the article stated that, "in September, the Canadian Institute for Health Information released figures showing Alberta women were more likely to have suffered violence from a partner over the past five years than women anywhere else in Canada" (p. A1). This sentence cued readers to conceptualize IPV statistics in ways similar to epidemiological

statistics. Indeed, IPV, or the effects of experiencing IPV, were even described as physically disabling as implied by the following sentence, “Sheriff King Home director Carolyn Goard believes in many cases it saves victims of violence years of psychotherapy: ‘We’re teaching people to move forward without the handicap’” (p. A1). In this case, the print news media likened the effects of experiencing IPV to the physical effects of a degenerative disease or a physical accident that permanently impaired an individual’s ability to function as he or she once did.

The discursive strategy of linking IPV to physical health and, more specifically, disease and handicap seemed to be intended to empower victims and limit the degree of victim-blame this type of individualized IPV discourse might have implied. For example, Fortney’s article “Shelters offer hope for a new beginning” (Fortney, 2006, December 16, Calgary Herald, p. A4), used World Health Organization Statistics to construct IPV as a public health problem,

It’s not just a problem confined to Canada. The World Health Organization describes violence against women “as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer, and a greater cause of ill health than traffic accidents and malaria combined.”

Irene Khan, the head of Amnesty International, called it just as much a threat to individuals, society and state as “HIV or SARS or the threat of avian flu” (p. A4).

This construction of IPV victims as having some form of disease eliminated the possibility that the perpetrator would be held solely accountable for his or her actions. Particularly in the article “Sheriff breaks cycle of violence” (Scotton, 2003, December 23, p. A1), the discourse was about victims. There was little discussion of perpetrators. By likening IPV to a disease that affected only women, as in the previous examples, interventions must then also have been designed to treat the female victim. The perpetrator’s need for intervention was

minimized, and a structural discourse of social responsibility was eliminated. Further, this discourse served to individualize and pathologize IPV generally, constructing it as a problem that, with the right interventions, could be eliminated without undue effort or change on behalf of perpetrators or society.

8.2.2 Mental illness as causal

While providing an alternative to a victim-blaming presentation, the use of a medical discourse to describe IPV in the print news media also served to individualize victims and perpetrators of IPV and allowed readers to avoid feeling responsible for solving the problem. At times in the present discourse, the print news media implicated mental health and mental illness as factors directly responsible for IPV and IPH perpetration. As exemplified in the case of Arden Diebel, these factors were often the only explanations the print news media required to construct blame and responsibility. Indeed, sometimes they even implicated the general experience of psychological distress as an explanatory factor in the perpetration of IPH.

An example of the way the print news media used a generalized mental illness presentation as explanatory occurred in Howell's *Edmonton Journal* article. In this case, the print news media implicated the generalized condition of 'depression' as vaguely related to IPH when a mental health expert stated, "depression will affect one in 10 people during their lifetimes but 'it visits each of us in a different way'" (2004, July 29, p. B4). While unrelated to the cases in the present study, this article discussed an IPH in which the perpetrator was reported to have been experiencing depression. The article also cited the Fekete murder-suicide as exemplary of the increasing rates of IPH in Alberta (Howell, 2004, July 29, p. B4). Richards's (2006b, May 13, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1) headline, "Violence booming with economy: Workers taking job stress home, officials say," implicated 'stress' as a cause of increased violence in the home even though there was little explanation of how these two constructs were related. Both of these

colloquial uses of psychological constructs to discuss IPH perpetration might make mental disorder and its symptoms frightening for readers, given its presentation in the context of homicide. These articles included no discussion of how the symptoms of stress or depression might lead one to murder his or her spouse and they contributed to the vagueness of mental illness presentation. The constructions served to maintain the stigma associated with such symptoms. Finally, this construction also might contribute to readers' conceptualization of mental illness as causal in cases of IPV and IPH and could negate a possible discussion of social responsibility.

The discussions of mental illness in the documents that presented symptoms of depression or stress as causal in the perpetration of IPH did not provide a presentation that might allow readers some understanding of these disorders. Even though these articles cited 'mental health experts,' the descriptions of stress and depression as related to mental illness were vague. Such a presentation was exemplary of Dowler, Flemming, and Muzzatti's (2006) complaint that the news media were not interested in presenting psychological knowledge accurately; however, it was also exemplary of the ongoing work that psychology and psychiatry need to do to ensure clinical knowledge is communicated to the news media and the public clearly and concisely. Giles (2003) discussed how the discipline of psychology needed to be more involved with the news media to ensure an accurate and fair presentation of the discipline. The discussions of mental illness in the documents used in the present study were exemplary of why it was the case. The intersection of mental illness and violent crime and the over-representation of news media coverage of crimes committed by persons with mental illness was one of the perceived primary misrepresentations of the discipline (e.g. Coverdale, Nairn, & Claasen, 2002). It is psychology's responsibility to seek out news media attention to rectify this misrepresentation.

8.2.3 Othering

The process of making a story of IPH more accessible and understandable to readers is the responsibility of the reporter. They must answer the overall *Why?* question to determine a motive for an IPH. Oftentimes, in the cases studied, the print news media constructed the answer to that question as ‘belonging’ to the individual actors in the case. Kelly Quinn was a “party girl,” as in the headline of the *Calgary Sun*, “Court told death planned: Crown argues killing of party girl final act of control by angry boyfriend” (Martin, 22 June, 2006, p. 10). Arden Diebel had bipolar disorder; Cari-Lynn Gaulton refused to tolerate Robert Scribner’s threats of suicide; Brenda Moreside refused to leave her abusive partner; and Josif Fekete could not manage life without his family. These frames were some of the ways the print news media constructed a motive. Focusing mainly on individualized explanations, these discourses did not examine the larger social structures such as gender disparity in society, which also might have contributed to these incidents of IPH. While the Fekete and Moreside cases did include commentary examining some of the systemic failings that contributed to the deaths of Brenda Moreside and Blagica Fekete, overall, the construction of the answer to the *Why?* question often rested with the individual perpetrator or victim and therefore constructed them as ‘other’ for the audience.

