

**FEMICIDE AND THE POLITICS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
A Feminist Analysis of News Representations of Lethal Male Violence Against
Women.**

By:

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Joint Women's Studies Program

at

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The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend for acceptance a thesis entitled *Femicide and the Politics of Acknowledgement: A Feminist Analysis of News Representations of Lethal Male Violence Against Women* by **Laure E. Lafrance** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dated February 14, 2005

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ABSTRACT

Laure E. Lafrance

Femicide and the Politics of Acknowledgement: A Feminist Analysis of News
Representations of Lethal Male Violence Against Women

February 14th 2005

In analyzing four specific cases of femicide covered in Canadian national newspapers through a feminist poststructuralist framework, this thesis demonstrates that femicide cases are regularly explained as isolated acts of violence.

This thesis examines how specific language and discourses chosen by the news media obscure the gendered and sexist meanings of the violence taken out on women's bodies. This project challenges the dominant patriarchal discourses implicit in newspaper coverage and questions how false, problematic, representations of femicides perpetuate ignorance of systemic gender inequalities in our society.

The argument presented throughout the thesis explains that if the media used the gender-specific terminology of "femicide," they would be directing attention to women's inequality in society and the politics underlying women's deaths. Redefining language and recreating language in feminist terms, therefore, is not only a form of resistance to patriarchal power but it also allows for creating and taking part in new political spaces of power.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Genviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Maria Klucznik, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte, Arlene May, Gillian Hadley, Rosella Centis, and every woman who has ever suffered the injustices of male violence.

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INTRODUCTION

Violent images regularly appear on our television screens and on the covers of our national newspapers. Unfortunately, the violent images that enter our homes have not been prepared for viewers/readers in a way that allows them to understand the relationships within which the violence occurs, the discourses being used to describe the violence, and the cause and/or effects of the violence. Violence is a regular focus of national and local newspapers and the broadcast news. The news media's representations of violence, however, are not free from criticism. The violent images presented to us by the news media, the language and the discourses included to describe instances of violence are open to criticism and challenge. Amidst various forms of criticism and a large amount of audience complacency violence remains a perpetual news story.

News coverage of cases of violence against women has slowly increased; violence once thought of as private is now covered by the news media and plastered on the front pages of daily newspapers. However, because of the way that the popular news media report violence against women, we must understand that news reporting, and popular conceptions of sexist violence, are processed and reported by the media in particular ways that reveal problematic objectives rooted in sexist, patriarchal, social values. Cases of violence against women have received a considerable amount of coverage in the news, especially since the category "violence against women" was included in the Canadian news index after the 1989 shootings of 14 women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal (Hui Kyong Chun 1999, 118). One could hope that this coverage would help to highlight violence as a gendered social problem, challenging and helping to end male violence against women. However, media coverage of violence

against women does not usually contribute to a better understanding of the sexist, violent subordination of women. Instead it reinforces and perpetuates false (and problematic) messages as well as patriarchal understandings of, this brutal form of female oppression by men.

The majority of violent acts against women are not random, nor are they committed by insane men who know no better. This runs counter to what many of us are led to believe by the news media. Lethal forms of violence against women, the killing of women, are most often the horrifying end of a continuous cycle of abuse, harassment, and inequality. I have adopted the term “femicide” to demonstrate the severity and prevalence of lethal forms of violence against women. Using the term femicide, “the killing of females by males because they are female” (Russell 2001, 3), allows us to acknowledge the gendered nature of relationships between men and women. Thus, this terminology assumes and understands the social constructions of gender which place the female, feminine subjectivities, as subordinate to the male, masculine subjectivities. Male subjectivities are constructed as more powerful, as in control and also as the central subject in society. This gendered relationship, in which the male is seen as powerful and aggressive and the female as subordinate and passive perpetuates systemic inequality between men and women in patriarchal societies. This unequal relationship is reinforced by behaviours and actions in the specific occurrences of male violence committed against females. I will explain this further in Chapter One under the heading, Gendered Relations, Subjectivities and Social Constructions.

Femicide is not a widely used term; it is a feminist term, established by feminists theorizing of violence against women. The concept and the phenomenon came to my

attention while reading “Femicide: Sexist Terrorism Against Women” by Jane Caputi and Diana Russell, from Russell and Jill Radford’s *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (1992). Femicide was a new concept to a reader who had studied violence against women but never lethal violence against women. Reading the chapter on the misogynist killings of women changed how I read and understood gendered violence. What became apparent to me was the need to acknowledge the politics that surround women’s deaths (at the hands of men) and how the public understands the gendered nature of these deaths.

This thesis, which began in feminist research of violence, came about because I felt it was necessary to acknowledge woman-killing, or femicides. The concept of femicide is necessary to highlight the particular contexts in which women are often killed. The use of the term “femicide” allows us to see that women are victims of patriarchal power, and that this power can result in women’s deaths. Femicides provide an example of the physical manifestation of male dominance, sexism¹, and misogyny² that have and continue to be integral to the power structures that operate in North American society. Diana Russell is a feminist-pioneer in research about lethal violence against women. Russell initiated the discussion about lethal violence against women by using the term femicide and by explaining how and why femicides take place within patriarchal societies where violence against women continues, and is perpetuated through patriarchal discourses. In her investigation of violence against women, Russell (1992, 2001) advocates the use of the term “femicide” by feminists, but also declares that

¹ Sexism is defined by Deborah Cameron (1998) in Jackson and Jones’s *Contemporary Feminist Theories* (1998) as a “systemic structural relation in which women are subordinated” (153).

² Misogyny is defined in the *Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory* (1997) compiled by Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, and Carol Walkowitz, as the fear or hatred of women. In Joan Smith’s (1989) *Misogynies*, it is argued that misogyny, woman-hating, is extraordinarily pervasive in contemporary Western culture, locating it in biological determinist ideologies. Adrienne Rich (1986) characterizes misogyny as organized, institutionalized, normalized hostility and violence against women.

“femicide” needs to be adopted by everyone concerned with violence against women in order to clarify what sexist violence, anti-woman violence means: females killed by males because they are females (Russell 2001, 3).

The term femicide allows us to understand and acknowledge that violence perpetrated against women is gendered and steeped within a patriarchal culture that views women as subordinate, and as less worthy of rights and freedoms than men. Femicide is the lethal manifestation of sexist and misogynist social structures and social relations on the bodies of women. The concept allows me to problematize the current legal terminology adopted by the news media, such as “homicide” and “manslaughter,” while also demonstrating that the central focus of research on women’s deaths must remain with the female victim.

As a Women’s Studies undergraduate student I became painstakingly aware of the disturbing phenomenon of femicide. Through feminist scholarship, and through taking part in annual December 6th commemorations of the 14 women who were killed by Marc Lépine in the “Montreal Massacre”, I was reminded of the disturbing, and unfortunately regular, nature of femicide. However, I found that this sexist violence was, and continues to be, left unacknowledged, and swallowed by silence. I began to take issue with the way violence against women was reported in the news. This began with questioning the narratives that described Marc Lépine as a crazed maniac who knew no better and killed with no plan of victim choice that were regularly circulated by the media. Having acknowledged the gendered nature of violence myself, I began to criticize how representations of violence against women were reported and put into discourse by the news media. Femicides were reported by the media as if they were isolated cases, ones

not connected to any form of systemic inequality between women and men. Every femicide that came to my attention inspired me to question how we understand and acknowledge women's deaths at the hands of their male partners and thus the politics of woman killing.

I intend to analyze how the Canadian public is informed about violent acts perpetrated against women, specifically in those instances when women are killed by men. I will be limiting my analysis to lethal forms of physical violence directed at women because this will allow me to specifically focus on the occurrence of femicide within a patriarchal society. I believe this to be important because lethal male violence against women is rarely acknowledged as representative of a form of male oppression and as a manifestation of sexism and misogyny in our culture. Therefore, I will examine how the national, print, news media communicate the circumstances of women's deaths by analyzing specific cases from four newspapers between 1989 and 2002. By using coverage from the national newspapers *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*, and the applicable, local, daily newspapers *The Montreal Gazette* and *The Toronto Star*, I will show that the news media often masks the gendered nature of women's deaths and perpetuates a discourse of gender neutrality that fails to acknowledge the misogynist nature of woman killing. I argue that if the media used the gender-specific terminology of "femicide", they would be directing attention to women's inequality in society and the politics underlying women's deaths. Women are the victims of murders perpetrated by the men in their lives, as well as by male strangers, and these acts of violence are not represented by the news media in a way that explains the frequent/regular occurrence of oppressive and sexist violence.

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to inquire into what influences our knowledge and understanding of femicides. Language and how it is used to describe cases of femicide is central to this inquiry. The language chosen by the news media to communicate issues surrounding male violence against women is located within larger patriarchal understandings about women, men, violence and power. I will show that the news media operate within, and disseminate, liberal-humanist and patriarchal discourses, which perpetuate the subordination of women (and dominance of men) through the use of essentialist understandings of male and female subjectivities. The use of such discourses, communicate and reaffirm patriarchal definitions of “proper” gendered behaviour that men and women should (must) fulfill. I believe that a feminist critical analysis is necessary in order to be critical of patriarchal discourses disseminated by the news media about male violence against women and to uncover the entrenched sexism and misogyny and systemic inequality found within news representations of femicides.

The mechanisms I use to critically analyze news representations of femicide are based in discourse analysis. Thus, I will critically analyze how cases of femicide are discursively constructed and how these discourses are reiterated and maintained at a social level. The social systems and relations that continue to reinforce patriarchal constructions of gender and violence can not occur without being discursively constructed and represented. My feminist critical analysis, therefore, works best within the theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism because it provides tools to interrogate and problematize the news media’s representations, the discursive constructions, of femicide.

A feminist poststructuralist framework enables me to problematize such concepts as gender, experience, subjectivity, language, discourse, and power as they relate to one another. These terms must be theorized together in order to explain how violence against women is represented through the discourses circulated by the Canadian news media. Using the tools of interrogation from the framework of feminist poststructuralism allows me to critically analyze representations of femicide, and to theorize how violence against women, specifically femicide, should be explained as a manifestation of women's subordinate status in a patriarchal society. A feminist poststructuralist perspective, explained in greater detail in Chapter One, helps me challenge patriarchal and sexist discourses found in news coverage of femicides; it enables me to contribute to the possibility of finding new ways of understanding and communicating the many issues surrounding male violence against women. This possible solution begins with the use of the term femicide, which I believe will lead to and allow for new ways of understanding lethal forms of male violence against women. These new ways of understanding lethal male violence will hopefully begin circulating within our social discourses so as to challenge the currently used sexist language which hold great, hegemonic, power in our discursive constructs.

Critical analysts, especially feminist analysts like myself, aim to contribute to criticizing and resisting hegemonic forms of power that oppress people who have been marginalized within our patriarchal societies. My goal, therefore, is to examine how Canadian newspapers represent femicide and hopefully create change by implementing and defining language that understands women as central and including women's

experiences as primary. I aim to follow the feminist and social activists who saw resistance as possible and change as necessary.

Parameters of this Project

At this point I must clarify the parameters of this work and explain my thesis project. As I have explained, I will be dealing with femicide, a lethal form of violence against women. While many theories have contributed to explanations to our understanding of violence against women in general, I will be dealing only with research on femicide and news coverage about violence against women.

I will stipulate that this thesis is not based in the belief that men are motivated to be violent or aggressive toward their female partners because of an irrepressible or inherent male tendency toward violence. I maintain that gendered relationships and behaviours are socially structured and constructed within patriarchal social discourses. These social discourses define and delimit appropriate modes of subjectivity for men and women based in patriarchal assumptions of biological differences which view men/males as dominant, strong, protective and powerful and women/females as subordinate, passive, vulnerable, and dependent. These gendered demarcations of appropriate behaviour are constructed within social discourse and through social tradition as natural or normal. Through the process of socialization girls/women and boys/men internalize and materialize identities that have been defined as normal and appropriate forms of masculine and feminine subjectivity/ties. I must also explain, however, that gendered subjectivities are frequently challenged; the people who step outside the regulated boundaries of appropriate feminine or masculine behaviour are actively resisting patriarchal definitions of “natural” or “normal” gender behaviours.

I recognize that “women” is understood as a sex category, however, I will illustrate that women’s status in society is based on a gendered relationship which posits the feminine, females, as subordinate, and thus women and females will be used interchangeably. Throughout this thesis, therefore, the use of the label “women” and/or “woman” should be understood as describing a gendered female subject.

This analysis will focus on male violence against females: the heterosexual dyad of femicidal violences. While I am aware of the question of abuse/battery in, for example, homosexual relationships, I am choosing to focus on heterosexual relationships where men commit femicide. I proceed with the understanding that the devaluation of women can happen in any relationship because the patriarchal social constructions that devalue feminine subjectivities are at the root of all social relations and power struggles, including those between intimates. An example of the devaluing of the feminine is represented in the violence of (heterosexual) rape. Monique Plaza (1980) is quoted in Teresa de Lauretis’s (1987) *Technologies of Gender*, explaining the devaluing of women, the feminine and the power of masculine aggression. “Rape is sexual essentially because it rests in the very social difference between the sexes... It is the social sexing (read gendering) which is latent in rape. If men rape women it is precisely because they are women in a social sense;” and when a male is raped, he too is raped “as a woman” (Plaza 1980; in de Lauretis 1987, 37).

In terms of my research data, I will be analyzing only newspaper articles concerning the four cases of femicide I have chosen to study. I will be examining newspapers because they are circulated daily, inform the public of important events and are part of a greater media system that negotiates what is important for the public to

know; newspapers function as a medium of knowledge production. Newspaper headlines, pictures, and texts offer the reader a way understanding the violence within our communities, the country, our world. Newspaper headlines are an especially prominent indication of what the news media, and the particular newspaper, see as the most important issue of the day, thus what is most newsworthy.