Even in cases without any clear mental illness constructions, such as the Fekete case, it was not unusual for the print news media to construct these cases by constructing victims and perpetrators as ‘other.’ For example, the description of Josif Fekete’s demeanour during the murder of his wife and child that appeared in the *Edmonton Sun* dehumanized him, perhaps as a means of reassuring the reader of the veracity of his or her basic assumptions about good and evil. Collican (2006, May 6, *Edmonton Journal*, p. 8) used the headline, “Killer ‘cold as ice’: Witness to Fekete murder-suicide testifies at inquiry,” which removed the possibility the reader might have understood Josif as anything other than a ‘cold-blooded killer.’ The print news

media's vilification of Arden Diebel occurred in much the same way, as they constructed him firstly as an evil psychopath and then as an unpredictable and dangerous man with bipolar disorder.

In these cases, the print news media used popular constructions of evil as explanatory. However, when a perpetrator was referred for a psychological assessment, the print news media also employed a vague reference to mental disorder. While psychological assessment following the commission of a homicide is a relatively common strategy that the judicial system uses to determine an individual's fitness for trial and mental status at the time of the crime, the print news media constructed these assessments ominously. Both Arden Diebel and Robert Scribner were referred for these assessments, and the headlines describing these referrals were similar to one another. In Diebel's case, the headline read, "Psychiatric tests ordered for Quinn suspect" (Slade, 2004, October 27, *Calgary Herald*, p. B2), and Scribner's read "Stabbing death: Suspect may face psych test" (White, 2005, March 3, *Calgary Herald*, p. B10). The notion of the "psychiatric test" as constructed in these headlines elicited stereotypical images of psychiatry in which professionals used mysterious and unknowable techniques to elicit information to which the public would not otherwise have access.

An 'othering' discourse was also present when the print news media chose to construct the cases as surprising and unpredictable. The print news media often cited sources such as friends and family of the victims or perpetrators who noted how 'normal' the victim or the perpetrator seemed, a familiar frame in homicide construction in general (e.g. Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987). This construction may have caused the audience to fear the unpredictability of homicide in general; however, it also served to 'other' the victim and the perpetrator. By citing sources who expressed shock about the homicides, given the apparent normalcy of the victim and the perpetrator, the print news media implied that these individuals were never ordinary at

all, a frightening idea when one considers that one's friends or neighbours might also be possible murderers hiding behind a guise of normalcy. In constructing the Fekete case, van Russell cited a co-worker of Josif's who stated, "He didn't strike me as the type of guy who would do something like this,' said cabbie Darcy Embree" (van Rassel, 2003a, 30 September, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1). Diebel was constructed in the same way when his co-worker was cited, "He was actually polite and quiet,' Crowle said" (van Rassel & Chapman, 2004, October 19, *Calgary Herald*, p. A1), as was Scribner, "He was a pretty cool guy,' said Adams, 20, who has known Robert, who works at a Swiss Chalet restaurant, since the two were in elementary school. 'We were pretty good friends and he was a pretty upstanding dude'" (D'Amour, 2005a, February 13, *Calgary Sun*, p. 3). These statements served not only to construct IPH as unpredictable, but also to contrast perpetrators with societal expectations of 'normal.' In spite of having regular jobs and contributing to society, these men, once revealed to have killed their partners, were 'other.'

The process of 'othering' perpetrators in print news media also extended to victims. Readers want an explanation for victimization, and the print news media must reassure the audience that its assumptions about humanity are correct and homicide happens only to certain types of people (e.g. Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Berns, 2004). The construction of the victim as 'other' is an important part of this process. An excellent example occurred in the *Edmonton Journal* article, "One in four women suffers spousal abuse: 1999 study released earlier this week" (Cormier, 2003, October 1, p. A6), published shortly after the Fekete murders. The article discussed the prevalence of IPH in Alberta, and Cormier cited a woman's shelter director who provided her perception of IPV in Aboriginal communities, "Venne believes the high rate of spousal abuse against aboriginal women reflects the lower value their husbands and others place on them compared with non-aboriginal women." This statement appeared as the final sentence in the article, constructing IPV in Aboriginal communities as different from that in urban or

Caucasian communities. The frame of this article was designed to acknowledge the commonness of IPV in Alberta generally. However, this construction of deviance used social comparisons to reassure readers that despite the frequency of IPV across the province, Aboriginal victims and perpetrators were qualitatively different from the majority, even in their use of IPV in relationships. Non-Aboriginal readers were thereby assured of their normalcy.

Culture, ethnicity, and language were common ways of ‘othering’ victims and perpetrators in the discourses under study. The Feketes, because of their immigrant status, were ‘othered’ by the news media’s reference to their country of origin. Blagica Fekete’s boyfriend, Byron Harpold, cited Josif’s ethnicity as explanation for his behaviour in the *Edmonton Sun* (Enevold & Bachusky, 2003b, September 30), “‘(The killer) was a lunatic, he figured he was still in Yugoslavia,’ he said, explaining Josif and Blagica moved to Canada about eight years ago in search of a better life” (p. 7). Further, Blagica was ‘othered’ for the reader when her statement to police was quoted directly in the *Edmonton Journal* (Faulder, 2005, July 3),

“He bring colours, he was so mad, on the face, you know,” Betty told Einarson. “...Every day he’s coming worse and worse and now he’s threaten to kill me and that’s why I’m all scary now...I just like to know what we have to do because I’m scary to live like this, you know” (p. E6).

While perhaps intended to demonstrate Blagica’s fear of Josif and elicit empathy from the reader, the inclusion of this statement also reminded readers of her ethnicity and provided them an explanation for her murder, i.e., she was from another culture with different standards of behaviour.

The presence of an ‘othering’ presentation within a crime discourse is not a new phenomenon. Researchers such as Coverdale, Nairn, and Claasen (2002) and Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987) have examined the ways in which the news media reassures readers of their

normalcy and safety from danger by constructing victims and perpetrators of crime as different from 'normal.' The discourse of 'othering' that I discuss is therefore not particularly unique except for the variety of what I found. The print news media drew attention to gender, behaviour, race, and mental illness as a means of differentiating victims and perpetrators of IPV from the audience. That this discourse was so prevalent in the articles indicates that perhaps it is not problematic news media behaviour as implied by Wilcox (2005) and Consalvo (1998), but rather a reflection of social behaviour.