I also chose to analyze newspapers because they provide a tangible form of data that could be read, and re-read, and critically analyzed in their original form. I must admit as well that newspapers are a form of data that are inexpensive in terms of access and reproduction. Gaining access to television news programs through news station archives would have been too costly and time consuming for this thesis project. Newspapers are a prominent and pervasive type of “text” within society, they can be found in almost every municipality, they are accessible to individuals across multiple socio-economic positions, and generate comprehensible and accessible information of social events and phenomena.

Conducting a critical analysis of newspaper coverage and representations of femicide cases is part of a larger feminist project where multiple criticisms of the patriarchal society in which we live exist and are circulated. I am in no way claiming that my interpretation and analysis is the only possible one for the subject I have chosen to analyze. The views, analyses, criticisms and suggestions expressed in this thesis are my own and based in my position as a feminist researcher who has studied this topic at length. Therefore, I can only represent my individualized reception as an audience member of the information provided in the newspapers studied from this particular, feminist, research position.

CHAPTER ONE: TERMINOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I have already used many terms in the introduction that require explanation in order to position my thesis epistemologically. Feminism, poststructuralism, women (as an identifiable category), patriarchy, gender, subjectivity, social construction, discourses, power, and violence are all concepts that carry significant intellectual and political weight. Defining these concepts, how they relate to one another, and the subject of femicide, is necessary to show how this work positions itself as a feminist theoretical project.

This thesis is an example of feminist critical analysis, or practice, as described by Chris Weedon (1987, first edition; 1997, second edition) in her work *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. She explains feminist critical practice as a way of understanding social and cultural practices to throw light on the constitution, reproduction, and contestation of gendered power relations (Weedon 1987, vii). This feminist approach allows me to investigate and interrogate how social context and discourses affect the ways in which gender is constituted, understood and displayed. Weedon's feminist critical analysis moves beyond an essentialist explanation of women and men that past feminists/feminisms have relied on and allows one to consider and incorporate historical and discursive contexts that construct/contribute to, and challenge the constitution of the gendered subject. Feminist critical analysis, or practice, allows me to consider and prioritize women's gendered experiences by bringing together the personal and the political, by problematizing and challenging patriarchal power in our current culture as well as the oppression of women in social and economic orders.

In this chapter I will explain each of the concepts essential to the theoretical basis of this thesis, showing how I understand and will use the concepts of women, patriarchy, feminism and feminist theory/theorizing, and gendered relations, subjectivities and social constructions, and lastly feminist poststructuralism. I will also show how I apply these concepts to the critical feminist analysis taking place in this thesis. I will then explain in the final section of this chapter how the news media acts as a generator of social knowledge, knowledge rooted in discourses that must be questioned and problematized in regard to representations of femicide. I will explain my use and understanding of the concepts of hegemony, and discourse, and the inter-relations of news production, discourses of gender, and the generation of social knowledge. I relate these general concepts directly to my subject of media representations of femicide as discursive constructions of gender, violence and power relate directly to our social and institutional processes. These explanations will show how I position myself theoretically and will contribute to my interrogation of problematic representations, language and discourses found in the news media's coverage of femicide.

Women, An Identifiable Category

The concept of "women" has been fraught with challenges in attempts made to identify a universal group called "women." Postmodernism, and some forms of poststructuralism, have challenged and destabilized the category "women." These postmodern critiques began by questioning the assumption of the existence of a natural, inherent category called "women." Stevi Jackson (1998) explains that poststructuralism and postmodernism "offered perspectives that were radically anti-essentialist – which challenged the idea that "men" and "women" were given, natural, essential categories.

Increasingly the category of “women” was called into question” (23). Feminist theorists, especially, began (re)configuring the concept of “women” in terms of an analysis that considered how “differing discourses construct varying definitions of women” (23) and thus revealing that there could be no universalizing definition of “women.”

In an attempt to consider women’s differences and diversity, Jackson (1998) explains that postmodern and poststructuralist feminists have emphasized cultural explanations that see “men” and “women” as discursively constructed categories (135). This explanation is useful for understanding how feminine and masculine subjectivities are socially constructed and thus internalized.

According to Judith Butler (1993) “the category of women does not become useless through deconstruction” (29). Butler maintains that “it must be possible both to use the term, to use it tactically even as one is, as it were, used and positioned by it”(29). Butler goes on to argue that the category of “women” must be subjected to a critique that interrogates its “exclusionary operations and differential power-relations” (29).³ I believe subjecting the term “women” to a critical analysis is crucial to this thesis because such a deconstruction enables me to question and challenge how patriarchal constructions of “women” define the feminine subject in a range of specific, and ultimately, limited ways. The institutional operations of patriarchy produce women’s subjectivities such that they remain subordinate to those of men. In this context, the feminine subject should be understood as passive, vulnerable, and dependent, and therefore, of less worth than the masculine subject.

³ In their discussions of how the category of women intersects with questions of race and racism, Gayatri Spivak (1996) and bell hooks (1984) posit the need for “strategic essentialism.” That is, a pliable and self-conscious political strategy employed by a subordinate group as a grounds for organizing and resistance.

Interrogating the category of “women” enables me to question how women internalize particular feminine subjectivities that either support or contradict the dominant institutionalized definitions of women’s social status/roles. Questioning the patriarchal operations that exclude and limit definitions of femininity allows me to examine how women are oppressed through the power-relations exhibited in femicide. In this thesis, then, I will argue that the unequal power relations endemic to acts of femicide demonstrate how women are perceived and treated as subordinate in patriarchal cultures.

“Women” cannot be considered a homogenous group. Contemporary feminisms must consider women’s diversity; examining “the social significance of differences among us,” including how women are differently located within global and local social contexts, and differently represented in images, like those found in media, art, and literature (Jackson 1998, 1). The importance of recognizing differences among women - racial, ethnic, class, language, ability, age, sexual - is that these differences intersect with gender differences and are hierarchical, producing inequalities among/between women (2). These intersections of differences among women must be kept in mind as having major influence when one is producing (feminist) analyses of women and women’s lives.

However, I believe and will argue in this thesis, that women can be considered an identifiable group in terms of how one of the many forms of patriarchal control and oppression, male violence against women, affects women all over the world. One must not assume that all women share the same experiences; however, we can acknowledge that male violence is committed against women in similar ways. Women, as Haideh Moghissi (1999) characterizes it, share a lack of control over their bodies and the sexual exploitation and abuse of women is an area of which women, North and South, have

much common experience. This is a space where women from all over the world can come together to develop a world-wide feminist coalitional politics against violence (95). I take from Moghissi that the common experience of exploitation and victimization of women by men can and does occur, that it is a present reality for women all over the world, and thus, we can not do without the category of “women” when dealing with the violence of femicide.

Feminist theorizing, Jackson (1998) maintains, must “continue to acknowledge the specific localized actualities, [social discourses], and global contexts which shape women’s lives” (10). Weedon (1997) argues that feminists who question the institutions that define femininity and womanhood (the media, the structure of the family, the sexual division of labour, access to work and politics, medicine, religion – to name but a few) must question how “woman” has been defined within liberal-humanist, patriarchal discourses. She states, “viewed from the perspective of women as a social group, they [feminists] can produce new ways of seeing which [definitions] make sense to them [women and feminists], enabling women to call them [these definitions] into question and open the way for change” (5). I believe in Weedon’s (1997) statement that an adequate feminist politics and theory, an adequate representation of women, must consider difference of class, racism, and heterosexism, when accounting for forms of oppression which divide women as well as those which women share (10, 11). It is not my intention to produce a totalizing, definitive, explanation of women, patriarchy, or even feminism, as I do not believe in one formulated truth. It is my goal to follow Weedon and Moghissi’s example and “hold on to feminism as a politics which must have tangible

results, and to mobilize theory in order to develop strategies for change on behalf of feminist interests” (Weedon 1997, 11).

A feminist poststructuralist approach to “women” considers women’s oppression as discursively constructed and constituted by and through social systems, relations and representations; Weedon (1997) explains “women’s experiences are not innate but determined by a range of forms of power relations” (78). A feminist poststructuralist approach, one that I am taking in this thesis, questions how feminine subjectivities are constructed and internalized, and how women’s experiences are reiterated by institutions in problematic and unequal ways. Weedon (1997) reveals that the central concern of feminist poststructuralism understands the position of individual women in society and the ways in which they are both governed by and resist specific forms of power. We must understand how women’s experiences are constituted in strategic ways within the broad field of patriarchal power relations (71). Women as an identifiable category can be thought of in this way, and feminist criticism can extend these explanations in order to find solutions to women’s subordination and challenge patriarchal power over defining women and women’s realities.

Feminist criticism, Weedon (1997) argues, seeks to privilege feminist interests in the understanding and transformation of patriarchy (132). Feminists take the patriarchal structures of society as a starting point. Criticizing and challenging patriarchal structures is a feminist practice by way of challenging male oppression over women. Patriarchal power and social relations within our society require further theorization to understand how women are subordinated and remain unequal to men in society.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is defined in the *Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory* (1997) compiled by Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, and Carol Walkowitz, as the “over-arching system of male dominance... a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (159). Maggie Humm (1995) delineates, in her second edition of *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, that patriarchy can be understood as “men’s greater access to, and mediation of, the resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home” (200) giving them access to greater social power. Humm (1995) extends the definition of patriarchy by explaining how the concept has been crucial to contemporary feminism because feminism requires a term through which the totality of oppressive and exploitive relations which affect women could be expressed (200).

The power relations embedded in patriarchal societies take many forms. Weedon (1997) illustrates that these forms of power range from the sexual division of labour to the internalized norms of femininity by which women live (2). Patriarchal power rests on the social meanings given to biological sexual difference which has transformed into seeing the male, masculine, as powerful and the female, feminine, as subordinate. Weedon (1997) explains: “In patriarchal discourse, the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male” (2). An example of this is the generic use of terms like “mankind” or even legal terminology such as “manslaughter” and “homicide” as encompassing all women and men.

While I am analyzing one form of patriarchal oppression/power, femicide and intimate femicide, I recognize and acknowledge that this violence is constituted,

perpetuated and put into discourse through multiple structures of power relations and negotiations. My understanding of patriarchy considers the multiple social structures and discourses that govern our social institutions, our society, and the intersections of gender, race, class, age, ability, and how this marginalizes people in patriarchal societies. My understanding, thus, is not limited to one explanation of power. Violence against women is but one of many forms of patriarchal oppression. Weedon (1997) explains that feminism must understand power in all its forms, that feminists cannot deny the multiplicities of power relations implicit within our patriarchal societies (120). Feminism contributes to finding new ways of resisting patriarchal power, challenging oppressive social operations and systems, and ending systemic inequalities between women and men.

Feminism and Feminist Theory/Theorizing

Feminism, according to Weedon (1997) enables its proponents to generate and utilize new theoretical perspectives that criticize the dominant ones, and create new possibilities for change (5). Humm (1998) explains that feminism itself is “not simply an additive explanatory model alongside other political theories,” rather it considers the experiences of women historically left out and ignored in political/social theory (Humm 1998, 194). The fundamental importance of feminism is that it makes women’s experience of sexuality, work and the family central which as Humm (1998) argues,

inevitably challenges traditional frameworks of knowledge. Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions: that gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and that women’s experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society (194).

I take these ideas as essential to a feminism that is critical of patriarchal social systems, including the media. Patriarchal control of the construction of gender, the control over generic discourses that are continually disseminated, and over women's lives in general must be criticized/challenged in order to understand the status of women's lives who are confronted by and dealing with male violence in their everyday lives. Humm (1998) asserts this when she states that "women often become feminist by becoming conscious of, and criticizing, the power of symbolic misrepresentations of women" (194). Jackson and Jones (1998) maintain that the majority of what has been considered objective knowledge has been produced by men, usually who have been/are white, middle-class, heterosexual men, framed by their social locations as men (1). A feminist theoretical enterprise such as this one contests androcentric (or male-centered) ways of knowing, and calls into question the gendered hierarchy of society and culture. Jackson and Jones (1998) demonstrate that feminist theory is an approach which first considers women, generating knowledge *about* women and gender *for* women (1). Feminist theory must take into account not only of the ways women lives are shaped materially but discursively as well (7).

As it has already been explained that the category of "women" is at the centre of debate within feminist theory because of the (Western feminisms) tendency toward totalizing women's experience and identities; women's experiences, therefore, must be considered as diverse, and as Jackson and Jones (1998) explain, must understand women as differently located within complex social relations (8). Feminism cannot be totalizing, it is and must be considered a theoretical approach within society and social relations which possesses room for debate and contestation (8). Feminist theorizing must be open

to fluid thinking and modification in order to maintain its critical edge and explanatory power (8), and in order to continue dealing with the many complexities of women's socio-economic and gendered status in society.

Feminist theorizing is crucial to an analysis of patriarchal discourses used and disseminated in the news about violence against women. As Weedon (1997) explains, feminist theorizing has meant questioning the nature of language, subjectivity and representation and has involved a shift toward non-humanist forms of analysis and knowledge creation (143). This questioning must occur because of the dominant discursive tendency to use liberal-humanist explanations of existence and experience (basing gender difference in biological sex) and to assume that universal truth claims are possible, which can not be supported by a contemporary feminist theory. Feminist theorizing challenges the patriarchal dualities (example, men/women, white/black, nature/nurture, aggressive/passive, and supremacy/inferiority) of the liberal-humanist Enlightenment project.⁴ Feminism must continue to question and transform knowledge production which constructs our understandings of self and others in oppositional and patriarchal ways, as well as to continue to generate feminist theories of women and women's experiences.

In order to question and transform both the social relations of knowledge production and the type of knowledge produced requires, as Weedon (1997) maintains,

⁴ Feminism and feminist theory leading up to the 1970s, and forms of feminist theorizing still, tends to rely on patriarchal hierarchies and privileges essentialist explanations of women, while also reinforcing patriarchal dualities. However, my understanding of feminism and feminist theory goes beyond these tendencies of first and some forms of second wave feminism and disrupts and/or challenges attempts of universalizing (and essentializing) the category of women that excludes women's differences like race, ability, class, sexual orientation, etc, and how these differences intersect socially. My explanation of feminism considers the intersections of women's differences and relies on the tools of feminist poststructuralism that question and challenge the way women, gender, subjectivity and power are constituted discursively and in representations throughout patriarchal cultures, such as representations of women in the media.

that “we tackle the fundamental questions of how and where knowledge is produced and by whom, and of what counts as knowledge. It also requires a transformation of the structures which determine how knowledge is disseminated or otherwise” (7). Weedon goes on to describe how feminists must question what texts are available to the public. I argue for the necessity of challenging the discourses perpetuated in newspaper articles about cases of femicide because the texts provided by news media cannot be considered free of damaging stereotypes and myths about the female victims and male perpetrators, nor can the texts be separated from the male dominated media institution in which the violence was created and disseminated. It is possible to trace the formative power of patriarchal, class and racial interests in what is available to be read.

Feminist theory allows one to uncover, challenge and question what is perceived as neutral. It is through this process that accepted, formative, constructs such as gender norms are questioned and new ways of understanding gender as historically produced and changeable is possible. Humm (1998) states that “one way feminism *has* reconstituted knowledge is precisely through changing aspects of language with the invention of new terms such as sexism” (203, emphasis in original). Feminist theory is able to communicate that criticism, critiquing language and representation, as “not simply technologies of communication but intensely caught up in gender value judgments” with the “key issues being: politics, pedagogy/performance, and positionality” (207, 208). Humm (1998) posits that language and representations are what make the constructions of knowledge and gender subjectivities possible. Representations, and the knowledge produced from them, shape our identities and our worlds (194).

Because a great deal of research about femicide has come from radical, or contemporary radical, feminist theory, I feel it is important to explain how radical feminism is necessary to conceptualizing violence against women cases. I understand radical feminism as encompassing (but not limited to) the following three ideological objectives explained by Andermahr et al. (1997): first, that women are “oppressed as women and that their oppressors are men,” second, that the “whole gender order in which people, things, and behaviour are classified in terms of the distinction between masculine and feminine is socially constructed” and third, that “male oppression has primacy over all other oppressions” (182). Radical feminism poses questions about sexuality, personal relations, marriage, the family and violence against women as these are “issues with which all feminism must engage” (187). Humm (1995) suggests that no other mode of feminist theory centralizes issues of rape, violence, and sexual difference to the extent that radical feminism does (233). Radical feminism brought issues of violence against women into the realm of public debate and aided in bringing about a dialogue between women who had been victims of anti-woman violence. Russell and Radford (1992) use a radical feminist analysis because it addresses male sexual violence as the form of violence that secures patriarchal power relations, as “the presence of sexual violence is one of the defining features of a patriarchal society” (353) that radical feminism works to challenge and obliterate.

Russell and Radford’s (1992) theoretical framework focuses on the political characteristics of male violence in relation to the gendered power relations of patriarchal societies, because:

Gender relations were [are] identified as power relations, which were [are] defined structurally through the social or political construction of masculinity as active and aggressive and the social construction of femininity as receptive and passive (6).

One of the major tenets of their theoretical framework is that women's oppression by patriarchy, which may manifest itself in legal and economic discrimination, is rooted in violence. Femicide must be understood as an inherently political act that controls women as a sex class, and is thus central to the maintenance of the patriarchal status quo (6). The goal of their work on femicide is to have more feminists embrace and use the term of femicide, to act against the misogynist violence and challenge the structures that allow it to take place every day. They explain the goal of their work is to go beyond an academic discussion, "by making the fight against femicide a major theme of (their) anthology," *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, and they hope it will "play a strategic role in consolidating feminist resistance to femicide" (7). In short, they wish to "consolidate feminist resistance to femicide" (7).

Russell and Radford (1992) acknowledge that the radical feminism of the 1970s and 1980s lacked a holistic approach to the male domination of female lives. They make it clear that an analysis of violence must consider the impact of competing patriarchal power structures on women's lives. Therefore, their feminist framework recognizes the importance of acknowledging the intersections of women's differences by responding to the injustices of capitalism, the racism of postcolonialism, and the heterosexist nature of studies of sexuality. The ways in which issues of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, and ability, intersect women's everyday lives must be acknowledged to create change that will improve the estate of women. Their radical feminism recognizes

the “complexities of these interactive structures and their different impacts on women” (355).

Gendered Relations, Subjectivities and Social Constructions

This thesis is a critical analysis of the newspaper media discourses on femicide, an act that I understand as representative of socially constructed gendered subjectivities and gendered relationships. I will explain how patriarchal social discourses construct masculine and feminine subjectivities in limited and traditional ways, and thus, represent men and women problematically in newspaper articles about cases of femicide.

Therefore, this thesis is, in part, an analysis of how gender is discursively constituted in media, newspaper, representations and how boundaries of appropriate masculine and feminine subjectivities are created and enforced. My aim is to question the patriarchal constructions of gender through a feminist critical analysis. Teresa de Lauretis (1987) explains that,

feminist theory goes further in defining the female-gendered subject as one that is at once inside and outside the ideology of gender: the female subject of feminism is one constructed across a multiplicity of discourses, positions, and meanings, which are often in conflict with one another and inherently (historically) contradictory. A feminist theory of gender, in other words, points to a conception of the subject as multiple, rather than divided or unified, and as excessive and heteronomous vis-à-vis the state ideological apparati and the sociocultural technologies of gender (ix, x).

de Lauretis (1987) maintains that in becoming a feminist, one assumes a position/a perspective that questions, analyzes, and explains social constructions of gender. I maintain that the (female) sex/(feminine) gender relationship is such that gender is neither biologically determined nor an imaginary construct that is purely arbitrary.

Gender is the “product and process of a number of social technologies” that “create a matrix of differences and cross any number of languages” (x). Gender, in fact, points to a

conception of women as neither already unified nor inseparably divided but as multiple and therefore capable of unifying and dividing at will. de Lauretis (1987) insists that if feminists wish to ground themselves in a politics, they must in some way privilege the category of gender so that they have some ground to stand on when they come together to improve their “estate,” and this political action requires a platform (48). Having gender as a departure point for political action enables feminists to do this because then women, the feminine, is central to any analysis, or challenge, or act of resistance to patriarchal political/social theories.

A feminist theoretical perspective must consider and recognize, as Weedon (1997) states, the “importance of the subjective in constituting the meaning of women’s lived reality.” Personal subjectivity and gendered identifications allow a person to make sense of their lives and are “a necessary starting point for understanding how power relations structure society” (8), the individual and gendered relationships. Feminist theory must account for competing subject realities and show which social interests benefit from the promulgation of subjectivities that are communicated and acted upon as acceptable (8).

Judith Butler (1993) has structured the majority of her academic writings around the sex/gender/social construction of gender debate. In *Bodies That Matter* (1993) she commits to an exhaustive explanation of how sex becomes materialized in/through the body. She does this by explaining the gendered constructions of the human subject, the male or female, and how these constructions of gender are performed. Butler explains that the sex/gender distinction is presented, displayed, and organized through social meaning of sex, and the gender sex assumes. Butler (1993) argues: “If gender consists of

the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not accrue social meanings as additive properties but, rather, is replaced by the social meanings it takes on” and gender emerges “not in opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces “sex””

(5). Butler explains that gender precedes sex; that there is no access to this “sex” except by mean of its construction (5), in other words by naming and enacting/behaving gender, its femininity or masculinity. Gender is socially constructed through the language of sex that directly relates to how one understands, and thus acts upon, gendered subjectivities. We understand the gendered body, and gendered relations, through the language of sexed/gendered social constructions. Using the language of “femicide,” is an example of understanding the gendered relations demonstrated, acted out, in acts of lethal male violence against women. The terminology of “femicide” assumes the patriarchal constructions of the male subject as powerful, aggressive, and violent over the female, who has been constructed as subordinate, passive and weak. The concept of femicide, therefore, explains the physical manifestation of the patriarchal social constructions of sex/gender displayed through gendered relations of the male subject over the female subject.

Butler (1993) is critical of a feminism that takes the essentialized female body as the point of departure for its theoretical framework. Butler, instead, claims that if feminism is to remain a critical practice it must understand the body itself as materialized through the gender it has taken on, whether the gendered materializations be chosen or forced (28). The materialization of gender is produced through the sexed body and, according to Butler (1993) “to materialize” causes the body “to matter” (32). The power dynamics played out through gendered materializations which operate within society

come from patriarchal constructions of which gendered acts and behaviours are considered appropriate. The acts of gender deemed appropriate are those constructed/made sense of through a “taken for granted” understanding by which patriarchal society grounds its power (34, 35). For example, as I will demonstrate, newspaper coverage of femicide routinely rely on the construction of the female as subordinate, and routinely describe women as naïve, passive and dependent, and the male as naturally in control and his aggression as acceptable. Patriarchal constructions of gender continue to hold power through how sex and gender is regulated in language in one instance, but also the way gender, and sex, norms are reiterated. Sexed bodies, and gender identifications, are established, according to Butler (1993), through regulated norms that materialize sex and gender by constantly reinforcing and reiterating the appropriate materialization of such norms (2). The act of femicide demonstrates how masculine/male subjects enact patriarchal constructions of the male norm as aggressive, and reaffirm patriarchal power by subordinating the female victim through femicide. Femicide, I argue, must be understood as a concept that assumes an unequal gendered relationship between the male over the female based in the patriarchal definitions ascribed to femininity and masculinity.

Patriarchal constructions of gender and sex, formulated in liberal-humanist theories, acquire influence through the ways women and men are posited against each other, the ways in which women and men’s bodies, experiences, and abilities are seen as different and how this difference is explained. Feminist theorizing must understand and explain that women are *socially constituted* as different from men, but that women, and

feminine subjectivities, are differently subjected to social relations and processes than men/male subjectivities (Weedon 1997, 8).

Hierarchies of accepted gendered behaviours and actions within patriarchal societies determine what is considered appropriate feminine and masculine behaviours. The argument that sex and gender have no essential nature or meaning is central to this thesis. Sex and gender, as described above, come into existence through the ways we speak about, and internalize, our gendered identities and the ways in which they are constructed through language and action (Weedon 1997, 119). Weedon (1997) contends that women have options in the battle to define their gendered subjecthood, their femininity, the social roles and meanings of women's experiences and identification with femininity however, this exists within a "hierarchical network of antagonistic relations in which certain versions of femininity... have more social and institutional power than others" (121).

Liberal-humanist discourses rooted in disciplines like sociobiology have provided traditional explanations about gender/sex, the body and subjectivity, as have some forms of feminism. The feminism I apply in this thesis, however, moves beyond the tradition to rely on liberal humanist discourses. The traditional, and most often male centered, explanations of gender and subjectivity have become entrenched in patriarchal societies. The liberal humanist discourses, Weedon (1997) explains, determine what constitutes "normal" femininity and masculinity and ascribe social definitions to the nature and function of femininity and masculinity to a fixed and unchanging natural order, guaranteed by the female or male body, independent of social and cultural factors and constructions (123). These discursive constructs "fix subjectivity by insisting that certain

meanings are the true ones because they are determined by natural forces beyond our control” (126). “Natural” femininity and masculinity necessarily fit women and men into certain positions, into different types of jobs, social and familial tasks, and through this fixing of meaning the interests of men are prioritized (126). Women and feminine subjectivities are seen as lacking or of less worth, for they have not been centralized in discourse, they have not been prioritized; instead they are relegated to the subordinate status within the patriarchal binary.

This thesis will show how the discourses disseminated in newspaper articles about cases of femicide reiterate and rely on liberal-humanist explanations of “natural” femininity and masculinity. The patriarchal discourses that attempt to “fix the truth of women’s and men’s natures” in fact entrench assumptions about what is natural/appropriate and “structure the social and institutional practices which constitute subjectivity, bodies, minds and emotions of girls and boys and women and men, and through this their power is realized and patriarchal relations reaffirmed” (125). Patriarchal discourses which attempt to fix masculine and feminine subjectivities according to traditional definitions of gendered roles encourage the preservation of sexism. Acts of femicide are the extreme form of inequality and I will show how this inequality is perpetuated in the newspaper articles’ discourses of cases of femicide.

I will show that while patriarchal definitions of gendered subjectivities are constructed and then reaffirmed as fixed and all powerful, there is still room to contest dominant meanings of gendered subjectivities. Women can “resist particular meanings and power relations” by challenging and changing definitions of gendered subjecthood in language, because within a poststructuralist feminism meanings and social relations are

always changing (Weedon 1997, 131). Language enables us to do this because, as Weedon (1997) argues, it offers a range of ways to interpret our lives that allow for different versions of experience and subjectivities. Language constitutes these differences (81, 82). Changing how we acknowledge instances of lethal male violence against women through the use of feminist language like “femicide” will/could enable the recognition of the gendered and power relations involved in the violence of the male perpetrator over the female victim. The concept of femicide makes sexism and misogyny central and helps us begin to acknowledge and then resist the power of patriarchal control over female/feminine experience.