Some researchers (e.g. Altheide & Michalowski, 1999) have commented that the news media cultivate fear in their audience by sensationalizing crime and over-emphasizing risk of victimization; perhaps an 'othering' discourse is a means of alleviating such fear. Using social comparisons, readers can differentiate and distance themselves from news media presentations that are fear inducing. Perhaps an 'othering' discourse may be responsive to an audience's tendency to make social comparisons themselves, not out of news media's unidirectional attempt to frighten their audience and lead them to develop and maintain social stereotypes.

8.2.4 Risk and dangerousness

Assessment of recidivism risk and dangerousness is a critical part of forensic psychology and psychiatry. Assessing an individual's likelihood of reoffending is a heavily researched area necessitated by clinical and judicial obligation. It is also a common discursive frame in the news media. To answer the reader's *Why?* questions, the news media must often construct risk and dangerousness for their readers. The concordance, or lack thereof, between psychological discourses of risk and those presented in the news media provides insight into the way print news media construct psychology and psychiatry for the public.

The notion of 'risk' as presented in the cases was vague and unelaborated. Overall, the construction implied that there was a systematic way professionals were able to determine risk;

however, the definition of risk itself was unclear as was the process of risk assessment. Wilson's (2003, October 4, *Calgary Herald*, p. A4) statement was an example of this vagueness, "Moriah Boyd, the Red Deer shelter's director, says a professional assessment of Betty and Alex revealed the two to be at 'very high risk' from Josif." By placing the results of the assessment in quotations without further elaboration, the author implied Blagica was in danger, but it was unclear from what she was in danger. Was she at "very high risk" for murder? Perhaps she was at "very high risk" of general victimization. The reader might feel unsure how this level of risk was determined from the information presented in Wilson's article.

Information from the inquiry of the Fekete case continued to construct the notion of risk as a vague concept, cryptic in its meaning and determination. Richards (2005, May 6, *Calgary Herald*) cited testimony from a police officer who constructed risk as a matter of professional instinct, "Einarson testified his impression was that Blagica and Alex were at risk and someone should follow up with them" (p. A3). This professional instinct as it was presented in the Fekete case lacked reliability and seemed to be clinically and legally meaningless, given the lack of credence paid to such a determination. Consider Richards's statement, "While considered at risk by shelter counsellors, there was no legal way for Alex to avoid the court-ordered visits with his father" (Richards, 2005, May 8, *Calgary Herald*, p. A6). Overall, the print news media constructed risk assessment, a critical aspect of forensic psychology, as vague, unknowable, and legally unnecessary.

The concept of risk was undefined for readers and seemed only peripherally associated with any academic or scientific discipline. Such a construction served to make the concept all the more elusive. Nevertheless, on occasion, the print news media did link risk to psychology and psychiatry, though this link was tenuous and unclear. The *Calgary Herald*, in constructing the Fekete case, cited a mother whose child had also been murdered by his father. She was quoted in

the last statement of the article, stating that “She hopes the inquiry recommends that in cases of high-conflict custody disputes, parents should have to undergo psychological assessments before getting access to children” (Mom hopes inquiry spurs change, 2005, May 1, p. 12). However, the nature and purpose of the psychological assessments she recommended were unclear. Further, where the word “risk” was not mentioned, the implication that psychology could somehow determine whether a parent should or should not have access to his or her children was a discussion reminiscent of the vague and mysterious “risk” discourses presented above. Constructed as somehow capable of making all-knowing determinations of risk and dangerousness, psychology was granted a place of mystery alongside the muddy concept of risk in the news media’s discursive construction of these areas of inquiry.

While overall the notion of risk was vaguely constructed, occasionally an educational discourse did emerge in longer articles that discussed IPV and IPH specifically. In these presentations, the news media described risk to be a determination of one’s likelihood of becoming a victim of IPH. While rarely included in the cases under study, the elaboration of the concept of IPH victimization risk was presented succinctly in a list attached as a textbox following an editorial comment by Jan Reimer of the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters (2005, August 1, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A14). The list, representative of the current state of research and academic knowledge about IPH, is presented below, as it was in the article,

Risk factors for lethal domestic violence

- Unemployment
- Access to weapons
- Drugs/alcohol
- Recent separation
- Highly controlling perpetrator

- Threats of homicide/suicide
- Forced sex
- Stepchild
- Serious depression
- Prior history of domestic violence
- Pregnancy

From Dr. Jacquelin Campbell's Danger Assessment, www.dangerassessment.com

(Reimer, 1 August, 2005, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A14).

The print news media provided the reader with no information about how or why these highly variable individual and relationship details were linked to a woman's increased risk of victimization or a man's increased risk of being a victimizer. Indeed, even the member of the partner dyad to whom the list of risk factors was relevant was unknown and contributed to the construction of psychological knowledge of risk as vague and mysterious.

One of the most clearly constructed discussions of male-perpetrated IPH victimization risk occurred in a comment piece written by Jacobs of the *Edmonton Sun* (2005, May 4, p. 11). Entitled, "Slappers versus abusers," the article described the efforts made by former Crown prosecutor, Valerie Campbell, to educate police and RCMP about IPH. Outlining a construction of risk similar to Reimer's (2005, August 1, *Edmonton Journal*, p. A14) article, Jacobs constructed IPH risk educationally, not emotionally, and provided the reader with an opportunity to understand more about the process of risk assessment in cases of IPV. For example, compare the construction of risk in Jacobs's article to that presented previously in Reimer's article,

Those red flags include a history of domestic violence, actual or pending separation, and a perpetrator who has made threats to kill in the past or who has attempted or threatened to commit suicide.

Domestic homicides could be largely prevented if police, family, friends and community agencies recognized the warning signs and got the intended victim to safety, says Campbell.

“The more (the red flags) are present, the higher the risk,” she says.

In fact, an Ontario panel that reviews domestic homicides in that province found that in eight of the nine 2003 cases examined, the killings were predictable (p. 11).

Contextually, Jacobs constructed the information in such a way that the reader could garner some understanding of what “risk” actually meant and how it might be assessed. However, as with Reimer’s article, Jacobs did not include a discussion of the role of psychology and psychiatry in informing risk assessment procedures, which may have served to further the public’s confusion about the role of these disciplines in the determination of IPH victimization and perpetration risk.