Gender(ed) Performativities

I feel it is necessary to briefly identify the importance and use of Butler’s theory of gender performativity, because it is this theory that makes central the idea of reiterating and reaffirming “accepted, acceptable” gendered behaviours. This is important when focusing on femicide because femicide, as the killing of females by males because they are female (Russell 2001, 3), is a violent manifestation of gendered relations. Aggression, violence, control and (the need for) power are understood as displays, or to use Butler’s terms, are performances of acceptable masculine behaviour and appropriate forms of male identity/subjecthood. The violent (and sexist) man’s performance of aggression against a woman reinforces male oppression and female subordination, thus, it is a performative of male physical and social power. I understand the physical act of femicide as a performative of established conventions of masculinity, and that the representations of femicide in newspaper media reinforce these conventions. The media’s representations perpetuate and are complicit in affirming the controlling and

inherently patriarchal act. The inequality of femicide and the system/conventions that perpetuate this violence are covered over and thus encouraged by problematic representations of femicide in the news media. The physical act of femicide is a repetition of already established rules and standard practices and the media representations that attempt to explain the act reiterate the established, patriarchal, social hierarchies of our culture.

Jackson (1998) examines Butler's theory of gender performativity and explains that the performance of gender is constructed through both discursive and non-discursive practices. "Bodies become gendered through the continual performance of gender... Hence gender is performative; to be feminine is to perform femininity" (137). Butler (1993) argues that "performativity" is not a single or deliberate act but rather it is "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (2). Butler, thus, maintains that gender becomes affirmed through the repetition of behaviours associated with either masculinity or femininity. Reiterating, reproducing, and performing traits and actions associated with either the masculine or the feminine is, Butler (1993) maintains, to "cite" gender, to become gendered. Citing the sex of a baby at birth, for instance, reaffirms (already) established, powerful, norms in qualifying the sexed body as boy or girl (2). Assuming the gender performances of the sex one has been named to, materialized in the body, structures the subject/the self through regulative and normative practices which are in turn coercive and constraining (2, 3). Reiterating the assumed sex and its gendered acts/behaviours cited at birth (as materialized through the body) causes the individual to invoke the power of patriarchal norms and discourses of acceptable masculinity and femininity. Butler (1993) helps me to understand that the

process of assuming a sex and the questions of gender identification reinforces the discursive means by which the “heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/or disavows other identifications” (3). Gender performativity, assuming the sexed characteristics of “forced” norms, is not a singular act. Butler contends that performativity “is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition... a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names” (12, 13).

I will demonstrate how the discourses put forth in the newspaper coverage of femicide cases provide narratives of what is appropriate gender behaviour. I borrow from Butler the thinking that the information omitted and that which is repeated in media representations of femicide apply to social behaviours and the behaviours involved in instances of male violence against women and femicides. This is illustrated through the newspaper representations that continually represent the female victims exclusively as passive or solely through their status of mother. The newspaper coverage reiterates and reinforces patriarchal constructions of feminine subjectivity by continually repeating this information, while omitting other information such as that which explains that the woman attempted to protect herself from violence. Also, when newspaper articles’ include gender neutral wording to describe acts of femicide they deny naming the violence in its gendered construct/relationship, and deny the male’s reiterative performances of patriarchal constructions of the masculine as aggressive and dominant. Ignorance and omission of information about male violence against women, thus, reinforces viewing

and understanding male oppression through femicide as normal performances of masculinity.

Important to the concept of performativity is the disciplining of gendered subjectivities by way of regulated norms. This is done through patriarchal discourses that position what is acceptable for male/masculine and female/feminine behaviour within social and discursive hierarchies. Because the male is positioned as central, dominant, and powerful in patriarchal discourses the female/feminine identities are usually cast as the other; that which is external, outside what is not male/masculine. Butler's (1993) feminism, her challenge to the oppression of a heterosexist patriarchy, can be found in the statement: "the task is to refigure the necessary "outside" as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome" (53).

Overcoming exclusions and critically refiguring what is understood as lethal male violence against women is what this thesis is committed to doing. In analyzing sexist and problematic representations of female and male gendered subjectivities in cases of femicide professed by the news media, I am "refiguring" what is outside, hidden, excluded, or assumed in the representations given to the public and instead of casting them as true or objective, as the news would, I am placing them as problematic and damaging to what we understand about male violence against women. The oppressive gender performativities acted out by men within male violence against women are validated by how the news represents cases of femicide. My task is then to account for this oppressive manifestation of patriarchal power and find alternatives to how to explain the sexist violence. This is possible through critically analyzing the patriarchal discourses perpetuated through news representations of male violence against women and

using instead terminology that explains the gendered nature of women's deaths by using the term femicide in news reports of woman-killing.

Feminist Poststructuralism

Feminist poststructuralism is a theoretical framework that can be applied to news representations of lethal male violence against women because it addresses the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness, focusing on how power is exercised (Weedon 1997, 19). Feminist poststructuralism theorizes the relationship between subjectivity, meaning, and social value. It examines the range of "possible normal subject positions open to women, and the power and powerlessness invested in them" (18), offering explanations for how and why people (men) oppress others (women). This framework challenges how one speaks, acts and internalizes, or challenges, social discourses that are seen as natural, neutral and necessary to a "normal" existence.

Origins of Poststructuralism and Feminist Poststructuralism

The origins of poststructuralism, according to Weedon (1997), are in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Marxist theory, especially Louis Althusser's⁵ theory of ideology and interpellation, the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida's theory of difference and deconstruction, and the theories of discourse and power of Michel Foucault.

Jackson (1998) explains that feminists entered into the poststructuralist debate by drawing on French structuralist work, relying on Althusser's Marxism and Lacan's psychoanalysis but also by combining Marxist and psychoanalytic theories in different

⁵ I feel I must direct attention to Althusser because it is with difficulty that I quote his work. Althusser killed his wife H el ene in 1980 (Finn 1989, 382). According to Geraldine Finn (1989) the news reports of H el ene's death were compassionate and sensitive toward Althusser, instead of vilifying him, the killer.

ways to account for women's subjectivities and women's subordinate status. In drawing on Althusserian theory, psychoanalysis, structural linguistics and semiology, new combinations were created to consider women's lives. The theory that ideology is effective through the capacity of language to shape our thoughts and desires was brought together with the Foucauldian concept of discourse as fluid, which reconceptualized power as diffuse and dispersed rather than concentrated (22). New combinations of these theories led to a new form of poststructuralism that considered feminism, considered how women are affected by the power of patriarchal ideology and discourse. Weedon (1997) explains the feminist appropriations of structuralist and psychoanalytic approaches began with the works of French feminists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. Each of these theorists considered how subjectivity, and the meaning of gender and power, relate to one another (13).

Contemporary Uses of Feminist Poststructuralism

Weedon (1997) advocates a specific version of poststructuralism that specifies and "indicates the types of discourse from which particular feminist questions come, and locates them both socially and institutionally" (20). The fundamental assumptions of this approach surround the non-fixity, or inability to firmly entrench, one explanation of language, meaning and subjectivity. A feminist poststructuralism, according to Weedon, must account for multiple discursive frameworks within society, without overlooking history and context (20). As de Saussure argues: "meaning is produced within language rather than reflected by language" (de Saussure 1974; in Weedon 1997, 23).

Furthermore, Weedon (1997) suggests we need to assume that meaning is constituted

within language and is not guaranteed by the subject which speaks it, hence moving beyond de Saussure to a *poststructuralism* (22).

Issues of Power, Power of Language, and Truth

Because poststructuralism argues for the plurality of language and the impossibility of fixed meaning, any interpretation is temporary. Interpretation is specific to the discourse within which it is produced and is therefore open to criticism based on the temporal context (82). Drawing from Foucault, Weedon (1997) asserts that: we need to view language as a system always existing in historically specific discourses and discursive relations within competing discourses, and how these processes give meaning to the world, the time, in which we live (22, 23). “Once language is understood in terms of competing discourses [they] imply differences in the organization of social power, [and] then language becomes an important site of political struggle” (23).

Poststructuralist feminism regards the rejection of essential truths as fundamental, questioning the supposed neutrality of language and social discourses is central to this rejection, and thus allows its proponents to choose between different accounts of reality on the basis of their social implications (Weedon 1997, 28).

Feminist poststructuralism allows its proponents to theorize the relation between patriarchal discourses and the social reliance on liberal-humanist epistemologies in analyzing language, discourse, subjectivity, social processes and the social institutions which benefit from reaffirming essentialist understandings of being. Weedon (1997) explains that in order to understand the power relations found and espoused in patriarchal discourse, and therefore identify locations and methods for change; we must examine the power of discourse:

Through a concept of *discourse*, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyze the opportunities for resistance to it (40).

Feminist poststructuralism is a valuable theoretical framework because it challenges the humanist ideals found in patriarchal discourses that maintain there is one essential truth about power, subjectivity/identity, and social processes. It is an effective critical tool to use against the “truths” patriarchy has established as central to its power.

It is a theory which decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing subjectivity and consciousness as socially produced in language, as sites of struggle and potential change. Language is not transparent as in humanist discourse; it is not expressive and does not label a “real” world (40).

Analyzing the problematic and sexist representations used in newspaper discourses about cases of femicide through a feminist poststructuralist framework is a process of challenging the meanings of the language chosen by the newspaper and thus the news media system.

Issues Concerning Gender and Subjectivity/ties

Feminist poststructuralist approaches deny the liberal-humanist assumptions that women or men have essential natures found in patriarchal discourses. Gender is socially constructed through discourses of power. Feminist poststructuralism thus refuses to give authority to general theories of the feminine as biologically defined, which locates the female in limited and subordinate roles, for example, the idea that women are only able to fulfill the roles of motherhood. Women’s experiences are not constituted from a natural essence, “experience is discursively produced by the constitution of women as subjects within historically and socially specific discourses” (Weedon 1997, 162). Feminist poststructuralism allows me to understand that under patriarchy, it must be acknowledged

that women have different, often unequal, access to discourses which constitute gender, gendered experience and gender relations of power in society (162). Therefore women's subjectivities must be understood as socially and discursively constructed by patriarchal discourses which serve male interests over female interests. This inequality allocates more power to men and governs women under patriarchal norms and values (Weedon 1997, 163). However women's subjectivities, Weedon (1997) explains, must also be understood as consisting of a plurality of meanings and "the possibilities available within these meanings have different political implications" (162), as women too are governed as subjects by patriarchal norms and values (163).

Feminist poststructuralism, Weedon (1997) maintains, offers an explanation of individual subjectivity. It describes the origins of experience and how experience can be contradictory to the discourses perpetuated in the news media, in the language we speak, and why and how subjectivity/experience can change (40). The possibility of change is one of the central tenets of a feminist poststructuralism; it offers a path to challenge patriarchal ideologies and ways of understanding why it is, and how it is, that people oppress one another. Resistance and change can occur because the language and meanings which grounds our understandings of social power relations are never fixed. Thus, it is "language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitute us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it" (31). The discourses that propose ways of being, those that hold power in our social/political institutions, however, represent specific political ideologies constantly in battle for status and power. Meanings of gender, for examples, are "both socially produced and variable between different forms of discourse" (22). Thus, gender is

materialized differently. The battle to fix meanings according to a patriarchal formulation for example, is found in the subjectivity of the individual and it is “a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist” (40). Men and women, therefore, have the ability to internalize and materialize different gender subjectivities. The choices made by an individual to define their gendered subjecthood represent negotiations with different discourses of power but are not independent/sovereign choices. Usually men/women adhere to constructions of gender structures as “normal” or “natural.” Thus, the individual internalizes the power of patriarchal discourses that structure limited forms of masculine and feminine subjectivity.

The power of (patriarchal) ideologies is, according to Weedon’s (1997) interpretations of Althusser, secured in our *ideological state apparatuses*, such as the media and justice systems. The interpellation of individuals as subjects, constituted in language, is a structural feature of all ideology (Althusser 1971; in Weedon 1997, 29, 30). According to Weedon’s (1997) explanation, this “process of the interpellation of individual subjectivity” relies on a structure of recognition by the individual as subject and articulates how one becomes an agent of specific ideologies. This, however, is also a process of misrecognition because the individual, “on assuming the position of subject in ideology, assumes that she is the *author* (her emphasis) of the ideology which constructs her subjectivity” (30). An example of this is how we continue to identify with patriarchal ideologies of gendered subjectivities and consider them chosen through free will. This sustains particular material social relations that rely on a theory of “ideology in general” which, in poststructuralism, is a theory of “language in general” (30). “Language, in this sense, consists of a range of discourses which offer different versions of the meaning of

social relations and their effects on the individual... [and therefore] the way in which we interpret these social relations have important political consequences” (Weedon 1997, 82).

The assumption made here is that ideologies of power are always present, constituted through language, as a precondition of social existence that is itself dependent on the historical context. The power of ideology is found, then, in the interpellation of individuals as subjects within *specific* ideologies, which are materialized in ideological apparatuses and practices. “The structure and function of the position of the subject within discourse is the precondition for the individual to assume historically specific forms of subjectivity within particular discourses... The material nature of ideology is discourse” (30, 31).

By continually reiterating the “normal” definitions of masculine and feminine subjectivity, the news media (among other institutions) maintain and reaffirm patriarchal power and control over men’s and women’s behaviour, roles, and subjectivity. Reaffirming patriarchal definitions of gendered subjectivity in news coverage of femicides establishes what is acceptable, normal, gendered behaviour in our patriarchal society. This reinforces the supposed, necessary, yet hidden, power of patriarchy over female and male subjectivity. Weedon (1997) expresses this by:

stressing the importance of the material relations and practices [existing within the organization of the news media] which constitute individuals as embodied subjects with particular but not inevitable forms of conscious and unconscious motivation and desires which are themselves the effect of the social institutions and processes which structure society (40).

The strength of a feminist poststructuralist approach is found in the way it enables us to attend to the practical implications of particular ways of theorizing and representing women's experiences and feminine subjectivities, thus oppression within society (6).

Analyzing and challenging the discourses perpetuated and language used in the news media, in newspaper articles particularly, can demonstrate how representations of femicide constitute gender (and gendered relationships) for the reader in specific, often problematic and sexist ways. These discourses position feminine and masculine subjectivities against each other and situate them within patriarchal discourses that legitimate male control of female subjects, and the female as subordinated to male power. The analysis of patriarchal discourses in news media representations of male violence against women is "a battle in which the legitimation of particular readings and the exclusion of others represent quite specific patriarchal, class, and race interests, helping to constitute our common-sense assumptions as reading and speaking subjects" (Weedon 1997, 163). Feminist poststructuralism must challenge, and allows me to question, what is constituted as legitimate representations of male and female behaviour and the ways they are described through language.

Discourse, Media Representations, and the News as a Social Knowledge Generator

The information provided by newspapers, news systems, and the language chosen in media representations, communicate what we perceive to be objective knowledge. The discourses used by newspapers, are in fact rooted in patriarchy and perpetuate essentialist explanations of men and women which rely on explanations of men as dominant, in control, and women as subordinate and passive. This enforces unequal power relations and reaffirms oppressive and gendered understandings of feminine and masculine

subjectivities. The news media continue to use essentialist representations of women and men in the coverage of femicide cases, which greatly affect our knowledge of instances of gendered violence.

This thesis assumes that the news acts as a generator of social knowledge. This is possible because of the news media's continual use and proliferation of discourses which are understood and viewed as common-sense. The media's use of dominant discourses, the language chosen, and the messages perpetuated by the newspaper media generate information about instances of femicide that can obscure women's understanding of their experience with violence, blame women for their victimization, and rely on essentialist understandings of gendered behaviour. The news media's representations, therefore, generate and reflect information that explain men as "naturally" aggressive, jealous, or having the right to control and hold power over all aspects of women's lives.

Humm (1998) argues in her chapter "Feminist Literary Theory," that "all representations, literary or otherwise, are what make constructions of knowledge and male/female subjectivity possible. Through representations we shape our identities and our worlds" (194). As Weedon (1997) explains, "representations either confirm or challenge the status quo through the ways they construct or fail to construct images of femininity and masculinity" (97). The central concern of examining representations of femicide is that "no representations in the written and visual media are gender-neutral" (97). The particular discourses disseminated by newspapers determine appropriate modes of constituting individual subjectivity by drawing on a range of ways of addressing the reader as a gendered subject with particular assumptions about the nature of gender, appropriate behaviour for men and women to exhibit, and acceptable roles for

them to play. The news media as an institution rearticulates social values in its own interests (97). Therefore, the news continues to reinforce sexist understandings of women, feminine subjectivities, and violence because they have invested interest in communicating representations of male violence against women in traditional ways. This invested interest originates from the news not wanting to disrupt common-held, hegemonic, beliefs about “proper” gendered behaviours.

Hegemony

Hegemony is the dominance of one social group over others, by ruling or dominating in a political/social context. Hegemony, according to Andermahr et al. (1997), functions through mobilizing consent of the dominated. To counter hegemonic ideologies, one must refuse and challenge consensual dominance (93). The newspaper representations of femicides do not disrupt the common held, hegemonic beliefs of purported patriarchal, or liberal-humanist, discourses. In fact they give power to such discourses by reaffirming and enforcing them through hegemonic means.

According to Stuart Hall (1977) in his work “Culture, the media and the “ideological” effect,” hegemony is accomplished through the agency of social superstructures – the family, education, the media and cultural institutions, as well as the coercive side of the state, for example the police and the courts, which work through an ideology of repression (333). Ideology is continually reaffirmed by social institutions that work under the power of patriarchy, therefore the news media as a social institution adopts and thus (re)produces the hegemonic discourses of the powerful (white, male) elite. The hegemony of patriarchal power in news discourses exists best in a society when “consent is obtained through the unquestioned, unconscious acceptance of

ideology” (Althusser 1971; in Meyers 1997, 20). Hegemony thrives on “the appearance of neutrality and common-sense - [what is also seen as the natural] – which allows those in power to maintain their position within a hierarchy of competing social formations” (Meyers 1997, 20).

Marian Meyers (1997) examines hegemony and the news in *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame*, and explains that news involves telling life stories, and acts according to a process by which the newsmaker navigates traditions, routines and organizations. The newsmaker maintains an “allegiance to shared values” in their news writing that socializes its public to believe what they are being told (Gans 1980; in Meyers 1997, 19). According to Liesbet van Zoonen (1994), the newsmaker is “limited by the social, economic and legal embedding of the media institution” (Meyers 1997, 19). This thesis will show that because the news media is upheld by and operates through already established patriarchal discourses, it acts against women’s concerns and instead communicates, for example, that blaming the female victim, denying or ignoring the male’s actions as demonstrative of sexism, and constructing narratives that posit women as subordinate to men are acceptable in cases of violence against women.

Meyers (1997) explains that the news media support certain status quo values, norms, and conventions by representing the interests of dominant power structures, those of the white, middle- and upper-class, male elite (19). Meyers explains:

The news contributes to the building and maintenance of popular consensus through the use of language that reflects and perpetuates the values, beliefs, and goals of the ruling elite. Consensus is thereby disguised so that it appears to be not the product of ideology but the result of what is simply natural or part of common sense – just the way things are and the way things are done (19).

The news reiterates patriarchal ideologies and cannot remove itself from reflecting “the social organization of reporting and the professional imperatives and commercial interests that are a part of it” as a social institution within a capitalist society (Meyers 1997, 22). The news reports on cases of violence against women in an uncritical manner and thus, women are victimized with no recognition of the sexist, misogynist culture that perpetuates anti-woman violence. News coverage disseminates hegemonic information, which posits women as expendable subordinates and thus effects what the public will believe and understand about women in society.

According to Barbie Zelizer (1993) in “Journalists as Interpretive Communities,” news editors and reporters are “members of an interpretive community” (219). They decide what is newsworthy, negotiating and justifying what is worthy of coverage based on already established criteria. This causes me to question the espoused “truth” of news reporting and the criteria chosen to explain events deemed appropriate for news coverage.

The process of deciding which stories to run actually disseminates hegemonic, patriarchal discourses of what is “normal,” or “natural,” or suitable behaviour. An example of this, according to Meyers, is that patriarchy benefits from the notion that men are “naturally and therefore rightfully more sexually aggressive than women, for it justifies the use of aggression against those not similarly endowed – that is, women” (20). The values and beliefs upheld within news production constitute a “framework that supports the dominant ideology while marginalizing, trivializing, and constructing as deviant or dangerous any challenge to it” (Meyers 1997, 22).

I do not assume, however, that there are no conflicts between the powerful elite and those marginalized by these forces. To hold on to power, the (white, male) elite must

constantly reinforce their power in the face of political and, in my work, feminist resistance. Resistance of patriarchal hegemony is possible as the critical analysis taking place in this thesis demonstrates. What is essential to my understanding of problematic, sexist discourses is that this hegemony must constantly be reinforced through public discourses like those reiterated by the news media. Meyers (1997) explains:

Because hegemony is never permanent, subordinate classes are never totally absorbed or incorporated into and by the dominate classes. The dominant discourse is open to being challenged and modified, and it is able to accommodate alternative meanings, values, opinions, and attitudes. Hegemony therefore must be continually renewed, fought for, re-created, and defended. Ideological struggle is thereby conceived of as a process of disarticulation and rearticulation of given ideological elements within a hierarchy of discourses (20).

In The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Foucault (1990) argues that the very existence of power relationships depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance that are present everywhere in the “power network” (Foucault 1990, 95). Foucault (1990) maintains that “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (86). Therefore, the power of patriarchal hegemony in discourse, and in the operations of our social institutions constructs these hegemonic social discourses as natural. The power of patriarchy is masked through its discourses being disseminated as common-sense, as what is normal. The feminist critical analysis I will employ constitutes a challenge to hegemonic discourses. In employing a feminist poststructuralist criticism I am taking part in resisting sexist, misogynist discourses disseminated by the news media that reinforce hegemonic patriarchal discourses.

Discourse

“Discourse” according to Maggie Humm (1995) is “the relation between language and social reality” (66). Discourse, as it is considered by Deborah Cameron (2001), is “‘language in use’: language used to do something and mean something, language produced and interpreted in a real-world context” (13). It is the discourses in the news media that construct our ways of understanding social events, relations, and processes and, in terms of my analysis, the violence in instances of femicide.

In order to examine the creation and perpetuation of sexist and misogynist messages in news coverage of femicide, or cases of violence against women, it is essential to understand discourse, and the discourses that surround gender, power, and language. de Lauretis (1987), who has been central to my understandings of gender and how it relates to a feminist framework, also discusses issues of gender in discourse. Her book *Technologies of Gender* examines how sexuality and gender are structured (2). Using the concept “technology of sex” from Foucault’s (1990) *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, de Lauretis is able to explain the social, economic, and political logics through which we came to understand sex, gender, and sexuality. Foucault explains that the technology of sex is an apparatus of knowledges, through which we understand, internalize, and talk about sex and sexuality, as well as the norms and frameworks that inform how we understand and make sense of the body historically. Foucault demonstrates that:

Through pedagogy, medicine, and economics, it [technology of sex] made sex not only a secular concern but a concern of the state as well; to be more exact, sex became a matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance (116).

Through the “technology of sex” (123) we are able to understand how sexuality and gender are put into discourse. de Lauretis (1987) examines how “both as representation and as self-representation, [sex and gender] are the products of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and crucial practices, as well as practices of daily life” (2). She continues to explain that we, like Foucault, can understand gender as part of a “complex political technology” that functions as the “product and process of a number of social technologies” (3). Sex, read gender, is a by-product of our patriarchal social organization of (hetero)sexuality. This organization is used to justify and explain the “naturalness” of heterosexual and patriarchal hegemony and gender roles within it.

Gendered subjectivities, affects relations between people, creates and causes social interactions, behaviours, and also affects how gender roles are perpetuated through dominant social messages. de Lauretis explains that gender acts as a set of “cultural conceptions [where] male and female [are] complementary yet mutually exclusive categories into which all human beings are placed” (5). These places exist “within each culture [as] a gender system...a system of meanings, that correlate sex to cultural contents according to social values and hierarchies” (5). Gendered subjectivities in discourse, as defined by patriarchal constructs, create and perpetuate human behaviours in specific ways and contribute to hierarchal inequalities and interactions.

de Lauretis illustrates how women’s gendered subjectivities, women’s bodies and sexualities are projected by the “male gaze” into cultural images and discourse, when she explains that representations of violence are inseparable from gender (33). Therefore, through the “techniques and discursive strategies by which gender is constructed [means

that] violence is en-gendered (38). Thus, to examine discourses of violence, one must also examine gender. Within newspaper coverage of femicides, or cases of violence against women, one must be critical of the discourses used to explain gendered violence. Meyers (1997) adds that “[A]nti-woman violence – whether rape, murder, battering, or any other type of physical assault – is gendered within the context of a patriarchal society in which male domination and female subordination are considered both desirable and the norm” (23).

Foucault (1990) states that within discourses of power and understandings of sexuality, “sex is [has been] put into discourse,” that it “becomes a discursive fact” through the people who use it, understand it, and how people materialize discourses of sex through their gendered subjectivity in society (11). For my purposes, “putting something into discourse” is essential to acknowledging and being critical of what we understand as “femicide.” All of the political implications of femicide can and must be “put into discourse” to become “discursive fact” and add materiality, or give weight, to what is being said. Using the terminology of femicide, putting it into discourses about lethal male violence against women allows for an alternative framing of male violence and the power relations involved when men are aggressive and violent toward women. “Femicide” enables one to acknowledge the misogyny and sexism inherent in acts of femicide and the politics of women’s deaths at the hands of male (intimate and non-intimate) partners.

In *Feminist Media Studies* (1994), Liesbet van Zoonen observes how discourses about gender, as well as discourses about violence, are situated within a:

power of discourse [which] lies not only in its capacity to define what is a social problem, but also in its prescriptions of how an issue should be understood, the legitimate views on it, the legitimacy and deviance of the actors involved, the appropriateness of certain acts etc. (40).

According to van Zoonen, society itself requires discourse, “which by definition has the effect of excluding, annihilating and delegitimizing certain views and positions, while including others” (40). van Zoonen explains the need for one to acknowledge that within every discourse, within every society, there are power relations that allow certain messages to be communicated while excluding others. Feminist criticism allows one to see that women’s voices and messages are usually the ones that find no place in dominant discourses.

Nancy Berns (2001) confirms this critique in her work on the media and discourses surrounding issues of violence against women. She explains that there are competing discourses about similar social problems, but that it is one particular perspective that often gains dominance in discourse. Berns (2001) also relies on Foucault to explain this point. Foucault argues that the “power to control knowledge allows one to control the dominant discourses on issues – thus silencing alternative perspectives” (Berns 2001, 264). Unfortunately, dominant discourses, the continual use of language defined in patriarchal terms, the supremacy of patriarchal understanding of violence, gender, and power, are used regularly in news coverage of issues of power, violence, and gender within the news.

Discourse and Social Knowledge

The news media, which enters the home and offers different formulations of social knowledge, perpetuates patriarchal understandings of relationships, violence, power and gender. Berns (2001) explains how the media is a dominant source of

information on social issues. She explains that the media is perhaps the “most dominant and most frequently used resources for understanding social issues” (263). Berns maintains that the media influences how people think and behave, how they see themselves and other people, and how they construct their identities (263). The mass media, whether news, talk shows, movies, newspapers, magazines and/or billboards, influence how gender constructs are understood, acknowledged, debated and reproduced.