The construction of risk in the articles was vague and uninformed; the notion of “dangerousness” was better defined. It was perhaps a reflection of the state of research in both of these areas of inquiry, where determination of victimization risk is a less well-developed area of inquiry in comparison to research examining risk of violent recidivism. Linked clearly to a psychological or psychiatric discourse, dangerousness, as the print news media constructed it in the current cases, was a measureable and observable characteristic that an individual possessed. This discourse occurred most frequently in the Quinn case where Diebel’s likelihood of reoffending was a critical discussion; the print news media constructed dangerousness as a part of Diebel’s identity. Slade (2006, October 7, *Calgary Herald*) quoted the Crown prosecutor in this case who stated, ““He is a dangerous man. The maximum parole ineligibility is required for him to quit hurting other women”” (p. B3). Martin (2006, October 7, *Calgary Sun*) also noted a similar statement from the same Crown prosecutor, “Hagglund said Diebel has ignored warning signs in the past his bipolar disorder will lead to violence and can’t be trusted to take medication

to control his behaviour” (p. 7). Both of these statements described dangerousness as internal to Diebel, particularly related to his experience of bipolar disorder. The print news media constructed it as something that belonged to Diebel, a part of his core identity; his capacity for violence and dangerousness was also subsumed under the same construction.

As perhaps expected in a discourse of dangerousness, a psychopathic construction of this concept was a salient frame of interpretation. In the Quinn case, the print news media constructed Diebel as observably dangerous by virtue of his bipolar disorder, “a defence psychiatrist testified Diebel was likely in a state of hypomania—in which his behaviour was frenetic and thoughts disjointed—making the killing an impulsive act” (Martin, 2006, June 16, *Calgary Sun*, p. 10). However, within this discourse, the reader was also reminded of the print news media’s earlier construction of him as a psychopath, as exemplified by Martin (2006, October 7, *Calgary Sun*, p. 7), “‘The best predictor of the future is the past,’ he said, quoting the testimony of psychiatrist Dr. George Duska. ‘The past was horrific—the Crown respectfully seeks a deterrent sentence to prevent a future horror.’” Likening the case to the violent brutality of a horror film, the construction of Diebel’s dangerousness returned to vague and unspecific notions of psychopathy that constructed Diebel as dangerous but also evil.

This discourse constructed bipolar disorder as vague, mysterious, and frightening, but also knowable in its identity as a distinct mental disorder. The audience could potentially find comfort in the knowledge that despite the smattering of vague, potentially dangerous symptoms of the bipolar disorder as constructed in the print news media, such an illness is manageable on some level by mental health professionals. Treatments for these symptoms exist and any dangerousness posed by individuals with this disorder is potentially manageable. In contrast to this presentation was the print news media’s construction of psychopathy in the Quinn case. In this situation, the print news media did not name the disease as a form of mental disorder;

indeed, they did not name it at all. They constructed it solely by focusing on Diebel's behaviour, which they framed as evil. They did not attempt to seek understanding of this behaviour from mental health experts, who could have provided some explanation for the series of behaviours. The print news media constructed Diebel as encompassing some form of vague, unknowable evil. If readers take comfort in the known as opposed to the unknown, which is frightening, then the construction of Diebel as a dangerous murderer is less ominous in the context of his bipolar disorder, which is a known mental disorder and, theoretically, manageable. Evil, on the other hand, is frightening in its unpredictability, and constructing Diebel as evil might have elevated reader perceptions of his capacity for further evil behaviour. The construction of Diebel as psychopathic was mostly eliminated from the text of the documents upon the revelation that he also experienced bipolar disorder. It seemed that the news media was uncomfortable with the vague construction of Diebel as evil and consequently chose to construct Diebel as an individual with bipolar disorder when they were provided this diagnosis as an explanation for his violent behaviour.

An ongoing frame for this document has been a discussion of the ways that the print news media presented psychology and the lack of a clear and consistent discussion about mental illness. I have speculated that one of the reasons for psychology's inconsistent presentation in the news media is because psychology itself is reluctant to seek news media attention. As noted by Giles (2003), psychologists have been reluctant to engage with the news media not only for fear of being inaccurately represented, but also for fear of derision by their colleagues, who may perceive news media attention as unprofessional. Where Carll (2001) noted that psychology as a discipline should seek news media attention to bring awareness to issues of mental illness and to help resolve misconceptions about the discipline, Giles (2003) noted that the stigma attached to psychologists seeking news media attention is strong.

With regards to clinical and risk assessment knowledge specifically, issues beyond peer derision are of concern to psychologists wishing to discuss criminal cases with the news media. Ethical guidelines in psychology warn practitioners to be extremely careful when presenting psychology to the public, via a news media venue or otherwise, particularly in litigious situations. The fear of administrative sanction or reprisal may prevent psychologists from seeking to educate the news media about the intricacies of psychological risk assessment and clinical syndromes. Carll (2001) discussed how ethical codes allow for news media interaction; however, it is possible that practitioners' perspectives of the risks of an accidental ethical misstep might not be worth the reward of presenting psychology to the public.

The fear of ethical sanctions would be another reason for psychology's reluctance to seek news media attention. Byrne (2003) asserted that, within psychiatry, the perception that the news media are antagonistic towards psychiatric knowledge and its practitioners is a reason for the reluctance of doctors to seek news media coverage of their work. Conceptualizing the news media as unidirectional actors whose performances are passively received by psychiatry and the public, Byrne (2003) noted that the two disciplines, psychiatry and news journalism, operate in a variety of ways that preclude a mutually beneficial relationship. However, Byrne (2003) also stated that psychiatry should nurture a relationship with the news media, though he was sceptical that this is possible. Indeed, Byrne outlined a series of philosophical differences between psychiatry and journalism, noting that where journalists seek fiction, psychiatry seeks fact, where journalists construct narratives, psychiatrists seek evidence, and where journalists are artists, psychiatrists are scientists. While intended to describe the differences between the two disciplines, Byrnes's discussion was paternalistic, condescending, and hostile, and therefore it was unsurprising that the news media might choose to present psychiatry, and correspondingly psychology, in a negative fashion, or as was the case in the documents I studied, to not seek the

input of psychiatrists or psychologists at all. Perhaps then, a key way for psychology and psychiatry to be better presented in the news media is to undertake a critical self-examination of the discourse that they themselves construct and endorse publicly and the attitude they hold towards members of the news media.