An important aspect of the mass media and knowledge generation is that much of the viewing or reading public depends on the media for information about events, people, and the environments that surround them. Wendy Kozol (1995) explains this very point in her work on portrayals of “domestic violence” (her terminology) in television. She illustrates how the mass media is the place where many people access and receive information about their social environments. Kozol (1995) explains that because of this “dependency,” the media has power; it constructs and limits social knowledge (653). One of the major problems related to the media being a main source of public information is that it is viewed as an objective source, disseminating common-sense knowledge. Kozol (1995) explains that ideals of objectivity legitimize media representations that may not be accurate and that may perpetuate sexist or unequal treatment of women and other marginalized groups. The media “powerfully regulates knowledge about a topic for audience members [who have] limited access to alternative sources of knowledge” (649).

It is essential to critically analyze newspaper representations of violence against women because, as Meyers (1997) states, “how the news media represent violence against women is important not only because the news shapes our view and

understanding of the world around us but also because it affects how we live our lives” (2). The news helps to construct the audience/reader’s sense of well being and community. This thesis will explain that the news functions as a source of knowledge creation that works through patriarchal discourses in representations of femicide cases. The news communicates what is important according to received patriarchal wisdoms. They informs us what deviant, acceptable and appropriate behaviour is for men and women, masculine and feminine subjectivities. In examining representations of femicide and violence against women in newspapers, feminist criticism uncovers that news coverage of women in general, and in cases where violence is involved in particular, is a product of a patriarchal perspective, rooted in liberal humanist explanations of gender and gendered subjectivities that perpetuate stereotypes and myths about women and men.

Because the news media is influential in knowledge generation, one must be critical of what is being communicated in the news, or within other forms of media. Weedon (1997) explains that the battle for supremacy in knowledge generation within media discourses is “a battle for subjectivity and for the supremacy of particular versions of meaning, which are part of that battle, the individual is not merely the passive site of discursive struggle” (102). The individual who comes to read/view the news does so as an individual with a memory and “an already discursively constituted sense of identity” (102). The individual, according to Weedon (1997), is able to “resist particular interpellations or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses” ... “Meaning is plural [and] allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual, and even where choice is not available [access to knowledge is limited or not possible], resistance is still possible” (102). To become critical and

resist the patriarchal discourses used in news productions of cases concerning violence against women, feminist criticism is necessary. My thesis commits to a feminist poststructuralism which is a useful criticism of the news media's generation of knowledge about male violence against women. Meyers (1997) explains, "Feminism constitutes a challenge to patriarchy's hegemony by challenging its central assumptions and rearticulating the meaning of gender" (21). Feminist criticism can be used to understand and critique the media as a subjective source of knowledge production. The theories used in explaining how the news acts as a social knowledge generator, substantiated by scholars such as de Laetis, Meyers, Berns, Kozol, and the philosophies of Foucault, are theoretical explanations that support and adhere to a feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND BACKGROUND ON CANADIAN FEMICIDE

The literature about femicide has developed from two major forms of research. The first is the qualitative feminist research of scholars such as Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1987), Liz Kelly (1987), Jane Caputi (1987; 1992), Russell (1992; 2001), Radford (1992), and Asyan Sev'er (1997; 1999). Each of these scholars examines femicide through a feminist lens to explain acts of lethal male violence against women as sexist, misogynist, and oppressive. They address how social and political power relations are rooted in patriarchal gender roles and how violence against women is an expression of oppression.

Each of these feminist scholars make the need to end patriarchal control of women's lives and bodies central to their arguments. Concepts like Russell and Radford's "femicide" and concepts like Kelly's "continuum of violence" (which will be explained) highlight their critique of male dominance and aggression.

The second form of research develops from a quantitative tradition, and adds to our understanding of the number of femicides in our communities (Gartner and McCarthy 1991; Ellis and DeKeseredy 1997, Frye and Wilt 2001). These scholars gather information about femicides from statistics, risk assessment surveys, medical records, and by quantifying the methods by which women have been killed and the weapons used. I recognize the value and necessity of a quantitative approach to the subject of femicide; however, I will not be explaining their findings, for I am examining representations of femicide in the media.

Conceptualizing Femicide

I have been greatly influenced by Russell and Radford's (1992; 2001) compelling argument about the need to acknowledge misogynist violence. Writing from the interdisciplinary perspective of women's studies, with a focus in sociology and criminology, Russell and Radford (1992) employ a radical feminist analysis of sexual violence against women to demonstrate the severity of unequal relations between women and men. They approach the subject by analyzing how women are treated as objects and denied subjective experience, the right to safety, and control of their bodies and lives (within a patriarchal society). The objectification of women through violence, they argue, occurs because of patriarchal structures that control and oppress women in order to maintain male dominance and power.

Russell and Radford (1992) explain that women's experiences with different forms of violence must be a priority to/in feminist theory and that integral to this is women's right to name their/our experience (3). They describe the term sexual violence as "any physical, visual, verbal, or sexual act experienced by a woman or girl" that is a "threat, invasion, or assault, that has the effect of hurting or degrading her..." (3). Their work therefore "moves beyond earlier feminist debates over whether rape, for example, should be seen as an act of violence or of sexual assault" (3). Russell and Radford's (1992) approach focuses on men's desire for power, dominance, and control. It enables them to see male aggression in the context of the overall oppression of women in patriarchal societies. They define femicide in the context of sexual politics so that attention can be paid to, and critique can be made of, the violence that maintains and perpetuates patriarchal oppression (3, 351).

Russell and Radford (1992) rely on Liz Kelly's concept of the "violence continuum" (Kelly 1988; Russell and Radford 1992, 3), to identify and address a range of forced or coercive (hetero)sexual experiences. The continuum concept facilitates a full analysis of all forms of sexual violence against women (Russell and Radford 1992, 4). In locating femicide within this continuum, Russell and Radford are able to use radical feminist analyses of sexual violence, "to compare the treatment of femicide in law, social policy, and the media with the treatment of other expressions of violence" (4).

In the chapter, "Femicide: Sexist Terrorism against Women" Russell and Jane Caputi (1992) contribute to the challenge to end violence against women by examining how men act out the "ubiquitous racist, misogynist, and homophobic attitudes with which they have been raised and which they repeatedly see legitimized" by committing femicides (14). They use the term femicide when referring to misogynist killings because it does not obscure the gendered nature of the act the way non-gendered terms such as homicide and murder do (15). They declare that whenever violence against women, be it rape, physical abuse, or any other act results in death, it is a femicide, a misogynist killing of women because they are women (15).

Russell and Caputi (1992) analyze the gendered nature of femicide and expose patriarchy's refusal to acknowledge femicide. Russell and Caputi (1992) make a significant contribution to the literature on femicide. They offer a language through which to communicate about cases of lethal forms of violence against women, and in so doing adopt the term femicide. They also present the possibility of what they call "rememory and resistance," in which they explain as the act of female victims of male violence remembering the instances of male violence and they proclaim that in doing so,

taking part in “rememory and resistance,” is to “disobey the fathers’ commandments to forget, deny and maintain silence and instead to turn in abusive fathers, husbands, brothers, lovers, sons and friends” (20). Thus, to face the horror of male violations of women “that do not destroy us but save us” (20). They implore their readers to criticize accounts of lethal violence against women and acknowledge the gendered nature of many women’s deaths (20). This work exposes the need to acknowledge misogynist violence, vicious acts of patriarchal ignorance, and the dismissal of male violence against women.

In 2001, Russell, with co-editor Roberta Hermes, published a second work related to femicide: *Femicide in Global Perspectives* (2001). Together, Russell and Hermes explain the need to recognize femicide but to recognize the femicidal injustices in a global context. This second attempt at politicizing femicide is more inclusive, of women of all racial backgrounds and specifically analyzes femicide in relation to ethnicity (Russell 2001, 20). Russell and Hermes’s contribution to the literature on femicide speaks to the importance of language in giving meaning to women’s suffering because of male violence. The 2001 work illustrates the necessity of naming, and thus acknowledging, violence perpetrated against women. Russell and Hermes find that the different types of femicidal occurrences that happen all around the world expose how women across all nations (can) experience the violent expressions of patriarchal control and oppression regardless of the country in which they live.

Russell and Hermes’s (2001) work consists of articles that provide examples of femicide found throughout the globe, for instance, AIDS as mass femicide in South Africa and female infanticide in China. I rely on the 2001 work *Femicide in Global Perspective* (2001) because Russell’s work in the anthology addresses particularly the

importance of defining and naming femicide, what definitions of femicide are included in the collections of works she included in the anthology, and Russell explains new concepts like “femicidal suicide” (explained in later in this chapter). *Femicide in Global Perspective* (2001) reaffirms the feminist message of *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (1992) with the goal of reaching out to and incorporating the experiences of women in the global community. The aim of both texts is to change how the reader understands women’s deaths caused by male violence and control, and challenge their readers to acknowledge the specific realities of the subordination of women through the act of femicide.

Causes and Risk Factors of Femicide

Feminist sociologist Asyan Sev’er (1999) also investigates femicide and other forms of violence against women in her work “Exploring the Continuum: Sexualized Violence by Men and Male Youth against Women and Girls.” Sev’er questions the patriarchal and misogynist structures of society and how they ignore women’s victimization in incidences of sexual harassment, abuse, and femicide. She questions the “culture of misogyny” which allows these acts of violence against women to continue to take place (92).

Sev’er (1999) uses social learning theory to show that men and boys observe (cases of) violence against women, and that these acts of observation translate into a recognition that men go unpunished in cases where women are abused, and thus violence against women is passed down from generation to generation (94). Her feminist analysis acknowledges that male violence against women is rooted in cultural misogyny that is maintained and perpetuated by patriarchal social structures and relations. She explains

that the unequal, gendered distribution of power and resources in our patriarchal systems fuel women's inequality. Sev'er maintains patriarchal power structures situate women's inequality by conceptualizing how men benefit from women's subordination in a triangulation of gender, power and control which (determine social constructs that) position women as subordinate to men in society. According to Sev'er these structural inequalities affect and contribute to all of our intimate relationships (95).

Sev'er's (1999) work is important because she explains the need to acknowledge how women's deaths caused by male violence perpetuates/maintains the pervasive misogyny of patriarchal social structures which allow this violence to continue and how we all must question and resist such violence and challenge patriarchal power and misogyny.

Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1987) also contribute to the literature on violence against women and femicide with their text *Lust to Kill*. In their chapter, "The Murderer as Misogynist," Cameron and Frazer examine how gender and crime are intertwined. Using a criminological and sociological approach, they question why it is men, rather than women, who have the "lust to kill" and why it is men who commit acts of sexualized violence. According to Cameron and Frazer (1987), men murder the objects of their desire. In examining men as sex-killers, Cameron and Frazer ask how society's discourses on sexual murder fail to acknowledge the gendered nature of women's deaths; that men choose to kill women because they are women.

Cameron and Frazer (1987) analyze women's murders by men through a lens that sees male murderers or the "sexual murderer" (their terminology) as misogynist. By analyzing the responses of men convicted of killing women through a discourse analysis,

Cameron and Frazer explain that men kill women to re-affirm their own control and power. Through such an analysis, Cameron and Frazer incorporate radical feminist analysis to their study of violence against women and are critical of the way in which women's subordinate status (to men) can translate into a fear common among women, of being violated. They explain how unfortunately, women's subordinate status can sometimes result in death. In examining their research of reasons why men kill through a discourse analysis, Cameron and Frazer (1987) create the discourse of the "murderer as misogynist" and suggest that men use murder as a form of transcendence, and of self-affirmation. Femicide allows the male perpetrator to reaffirm his masculinity and his masculine power and control (166). Cameron and Frazer (1987) explain that men's subjectivity is at the heart of their existence and women's status as subject is constantly being negated by male subjectivity. Their analysis incorporates a feminist interpretation of crime that sees women as being denied their subjectivity, whereas men benefit from being, and maintaining themselves as, the central subject within our social institutions. They explain that men are most commonly in control of their own subjective status but also in control of women's bodies and sexual desires. Men then take women's rights and control over sexual desires away from them through abuse and women killing (168, 169).

Cameron and Frazer (1987) employ a qualitative approach to their research of the responses of men who had murdered women. In examining the sexual murderer, they explain the social discourses surrounding male murderers, they also look at different types of murders from their research and how these cases fit into the discourse of "murderer as misogynist" (170). Their analysis focuses on how misogyny drives the (male) murderer and how this translates into his murder of women close to him, as a form

of masculine transcendence. These scholars contribute to the feminist literature on violence against women, specifically femicide, by acknowledging that one must understand the male perpetrator's use of misogyny and patriarchal control in the killing of women in order to understand the subordination of women through acts of male violence and femicide.

Cameron and Frazer (1987) declare that we all must "aspire to an equal and feminist future in which murder is no longer a metaphor for freedom, in which transcendence is not the only possible self-affirmation and in which the lust to kill has no place" (177). Cameron and Frazer explain that the man who commits femicide must be acknowledged as a perpetrator who thrives on the misogyny within our culture. In order to see the murderer as misogynist, we also must acknowledge the culture of misogyny that perpetuates denying women their subjective status. Cameron and Frazer (1987) require their reader to understand the very real possibility that cultural misogyny can and has resulted in the deaths of women; (where one woman's death is too many.)

In the feminist criminological study "Woman Killing: Intimate Femicide in Ontario, 1974 to 1994," Rosemary Gartner, Myrna Dawson and Maria Crawford (1998) provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of femicide cases in Ontario. They employ a feminist analysis in order to incorporate women's unequal sociocultural positioning in Canadian, specifically Ontarian, society. Their research questions the phenomenon of "intimate femicide"⁶ between the years of 1974 to 1994 in Ontario. In their research regarding intimate femicide in Ontario, Gartner et al. (1998) examine the limitations of statistics about women killing. They are critical of statistics related to femicides because

⁶ Intimate femicide is defined as an act of femicide in which the male perpetrator is either married, cohabiting, or a boyfriend of the female victim.

the numbers come from a limited and ambiguous statistical category called “spouse killing” which leaves out common-law partners and boyfriends. Gartner et al. (1998) offer a compelling, feminist contribution to the issue of femicide. They highlight the gender specificity of intimate partner killings, and show that women are the victims of murder because of male control and the inequality which perpetuates male control over women’s sexuality, labour, and lives. This is an excellent feminist analysis of intimate femicide. Gartner et al. focus on language issues, the need to acknowledge gendered violence, and the fact that women are disproportionately killed by men.

Gartner et al. (1998) describe the causes of femicide, explaining the markers of risk for women in cases of intimate femicide in Ontario and what social economic factors may contribute to women being at greater risk of death by male intimate partners. Their study found increased risk factors to be associated with relationship status, where estrangement and common-law status were associated with higher risk rates, as well as ethnicity, employment /unemployment, and the offender’s history, whether they had a criminal record or a violent past. Gartner et al. maintain that intimate femicide can happen to any woman, regardless of age, ethnicity, or cultural background. However, victims of femicide were more likely to be separated from their partner, to be in a common law relationship, and/or to be Aboriginal. The male perpetrators of intimate femicide were usually unemployed and had prior histories of violence (166, 167).

Gartner et al. explain that the killing of women usually occurs in the home of the female victim, that men usually use a gun, and that children are often present, unfortunately, during the murder of their mother. They also observe that a considerable number of cases include violence where the victims had been stabbed, beaten to death,

had their throats slashed, or had been strangled. The most disturbing information found in their study was the extent and the nature of the violence; in each case of femicide, the perpetrator tended to use more violence than was necessary to kill the victim. They explain that the types of violence men perpetrated against women in acts of femicide caused the coroner to investigate and discuss the murders as prolonged or examples of “over-kill”. Gartner et al. also observe that the violence of femicide was more likely to be of a sexual nature (162).

The literature described above demonstrates the theoretical approaches to the study of femicide that inform my understanding of femicide and women-killing which greatly contribute to this thesis project. These feminist understandings of sexist violence guide my project of acknowledging lethal male violence against women as misogynist and as sexist manifestations of patriarchal power and domination over women.

News Coverage of Violence Against Women

In order to acknowledge how sexist/misogynist ways of understanding/talking about violence are perpetuated by newspapers, we need to examine how these conceptual frameworks are created. My thesis has been greatly influenced by the works of feminist scholars such as, Kate Clark (1992), Helen Benedict (1992), Forsyth-Smith (1995), Marian Meyers (1997), Maria Los and Sharon Chamard (1997), Adrian Howe (1997), Debi Sev'er (1999), and who have analyzed news coverage of violence against women and how women are portrayed within this coverage. Their research guides me theoretically and methodologically; I intend to make use of their methodological approaches to locate my work within a similar type of feminist criticism and to enhance my feminist theoretical framework.

Sev'er's (1999) work, that has already been examined earlier in this chapter, also commits to an analysis of news coverage of violence against women. She explains that the media, especially Canadian media, "gloss(es)" over the continuum of violence. Sev'er (1999) conducts qualitative analyses of media coverage of cases of femicide in order to document how the Canadian media account for violence against women. In analyzing articles from *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Ottawa Citizen* and *The Montreal Gazette*, she observes that men abuse and kill, and women and children are abused and killed disproportionately to/by men (95). Sev'er contributes to a larger discourse on violence against women by including an analysis of a "culture of misogyny" which perpetuates pervasive and lethal violence against women. Her work concludes that news coverage in Canada and the United States fails to recognize the culture of misogyny that willfully ignores sexist violence against women that take place and disregards the gendered nature of the killing of women (92, 93).

Marian Meyers (1997), in her work *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame*, explains that news discourse assumes that men are the primary focus and the most powerful members of society. She engages in a feminist critique of news broadcasts about violence against women and the patriarchal perspective on this subject the news perpetuates. Meyers (1997) explains how the news employs traditional, gendered, concepts of appropriate male and female gender roles such as men being independent and powerful and women being dependent and passive in representations of cases of violence against women. The perpetuation of sexist concepts in the news media is facilitated by a patriarchal culture which institutionalizes and rationalizes women's inequality within social, political, and economic structures and discourses (3). According

to Meyers (1997), the news frames violence against women in a way that supports, sustains, and reproduces male supremacy and is “rooted in cultural myths and stereotypes about women, men and violence, and the links between sexist violence, social structures, and gendered patterns of domination and control are ignored and disguised” (9). The result is that women are seen as complicit in the violence perpetrated against them, deserving of the violence, or are blamed for the violence; while men are represented as manic, or insane, or excused because they are presented as insecure and unstable.

Meyers (1997) illustrates the various perspectives news coverage takes in presenting female victims of male violence. She explains it is often women “who appear as the deviants worthy of condemnation” while the male perpetrator gets excused (4). Meyers explains that women are often portrayed as passive victims who do not fight back or take any other actions to protect or defend themselves (8). The news media thus portray women affected by violence in ways that maintain images of women as dependent and vulnerable.

The portrayal of women as dependent victims warns women, causing them to be fearful of public (and private) spaces, and act as a form of social control, reminding women to remain within male boundaries of acceptable behaviour (9). Meyers describes how “the vulnerability of women is a given and linked to questions of complicity, [which] remains lurking in the shadows of representation [of male violence against women]” (9). The social ramifications of these representations include the suggestion that women are inherently vulnerable to men, and that “real security can be provided only by those who are not similarly vulnerable – that is, by men” (9). Therefore, a contradiction in the representation of women as victims of male violence exists by

continually representing women as vulnerable to men, but that women can be “made safe only by men” (9). The news media, therefore, create and perpetuate these messages of women as vulnerable and passive which causes women to be continually fearful (9).

Meyers’s central argument is that the news is not neutral and can not be perceived as such. The news seeks balance, according to its doctrine of ‘remaining objective’, however, when reporting cases of violence against women the news reiterates patriarchal ideologies.

Maria Los and Sharon Chamard (1997) also contribute to the feminist literature by exposing the sensationalism in news reports about violence against women. They conducted a content analysis of newspaper articles in *The Toronto Star* (hereafter referred to as *Star*) and *The Globe and Mail* (hereafter referred to as *Globe*). They employ quantitative and qualitative analysis to uncover the sexist, misogynist, and misleading messages used by the news media in representing cases of violence against women. Los and Chamard (1997) note that sexual violence can be endlessly exploited for its “titillating value, its crypto-pornographic quality and its sexist slant” (294). They demonstrate that the selective “truth” in media representation is a “negotiated process... which preserves and reproduces the knowledge hierarchy of society” (296). Dominant male-centered voices and economic interests are more important than sharing “the truth” about cases of violence against women. Unfortunately, the result of prioritizing men’s position in commentary about violence against women, as well as excluding women’s voices, perpetuate patriarchal discourses and relegates women’s and feminist voices to the margins where “the authority of feminist voices [is] undermined by the tendency to portray them as biased, emotional, and incoherent” (322, 311).

Los and Chamard (1997) examine how portrayals of women who have been victimized by male violence typically contain familiar themes in newspaper articles. Women's experiences are rarely central to media reports, which marginalize the victim's side of the story. Thus, the victim is usually not represented or more specifically, women's comments are banned from being reported. However, men's side of the story is regularly explored and given space in news articles (308).

Los and Chamard (1997) observe that the *Star* and the *Globe* both rely more heavily on male perspectives than female ones in rape cases. The newspapers both present questionable, sexist, and at times misogynist statements made by male perpetrators as well as male judges who sat on rape cases (309). The analysis of both newspapers in this work fails to challenge sexist views in rape cases, let al. one provide a balanced view of the rapes, that is one where women's voices are heard and valued. In both the *Star* and *Globe*, Los and Chamard (1997) observe that "there was an unusual amount of media focus on the ambiguous interaction between [a woman] and her alleged assailant and on her reputation" (314). Their analysis reveals that the media rely heavily on patriarchal dichotomies, positioning women and men against each other with women as subordinate to men.

Los and Chamard (1997) explain that press reports dealing with sexual assault cases disqualify women's presence and voice and so give only a partial view (of any case) (310). They explain how the newspapers blame women for sexual attacks; they are seen only through the male gaze in media reports about violence against women and are present only as victims who are frightened, passive, and the focus of random attacks.

When presented as active, women are seen as causing or increasing the probability of their own victimization (313, 319).

Los and Chamard contribute greatly to the literature about how violence against women is reported in national newspapers. Their analysis identifies and explains the problems associated with reporting violence against women in male-defined terms, and of using patriarchal discourses, because doing so excludes women's voices and women's experience of the violence perpetrated against them, making it seem as though sexual violence is a rarity which it is not. Los and Chamard help me to be critical of which/whose voices are prioritized in news coverage of violence against women and informs my feminist critical examination of the organization of news articles and the problematic representations of women, men and violence news coverage disseminates in dealing with cases of femicide.

Adrian Howe (1997) examines how violence against women is reported in the Australian daily, *The Age*. Howe (1997) analyzes the coverage of a three week series entitled "The War Against Women." Howe (1997), committed to a poststructuralist feminist approach, conducts a Foucauldian project whereby she explores how men's violence against women and children is represented and "put into discourse." Her interest is in the question of representation, in the issues of power and knowledge within media communications, how violence against women becomes a "human interest" story. In other words, she investigates, how it becomes news and how news discourses concerning violence against women are usually constructed through patriarchal and sexist descriptions of the violence men perpetrate against women (178). Howe (1997) criticizes the language used to describe acts of male violence, the men and women involved, the

size and placement of the articles, and the editorial and reader response to the coverage. She maintains that the representations themselves are violent and inseparable from the notion of gender as articulated in de Lauretis's *Technologies of Gender* (1987). Howe (1997) shows how representations of male violence against women perpetuate hegemonic, common-sense, positivistic, approaches to male violence. She states: "conventional approaches to sex and gender issues are devoid of an analytical framework or even a language that can express and face the issue, the issue of men's violence" (192).

Howe (1997) is also critical of the narrow definitions of "domestic violence" as physical violence by one married person or partner against the other, used in the newspaper coverage. This definition obscures the fact that the violence is usually perpetuated by men against women. Howe is critical of how *The Age's* coverage holds on to taken-for-granted categories of men, women and gender roles as fixed categories, and of the "tired, old, misogynist stereotypes" invoked in explanations of male violence (192). She also observes how the newspaper perpetuates, actually relies on, the notion that men lose control because women provoke them and women deserve the violence perpetrated against them.

Howe (1997) is critical of the newspaper's use of mixed messages. The newspaper's coverage, at times, relies on the expertise of feminist activists and professionals who are quoted about to the pervasiveness of sexist violence, however, non/anti-feminists are also quoted regularly by the newspaper, often within the same articles or within the series. The newspaper thus devalues their feminist experts in maintaining that domestic violence is abnormal, not regular (197); they minimize men's

responsibility for their acts of violence and perpetuate hegemonic representations of gendered relations, placing the blame for violence on women yet again (201).

Howe (1997) concludes by stating what is most disturbing about *The Age's* news coverage of cases of violence against women is the newspaper [the media,] appropriates feminist knowledge and then translates it into digestible material for a mainstream readership (202), which does not communicate the depth of how the way men's violence affects women. Therefore, the newspaper reiterates hegemonic, patriarchal, understandings of male violence against women which does not help or keep women safe from male aggression/violence.

In the examination of Canadian media, Debi Forsyth-Smith (1995) explores the way violence against women is covered in imperfect and problematic ways. Forsyth-Smith analyzes how specific newspaper articles deal with violence against women, by examining the organization of the newspaper articles' size, the language used to describe the male perpetrators' violence and the victimization of the female, and the criminal context of each specific case/occurrence of violence. She maintains that the media has only recently taken up the issue of violence against women and continues to provide an imperfect, problematic representation of violence against women. Forsyth-Smith (1995) argues that news coverage of violence against women is problematic because it represents cases of femicide as isolated events, as not indicative of the every day violence many women endure because of male violence. The news coverage of cases of violence against women is written in generally sensationalistic ways, which consequently further mystifies the problem by contributing to its invisibility and pervasiveness (56).

Forsyth-Smith (1995) focuses, on the media's use of problematic language. She explains the terms used for women and for cases of violence against women misname women's experiences and thus become part of the problem. Two examples of problematic language used by the press to explain gendered violence are "domestic violence," and "spousal abuse." Both fail to specify the gendered and intimate character of the social problem (60).

Forsyth-Smith (1995) offers a list of femicide cases which took place in Nova Scotia between 1989 and 1993, but acknowledges that it is difficult to find articles on femicide because it is not a category used by/listed in the Canadian news index (67). Forsyth-Smith's work explains the necessity of naming sexist, and lethal violent acts perpetrated against women as femicide because the lack of a term which recognizes these acts as part of a larger, systemic social problem, isolates each individual woman and the acts of violence perpetrated against her.

Forsyth-Smith (1995) argues that the treatment of violence against women in the news is incomplete and presented in a way that removes it from the context of the very structures of male power and violence that allow it to happen in the first place (70). Forsyth-Smith concludes that news reflections are flawed and ignorance is an ideological tool in news dissemination. She maintains that we must represent violence against women in a way that will help us to understand and change the world for the better (70).