9. Discussion

Doing this research was, as with any project of this size, at times difficult and at times rewarding. Through the process of conceptualization, which involved reading the same articles numerous times and in greater and greater depth, I found myself experiencing cynicism and empathy towards the victims, families, police, news media, and academia. In the beginning, I expected the news media to fulfill my cynical expectations of sexist and misogynistic reporting. However, as I came to understand the text from different angles, I developed a more holistic view of my data. I began this project as a feminist researcher, intending to focus on the data from a critical feminist perspective. However, I adopted the ECA methodology in order to explore the data from a variety of angles under a constructionist epistemology. I thereby came to accept alternative interpretations and subversive discourses as equally informative and valid to the project (Altheide, 1996).

Using an ECA methodology necessitated the examination of a variety of frames that, at times, quantitatively occupied very little space in the overall text of the documents studied. Single sentences, paragraphs, or articles were at times rich sources of contextual information that included unique discussions, such as a titillation frame or a pro-feminist frame, that conceptually offered a subtle variation to the overall discourse of each case. I could have ignored or minimized the impact of these discussions, particularly if I had approached this project from a quantitative content analysis methodology (Altheide, 1996). Approaching the present data from a qualitative methodology, however, allowed me to examine prominent and subversive discourses in each case. For example, although the dominant discourse in the Fekete case was of systemic blame, the ambivalent presentation of both Blagica and Josif was an unexpected way in which the print news media constructed them for the audience. In the Moreside documents, the dominant discourse was of RCMP and judicial failure, but a confusing and ambivalent

presentation of Aboriginal victims of violence was also present. Cari-Lynn Gaulton's case included a surprising pro-feminist discourse in one article, which subverted the larger thematic frames of prior articles. The way the print news media constructed psychology in the Kelly Quinn case led me to consider the presentation of my discipline more carefully.

Because my interpretation of the texts deviated from traditional conceptualizations of the IPH literature, the analysis of these documents was challenging. There was very little research examining the ways the news media, especially mainstream media, subverted traditional reporting practices in favour of adopting frames of interpretation that eschewed reader expectation, such as the pro-feminist discussion I noted in the Gaulton and Fekete cases. In addition to examining an emotionally intense topic area, I approached the documents from an underdeveloped research base. Although I worked extremely carefully to ensure that my interpretations of these phenomena were trustworthy and were supported by the text of the documents, presenting these results without a solid grounding in an existing programme of research literature was intimidating.

9.1 Contribution to the Discipline

In considering the way that the present project contributed to the discipline of psychology and perhaps the larger understanding of IPH presentation, I had to reconsider what the notion of making a 'contribution' meant to me. Certainly, my research added to the academic discourse on IPH presentation. I looked at some very specific cases and identified a number of understudied areas worthy of future investigation.

Beyond the identification of new themes and frames not examined in other research, the current project also initiated a discussion on the reciprocity of media in the construction of academic and social discourses. Rather than a critical examination of the news media, designed to find fault with their presentation of a variety of topics, the present study considered the

reciprocity of media and society in the social construction of various concepts related to IPH. Ultimately, owing to the lack of literature examining the social construction of IPH in general, this document contributes to the variety of the discourse on the topic and presents topics for future research that have not yet been identified as salient in other similar studies.

9.2 Audiences

This project represented my interpretation of the data from a social construction born out of a number of years of data analysis, re-analysis, and writing. Completing this project in an academic context initially limited its dissemination to a small group of scholars, and as I wrote the document, I assumed that it would not be read widely. Nevertheless, as the project reached an end, I considered various potential audiences for this work, and my acknowledgement of them in the context of this document was perhaps the best way that I could end this project. In the following discussion, I chose not to reproduce and elaborate on the arguments presented earlier in the text, but instead chose to reflect on this project's potential audiences and address them accordingly.

9.2.1 The Media

This document was about the print news media. It was also about IPH and IPV, but the print news media and its role in constructing these psychological phenomena for their audience was the focus of my investigation. Therefore, the print news media was the most logical audience of this work to address first.

My supervisor noted that analyzing the news media is “like shooting fish in a barrel” because the media are an easy target for one-sided critical discussions. Indeed, many of the articles that informed my literature review took a critical stance towards the media, looking for their failings and missteps, which was originally what I had intended to do as well. However, as my research progressed, my position on the news media, particularly concerning its presentation

of male-perpetrated IPH, became surprisingly sympathetic owing to ECA methodology. Although designed to be intensely critical of news media presentations, ECA required consideration of the documents under study as originating from the confines of the media culture (Altheide, 1996). The examination of media ethnographies (e.g., Ericson , Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Tuchman, 1978) in my literature review precluded me from a discussion of the paradoxical conflict between the news media's intention to be objective and the socially constructed nature of the news. This critique of the media was subsumed in the methodology; therefore, it was not my role to judge the print news media documents from standards of media professionalism, such as objectivity. ECA explicitly stated that such standards of professionalism were not possible (Altheide, 1996). Even studies of academic journalism, such as that of Boudana (2011), considered the ways that notions of objectivity in the news media evolved given the recognition that there is no objective 'truth.' My role, by way of ECA, was to comment on *how* the print news media constructed news in certain ways, not necessarily *why*.

The second reason for my acquired stance of sympathy towards the media was that I did not examine these documents from a feminist theoretical position. A critical feminist perspective was my intended route of interpretation; however, I realized this type of investigation had a well-developed research base and I could offer little unique discussion on the topic. It therefore became necessary to examine these documents from a different methodological and theoretical perspective; I chose ECA. My status of observer rather than critic might not have put me in a position to comment on what the print news media did 'right' and what they did 'wrong' in the construction of these cases; however, I could comment on what I observed in the process of doing this research.

Throughout the project, I noted that the line between news and entertainment was exceedingly blurry. This trend had been observed by a variety of authors (e.g. Moy, Xenos, &

Hess, 2005; Surette & Otto, 2002; Williams & Carpini, 2009;), who noted that many forms of news media seemed to be moving towards a format of “infotainment.” Described as a hybrid of entertainment media and journalism, infotainment was particularly prevalent in television where programs designed for entertainment purposes incorporated newsworthy information into their format. Even so-called ‘hard news’ programs, such as local and national evening news broadcasts, have incorporated aspects of infotainment to maintain viewership in the increasingly competitive market of television production (Surette & Otto, 2002). In their glorification of the salacious and gory details, the print news media seemed to have constructed the murders in this study, particularly those of Kelly Quinn and Cari-Lynn Gaulton, as entertainment framed as serious news stories.

While less susceptible to infotainment trends, print journalism also exhibited some degree of role confusion about its position as a vehicle for dissemination. Owing to the rise of Internet communication, authors have speculated whether print journalism was perhaps facing extinction (Alves, 2001; Gunaratne, 2010). With the rise of independent Internet media blogs and news sites, print journalists may see their profession as under threat and therefore choose sensationalism over professionalism to maintain readership. In an age where people receive news in short televised pieces and even shorter blurbs on social media websites, print journalism is competing for an audience who, with minimal effort on their part, expect massive amounts of information delivered quickly (Cerf, 2006).

Despite the popularity of brief news, print journalism still has an audience. People want to know more about the world they live in. Audiences seek out detailed and informative accounts of their culture, which newspapers are particularly well poised to deliver (Farhi, 2005). Farhi suggested that despite claims of the newspaper’s impending extinction (e.g. Alves, 2001; Gunaratne, 2010), newspapers could maintain and increase readership by meeting their audience

where it was most convenient and desirable—the Internet. The newspaper can no longer depend on its position as the taken-for-granted source for in-depth news coverage, so it must create a demand that may, for some publications, mean that the news media covers news more sensationally than it has been in the past. Such a pattern of coverage becomes problematic when audiences believe the newspaper medium itself is the most credible and least susceptible to outright sensationalism (e.g. Kioussis, 2001). In this situation, there is a dissonance between reader expectation and newspaper behaviour. An audience might expect newspapers to be immune to sensational reporting strategies when, in fact, they are not.

The language media use to communicate a news item is designed to lead audiences to interpret such events in particular ways and to alter their opinions of specific topic areas. Sacco (1995) discussed how the news media, while perhaps not always aware of the depth of their impact, has the power to shape public opinion and public response to social problems. Boudana (2011) discussed how creative language use could encourage journalists to engage in complex presentations of social issues, though it was also noted that individual reporters need to be willing to diversify their sources, present alternative and dissenting opinions, and subvert their own political inclinations to accomplish this task. In doing so, these reporters can subvert the dominant discourse of a particular issue, which can be incredibly powerful.

Instances in which the news media chose not to construct Blagica Fekete as villain or victim, or when Slade (2007, March 15) used a critical feminist perspective to construct the closing arguments of Robert Scribner's trial were unique, and the audience might have noted these subversions. In terms of word count and physical space, these subversions do not take up much space in an article, but the audience does not necessarily use quantitative word counts to inform their opinion. Presented as clear, concise, and rational, these subversive discourses can result in major reader paradigm shifts. By presenting subversive information in the most

accessible portions of the text, such as headlines, pictures, picture captions, and textboxes, newspapers are uniquely poised to challenge the dominant ways that specific issues in society are discussed, perhaps inspiring social change (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Sieff, 2003).

While social change might motivate print news media to consider alternate frames of interpretation, an immediate benefit of presenting subversive discourses is the protection of newspaper status as a trustworthy purveyor of news. I focused much of my interpretive space discussing subversive discourses that occurred in a small number of articles. However, the dominant frames of interpretation in the cases were consistent with those found in previous research, namely, that sensational clichéd notions of gender, romantic relationships, and mental illness dominated headlines, textboxes, and picture captions (e.g. Carll, 2003; Meyers, 1997; Allen & Nairn, 1997). While these might be ideal places for dramatic discourse designed to ‘sell’ newspapers, this presentation lacks creativity. Conceptualizing Cari-Lynn Gaulton’s murder as a sexualized incident of romantic tragedy is a tired discourse deserving of feminist scrutiny. A subversive discourse and one that could inform the audience would be to present this murder as an act of control, domination, and male power, as was done by Slade (2007, March 15). Making such subversive discourses prominent and mainstream is a way to preserve the newspaper media’s reputation of trustworthiness and credibility.

The spirit of this document has been not to criticize the news media blindly for adhering to the standards and traditional practices of their discipline. My goal was to provide thick description of the ways in which the news media communicated with its audience while avoiding value judgement.

9.2.2 Feminism

As a feminist, I found that this project was, surprisingly, a challenge to my commitment to the movement. Contrary to my ECA methodology, I felt pulled to interpret documents from a feminist angle owing to the sometimes sexist content of the articles. Yet in the process of completing the literature review and examining psychological research about IPH and IPV, I also found myself struggling against some fundamental aspects of feminism owing to the different ways that psychology and feminism conceptualize the causes of male-perpetrated IPV (e.g. Dutton & Nicholls, 2005). Although the entire project was emotionally and intellectually exhausting at times, nothing was more challenging than my own constant internal scrutiny of my feminist principles. As the project progressed, I began to question feminist constructions of male-perpetrated IPV and eventually the movement itself.

While I describe myself as a feminist, I have never engaged in feminist research (e.g. Chafetz, 2004; Webb, 1993), not for lack of interest or respect of the methodological paradigm, but more for lack of opportunity. I originally approached this project from a feminist perspective, one intended to describe the articles from a subjective position specifically considering the reality of women's everyday experiences. This position seemed consistent with the topic of IPH, past research, and my own philosophical inclinations (Chafetz, 2004). However, as I read more widely in the field of media research and discussed my topic with colleagues, I began to struggle with how to approach my data from a feminist perspective. As I continued to try to differentiate my research from that which had been done previously (e.g. Berns, 2004; Meyers, 1997;), I began to examine my understanding of feminist theory more critically, both in general and as it had been applied specifically to male-perpetrated IPV and IPH.

IPV and IPH are widely researched areas of feminist academic inquiry. Academically and socially, feminism has been powerful in changing the ways that society constructs male-

perpetrated IPV and in advocating for protection of female victims of violence. By conceptualizing IPV as resulting from systemic power imbalances between men and women in society, feminists understand male-perpetrated IPV and IPH as societal and systemic issues. I have often had difficulty reconciling this perspective with my academic background in psychology, and I have read widely in an attempt to resolve my feelings of dissonance (e.g. Anderson, 1997; Dutton & Nicholls, 1995; McHugh & Frieze, 2006; Straus, 2006). Regardless, academic literature has left me feeling dissatisfied with both disciplines. I am dissatisfied with psychology for not considering the social context of gender disparity in research about IPV (e.g. Allison, Bartholomew, Mayseless, Dutton, 2008). I am dissatisfied with feminist literature for seeming to reject psychological research evidence indicating gender symmetry in many forms of IPV (e.g. Dutton & Nicholls, 1995). While some of this dissatisfaction might ultimately be the result of epistemological differences between the two disciplines, the fact that I feel the need to choose sides in what I perceive as a dogmatic debate about epistemology is frustrating.

Upon acknowledging my dissatisfaction with the feminist position and its stance on IPV, I began to read more widely about the status of the feminist movement. I was curious as to why, despite the feminist discourse in the Fekete case, there was no explicit acknowledgement of the feminist interpretive stance. Seeking out the zeitgeist of cyberspace, I discovered that while feminism was a sophisticated presence on the Internet (e.g. web blogs such as *Feministing* and *Jezebel*), appealing to both younger and older women, there is also a subset of feminists online who have become disillusioned with the movement (e.g. *Bad Feminist UK*). I began to understand that my frustration with feminism's dominant discourse on IPV was only a small part of the source of my growing alienation from the movement. I had sensed what others were also feeling, that regardless of its intentions, feminism was losing touch with its audience and perhaps alienating some of its own. With feminists themselves discussing the various ways in which

some women are ‘better’ feminists than others in the popular media (e.g. Raven, 2010, March 6), it is unsurprising that many women such as Walters (2010, September 17) do not feel they can identify with the movement and even admit feelings of distance and alienation. I suspect that the media may perceive the very word, ‘feminism,’ to be alienating towards audiences and avoid using it. Given the current state of the movement as I observed on the Internet, I do not find it surprising.

It is possible that the reason the word ‘feminism’ is alienating to many members of a general audience is that the media have historically denigrated it (e.g. Beck, 1998; Hogeland, 1994). However, this answer is too simple, particularly given the perspective of media reciprocity I have adopted for this project. As discussed in my description of ECA and media theory, the relationship between media and culture is not a unidirectional phenomenon. The news media do not ‘do’ culture alone. They do not decide what to construct and then place it in the culture without reflexivity. Although powerful, the media are impacted and changed by culture (Altheide, 1996). The process is reflexive. Therefore, while the media might have historically presented a caricature of feminism (Bradley, 1998), on some level, this caricature might have actually been reflective of society’s perception of feminism, flattering or not. Presenting feminism as confused and misdirected might have been a reflection of the ways feminists were communicating their beliefs to the culture and society’s resulting discomfort with it. In the discourse of the present study, one might argue that the lack of explicit discussion about feminism might have less to do with the media’s derision of the movement and more to do with the media’s allegiance to their audience. The media, aware of the discomfort an explicit feminist dialogue could cause their audience to feel, might avoid eliciting this feeling by not using the word “feminist” in text.

The above discussion is inflammatory, even to me, and I fear an adequate examination of the issue warrants more discussion in a larger forum. I ask feminist readers of this document to consider the state of feminism in popular culture as being in crisis. The general population seems weary of a feminism they perceive to be dogmatic, rigid, man-hating, and hostile (e.g. Lind & Salo, 2002; Walters, 2010). While this might not be an accurate reflection of the actual state of the movement, that it is society's perception of it is extremely relevant. Perhaps of more concern, however, given that society has long perceived feminism in this way, is the reluctance of 'new' or 'young' feminists themselves to adopt the label of 'feminist' and claim it as an identity (Hogeland, 2000). Perhaps it is time to consider re-imagining how feminism is presented to the public.

9.2.3 Psychology

9.2.3.1 Presentation

My examination of the feminist movement, particularly within academia, left me with some feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction. My reflections on psychology as a discipline were somewhat different. I struggled to describe the media's presentation of psychology rather than criticize it. I experienced feelings of defensiveness about the way I believed the media presented the discipline to the audience given what I perceived to be a lack of agreement between my knowledge of the field and the way it was discussed in the documents that I studied. Implicit in my own defensiveness is a resonating belief that academic psychological knowledge is in some way superior to that presented by the news media. In an epistemological framework however, this evaluative judgement is inconsistent. Nevertheless, I believe the basis for my own dissatisfaction with the lack of concordance between psychological knowledge and lay knowledge of mental illness is worthy of discussion, particularly because I think that the

responsibility for any misrepresentations of psychology in the cases in the current study specifically, and even more generally in the news media, may lie with psychology itself.

My research and discussions with colleagues conducting similar investigations of news media presentation lead me to conclude that psychology as presented in the news media differs from the reality of practised psychology. Psychological concepts such as bipolar disorder, psychopathy, and risk assessment are concepts poorly defined in the news media and subsequently reinforced by psychology's silence on the topic.

Psychology as a discipline practised by researchers and clinicians has been negligent in examining the ways that psychology actually presents itself to the public. Few academic investigations exist that explore the ways that the news media has represented psychology and the way that the public understands psychology. Most studies examining news media presentations of psychology and psychiatry focus on the misrepresentation of mental illness (e.g. Allen & Nairn, 1997; Wahl, 2004). Giles (2003) speculated that the lack of research examining psychology's presentation was due in part to the periphery of news media studies within the psychology discipline as a whole. Giles noted that psychology tended to consider news studies to be a less valid form of academic inquiry than other more experimental domains of the discipline. Media psychology was not a prominent subset of academic psychological research in many universities, and there was little impetus to develop a research programme to examine the way the media presented psychology to the public.

Nevertheless, psychology presented in the media captures public interest. Psychologists communicate with media to such an extent that the American Psychological Association has outlined recommended best practices for psychologists engaging with the news media (e.g. Kirschner & Kirschner, 1997). Giles (2003) noted that news media formats are less than ideal for the explanation of complicated psychological research. However, because these formats were

most accessible to large audiences and provided opportunities for psychologists to present their research and their discipline coherently and accurately, Giles encouraged psychologists to seek ways of disseminating their knowledge through these forums. It is a critical means of maintaining the public's confidence that psychology is a valuable and socially responsible discipline.

Developing relationships with the media is not easy. Historically, psychology has had an uneasy relationship with the media because the media have presented the discipline as lacking legitimacy and firm ethical boundaries (Giles, 2003). With respect to the discussion of the intersection of the media's construction of criminal behaviour and mental illness, it seemed likely that a number of factors contributed to the media's negative presentation of psychology. Dowler, Flemming, and Muzzatti (2006) cynically suggested that "the only message that appeals to media outlets is one supporting harsher measures, critiques of inadequate police measures...strengthening laws, or increasing prison sentences" (p. 842) to explain the lack of criminological or psychological presence in the news media. However, I argue that the strict ethical code of clinical psychology precludes the discussion of risk assessment minutiae in public forums. The code of ethics of psychologists is one of the strongest in the human services field; it might also be preventing psychology from presenting itself accurately to an audience as a means of maintaining public confidence in the unique and confidential relationship between clinical psychologist and client. However, the variety of ethical codes for psychologists do not forbid psychologists from interacting with the media, and in the interest of accurate presentation, it might be desirable for psychologists, particularly in forensic psychology, to discuss their work in a public forum.

In an era of for-profit health care, any media presentation of psychology as an unreliable or unknowable discipline might become problematic. If the media and the public do not see

psychology as a worthwhile field of study and practice, psychology might also begin to lose its credibility as a respected discipline even within health care thereby damaging the careers of its practitioners (Carll, 2001).

The implications of psychology's loss of credibility are beyond the scope of the present paper. However, as I examined the documents under study, my concern with the way the media represented psychology in the four cases warranted further thought on the subject. Psychology needs to make itself accessible to its consumers and the public. There might be a number of ways to accomplish this task, but for my purposes, the issue of dissemination was central.

9.2.3.2 Dissemination

Psychological research is often publically funded in Canada by way of government and university grants and scholarships. The Social Science and Humanities Research Council, a government research agency funding research in the humanities and social sciences, funded the present project. Although tax dollars fund much psychological research, making this research the property of the country and its public, the research is not accessible to the public in a meaningful way. The demands of academia cause psychologists to seek peer-reviewed publications as forums for dispersing their work to larger audiences. While this process ensures that psychology is constantly producing knowledge, it does not support accessibility. The public likely has neither the resources nor interest in pursuing knowledge acquired by reading dense peer-reviewed journal articles written by academics, for academics. Rather, the public seeks out information from accessible forums such as newspapers, books, magazines, and websites, which are not traditional dissemination forums for psychology. As such, psychology and its vast knowledge base remain inaccessible to its funding public.

Systemic factors, such as tenure-track academic positions, might interfere with non-traditional dissemination practices. Sommer (2006) encouraged psychologists to consider other

forums for the dispersal of knowledge to increase the presence of psychology in the general media and in the mental illness discourse of popular culture. Describing the process of dual dissemination, Sommer posited that researchers should consider traditional peer-reviewed publication practices as well as mainstream media as audiences and construct alternative versions of their research to meet the concomitant demands of each of these mediums. What we do is important and interesting. We do the discipline and ourselves a disservice by not sharing this knowledge (Sommer, 2006).

Recognizing the need to communicate the results of psychological knowledge to public audiences, health psychology has been a leader in providing the discipline of psychology with good examples of creatively presented research. Kerner, Rimer, and Emmons (2005) discussed some of the current issues involved in making psychological research available to the general public, including the types of research that are most suited to wide public dissemination. Clearly there is need to determine a series of best practices for health research dissemination. In general, the spirit of the discussion points to the importance of making psychological knowledge accessible to the public. While health psychology research seems to be prominent in this practice, there is room in popular media, including newspapers, magazines, and the Internet, for the presentation of other facets of psychological research. Indeed, the present project, as a study of media, could be presented to the audiences discussed as a means of education in media literacy.

For the present project, I have considered the variety of audiences that might find value in this work. Beyond presenting this document to my academic department as fulfilling criteria for my degree and eventually preparing it as a number of manuscripts for peer-reviewed publications, I have begun to consider alternative distribution forums that are more publicly accessible such as a stand-alone book or as a section in a larger collection about media analysis

of popular culture. The cases and my conclusions about presentation, IPV, IPH, victims, and perpetrators are relevant to consumers of news media. This project is an example of the context in which our culture is produced. Publishing my research in a more accessible forum will allow the public greater access to the concepts I discussed. Further, my hope for this document is that the media, feminist scholars, the public, and other academic disciplines might have the opportunity to consider how it comments on the intersection of psychology, news media, and the creation of culture.

9.2.4 Families

The present project was archival, based on documents in the public domain. Despite the sensitive and emotional nature of the subject matter, I was not required to consult the families of the victims or the perpetrators. It was important to the integrity of the methodology that I did not seek external verification of any of the information presented in the documents. While I was not required to seek the permission of families and perpetrators before engaging in this research, I felt close to them. Therefore, I chose to address them in the concluding paragraphs of this document.

As a whole, I was curious. What was it like for the families to be scrutinized in such a public forum? What was it like for them to review the deaths of their loved ones as presented by the media? What did the media not include in their coverage of these IPH incidents, and what was included that the families wish had not been?

I was also curious about the perpetrators of these events. What were their responses to the news stories? Did they feel misrepresented? What was the experience of being socially constructed actually like? What do they wish the public knew about them?

Unfortunately, the vast majority of my questions will never be answered because they are directed toward the deceased victims of these crimes. I spent years examining how the news

media constructed Kelly Quinn, Cari-Lynn Gaulton, Brenda Moreside, and Blagica Fekete. I felt at times as if I had a personal relationship with these women, but at other times, it was as if the language of the reporting kept them at a distance from me. I have been extremely saddened and enraged at what happened to them. I was angered by how they were constructed, and I have been empathetic. I found myself wondering who they really were when they were alive and how the media could not possibly have captured their essence as living, emotional beings. I have thought of them at inopportune and surprising times. These women and the men who killed them have become a part of who I am. Their stories affected me deeply. The stories of these people are important and powerful. While my work was not a telling of their stories *per se*, I hope I did them some justice in the context of this project.

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