Helen Benedict's (1992) analyzes how the press, specifically in New York City, covers sex crimes against women. Benedict (1992) maintains that the journalistic community is part of the cycle of injustice, where blaming and trapping the female victim of male sexual violence is the norm. Benedict's research, which included interviews with

journalists and analysis of the newspaper articles, lead her to conclude that the press perpetuates rather than debunks the “myths and misunderstandings” (vi) through habit and ignorance, covering the crimes perpetrated against women with bias and sometimes cruelty. Benedict’s research goals include challenging the pervasiveness of rape myths in news coverage and criticizing the habits of the (male-dominated) newsroom, in order to examine public attitudes toward women, sex and violence, and to elucidate the role the press plays in establishing or reinforcing patriarchal attitudes and gendered roles for men and women. Benedict (1992) shows how the press will cover crimes in certain ways based on pressure to sell papers; they “report what sells” (7).

Benedict (1992) maintains that the press both reflects and shapes public opinion; “it merely reinforces established opinions by mirroring them” (3). She explains how descriptions of women affect the public’s reaction to female victims of male violence. Benedict critically analyzes the sort of vocabulary used by reporters, and she examines the issues that were picked up by the newspapers and which were ignored; how the accused were treated; and above all how the victims were portrayed (5).

Benedict’s (1992) analysis shows how the press categorizes women who were victims of sex crimes through the use of rape/sexual myths by either describing women as either “virgin” or “vamp.” She explains how the news coverage of sex crimes not only focuses on violent crimes perpetrated by strangers but also represents women as innocent and “virgins” in such attacks. In these representations “virgins” are women who are pure and innocent. Their attackers are described as monsters or the crimes against them are explained as random and/or committed by insane men. The “vamp,” is a woman who provokes the assailant with her sexuality and thus is blamed for the sex crime (18, 19).

Benedict (1992) is critical of the language used by the press in their coverage of sex crimes and the myths perpetuated within these representations, because the language is gender biased. The words chosen by the press consistently represent women in sexualized, condescending, or infantilizing ways, which as Benedict explains rarely or never used in representations of men (20). She argues that the press's portrayals of the female sex crime victims are not only shaped by sexist and demeaning language and myths based in stereotypes and false assumptions, but by the view that the news media has of women in general. The media rely on the virgin/whore dichotomy and on patriarchal definitions of feminine subjectivities as passive, dependent, and indecisive (22). Benedict (1992) explains that women "fare badly at the hands of the press" because they are "pushed into subordinate roles as sex objects, wives, mothers, or crime victims; they have little opportunity to be portrayed as self-determining individuals" (23). Benedict (1992) concludes that the press coverage of sex crime perpetuates patriarchal and false narratives about women and that news reporters/editors force the crimes into proscribed shapes. "They do this through their choice of vocabulary, the slant of their leads, the material they choose to leave out or put in; and they often do it unconsciously" (24). Basically, as Benedict explains, the press represents violence against women by choosing "between lies" (24).

Kate Clark (1992) offers a critical analysis to the literature of news coverage and violence against women in her analysis of a British tabloid's treatment of sexual violence. In her work "The Linguistics of Blame: Representations of Women in *The Sun's* Reporting of Crime of Sexual Violence," Clark (1992) examines *The Sun's* reports that are, on one hand extremely gendered, and on the other, filled with gender-neutral phrases

such as “sexual violence,” and “spousal abuse” (206). Clark (1992) argues that the newspaper’s language subtly blames the women for their victimization. Clark explains her analysis as a way of “decodifying the language” included to lay bare to the patterns of blame (208).

Clark (1992) maintains that “all news items are processed through minds. They must always be subjective, therefore, conditioned by the ideology of the language user” (209). She explains this by showing how the newspaper reports use language in certain ways, and in fact reinterpret the information to fit the approach the paper wants to take in the coverage of the story. She examines cases of violence against women by using what she calls “naming analysis” and shows the range of forms through which something can be expressed (209), Clark analyzes how the victim and the attacker were portrayed by *The Sun*’s coverage.

Clark’s (1992) analysis shows that the male, the attacker in the case of sexual violence, is regularly reported as a monster, or a fiend. Men are often excused for the violence committed against a woman because she is reported as provoking the violence. The female victim is regularly represented through personal details. The female victim is labeled and not individualized; she is always reported in connection to her male abuser or killer and thus, is always subjugated to male dominance (210). Clark (1992) argues that the ways in which the victims are named reflects patriarchal viewpoints and use myths that are fraught with anti-woman attitudes (223).

Clark (1992) concludes by explaining that the British newspaper obscures the whole range of violent acts committed against women to the degree where it becomes impossible to ask why violence against women and girls occurs so regularly in society

(224). She states that *The Sun* continually vilifies the female victim and relies on the myth of “sex fiend” for the male perpetrator in order to position him as external to normal society, thus reinforcing that it is male strangers who are the men to be feared, when this is far from the norm. Clark’s analysis shows how the newspaper coverage and the specific language chosen for the representations of male violence against women help to maintain the patriarchal status quo.

The feminist analyses of Sev’er, Meyers, Los and Chamard, Howe, Forsyth-Smith, Benedict, and Clark explain why news coverage about violence against women is problematic in its representation and how it demonstrates a subjective, patriarchal understanding of violence instead of examining factual analyses about women’s victimization within patriarchal societies. I will show that by using a feminist theoretical framework, one similar to those found in the works described above, one is able to view newspaper discourses concerning cases of violence against women, specifically femicide, as sexist and as representing patriarchal power structures that dominate our understanding of male-female relations, gendered subjectivities, and ignore women’s pain, suffering and, in some cases, deaths.

Isolating Feminist Literature about News Coverage and the “Montreal Massacre”

I have chosen to focus on the information pertaining to the “Montreal massacre” at this point because it has greatly affected how violence against women is discussed and presented in the Canadian national news media. The “Montreal massacre” has been the topic of many academic works; how to understand Marc Lépine’s actions have become the focus of a large amount of scholarly work, like that of Russell and Radford (1992), Forsyth-Smith (1995), Hui Kyong Chun (1999), and others like, Meyers (1997), and

Haskell and Randall (1998). News coverage of the femicidal event also garnered a great deal of attention. I have chosen to examine a number of feminist responses to the coverage of the “Montreal massacre” because I feel time needs to be taken to consider such responses, as Lépine’s mass femicide caused many feminist scholars to write about how violence against women is recognized in Canadian society, and elsewhere.

The coverage of the “Montreal massacre” was vast and the articles written were numerous. Because of this I feel it is necessary to consider how feminists reacted to the news coverage of Lépine shooting of 14 women. I specifically analyze the responses to the newspaper coverage of the “Montreal massacre” because many feminists in Canada reacted to the media’s coverage of Lépine’s femicidal violence as it ignored Lépine acts as sexist and as contributing to the cultural, systemic misogyny of patriarchal, Western, societies. I will therefore, focus attention on how the coverage of the “Montreal massacre” affected feminist research in the realm of violence against women, how it changed the ways in which we speak of violence against women and also how the “Montreal massacre” was conceptualized and represented by the news media.

Introducing the three narratives that functioned as explanations for Lépine’s motivation behind the killing of 14 women is essential as these narratives were found throughout the coverage and became highly politicized.

Hui Kyong Chun (1999) conducted a critical examination of the news coverage of Lépine’s femicide in her work “Unbearable Witness: Toward a Politics of Listening.” She found three specific explanations of Lépine’s motivation. The first narrative explained Lépine’s murderous act as resulting from Lépine being insane, sick, and delusional; that the crime was a random act of violence and that the gender of his 14

victims was incidental. The second narrative presented Lépine as an insane victim, assuming that he acted violently because he was a victim of child abuse and was venting his anger. The third narrative consisted of a feminist explanation: that Lépine killed because he felt threatened by women. This explanation garnered support from those who believed Lépine's violence resulted from deep rooted sexism and misogyny (115, 116). I rely on each of these narratives explained by Hui Kyong Chun (1999) to explain how the newspaper articles that will be critically analyzed in this thesis conceptualized Lépine's violence. All three narratives found in the newspaper discourses will be explained further following the discussion of feminist reactions to the news coverage of Lépine mass femicide. Others such as, Russell and Radford (1992), Forsyth-Smith (1995), and Meyers (1997), have also argued that sexism and misogyny were the root cause behind Lépine's killing of 14 women at the École Polytechnique.

Explaining how feminists responded to this "mass murder" illustrates how essential and useful a feminist interpretation is, because such an interpretation encourages the critical examination of the events of December 6th 1989 as an example of femicide, which takes into account the gendered nature of the violent act.

I feel it is necessary that I offer an overview of the research surrounding the media coverage of the "Montreal massacre" as well as the narratives produced by the coverage which attempted to explain Lépine's actions and motivation in order to show how feminist scholars before me criticized and challenged the news coverage of the "Montreal massacre."

Feminist Research and the “Montreal Massacre”

Numerous feminist scholars who have written about femicide and representations of violence against women in the media have related their work to the “Montreal massacre.” Russell and Caputi (1992) introduce their chapter “Femicide: Sexist Terrorism against Women” by discussing the events of December 6th 1989. They examine the connection between women’s unequal status, the ubiquitous fear women feel from the threat of male violence (being violated or killed), and Lépine’s lethal actions. Lépine felt threatened by women, they explain. He feared that women were taking the job he felt was rightfully his, therefore, he felt he had reason to commit his misogynist act of mass murder. Russell and Caputi (1992) state, “Lépine felt humiliated (“laughed at”) by women he defined as “feminists” because they had entered traditional male territory. His response to the erosion of white male exclusivity and privilege was lethal. It was also eminently political” (13). Lépine committed the femicidal act with the political intent of killing feminists specifically, but also of killing any woman attempting to enter the traditional male-bastion of engineering because these women’s lives were expendable.

Russell and Caputi (1992) assess Lépine’s killing of 14 women as representative of the constant threat of male violence that exists in patriarchal societies. They explain that women’s fear of, and the threat of, male violence is justified as examples of women being killed, abused and harmed by male intimates or strangers is an every day reality in our Western culture. Woman-killing is a political and gendered act that keeps women subordinate to men. This subordination of women contributes to, and results in, continued male violence against women; male dominance and oppression can become

lethal and the fear of male violence is perpetuated in unequal representations of violence against women in news coverage.

Patriarchal oppression of women is communicated and maintained in many ways, whether it is through the division of labour, the lack or absence of childcare, and the ever present “glass ceiling.” There are many examples, but none is as systematically final as femicide. Femicide and male violence against women in all its forms, including the threat of violence, is an act of power and dominance over women. Meyers (1997) explains that Lépine’s choice of victim “reflects the misogyny being supported in the culture” (11). Russell and Caputi (1992) affirm this; “Lépine’s murders were hate crimes targeting victims by gender, not race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation... the goal of violence against women – whether conscious or not – is to preserve male supremacy” (14). Lépine’s specific choice of victim, the sentiments and the message he expressed, and his calculated plan of action all demonstrate the misogyny of this “mass murderer” but also the politics of his reasoning.

The Background

The numerous professionals and academics who commented on Lépine’s killing of 14 women, such as the criminologists and sociologists who study mass murder, as well as psychologists and psychiatrists, have described Lépine’s shooting at the École Polytechnique as a “mass murder.” Mass murder is described by Russell and Caputi (1992) as “a single crime that involves the killing of a number of people,” and “is less often directed exclusively at women and so is not usually interpreted as femicide” (11). The “mass murderer/mass murder” terminology was regularly applied to the events of December 6th because of the number of people killed. However, to apply the label “mass

murderer” to Lépine obscures the sexism inherent in his crime and the misogyny behind his motive. It is my contention that to describe Lépine as a mass murderer (without applying a gender analysis) ignores the gendered nature of his killings, that the fact that only women were killed and that he only wanted to kill women, but it also places a label on Lépine which allows room for thinking about him as pathological, to imagine that his violence was random and that there was no explanation for his fury except for insanity. The mass femicide of 14 women committed by Lépine “is a notable case of femicidal mass murder” (11) according to Russell and Caputi, and should always be considered as such.

After the violent events of December 6th, the Montreal Urban Community (MUC) police launched an investigation into what happened, that centered on the life of Marc Lépine. Hui Kyong Chun (1999) explains that the police released a brief biography of Lépine; they spoke of how he had no known psychiatric history and also alluded to the suicide note that was found on his body where Lépine explained his reasons for committing the “massacre.” However, on December 11th the police, along with the chief coroner, announced that they would not be investigating the crime any further and no public inquest would be called. The police had made the decision not to investigate the crime or hold an inquest in to the deaths of the 14 women because it would rehash “the gruesome and sickening aspects of the tragedy” and “would mean more pain and suffering for the families” (112). Thus, once the Montreal Police had refused to hold an inquest, “it appeared that the crisis of truth and evidence resulting from the massacre would only be addressed through the media, through a mediatization of the event” (Hui Kyong Chun 1999, 114). This mediatization indisputably occurred and not without

perpetuating troubling, problematic and sensationalist messages and discourses, discourses that reiterated patriarchal themes and included sexist language.

The Coverage

It is here that I turn to the newspaper coverage that grew out of the events of the December 6th shooting of 14 women. In consulting the coverage from four Canadian newspapers (*The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Montreal Gazette*, and *The National Post*), I will show that the representations of the “massacre,” the victims, and of the perpetrator, Marc Lépine put forth by each newspaper, were disseminated in multiple, disconcerting, ways. These representations presented patriarchal discourses, sexist or problematic language, and offered confusing and mixed messages. The problematic discourses are those that reiterate and reinforce patriarchal themes and trends. Patriarchal discourses found in newspaper coverage perpetuates male-dominated language, invoke essentialist and sexist understandings of the perpetrator and the victims. I will critically analyze the discourses within newspaper coverage because they have the ability to perpetuate troubling, false, and unjust accounts of what occurred, and can include narratives that hide the misogynist reasoning behind the shooting of the 14 women killed by Lépine. I will problematize the implicit themes and language used in the newspaper coverage that divert attention from the actual occurrence, that being mass femicide.

Forsyth-Smith (1995) explains that the “Montreal massacre” prompted an increase in the news coverage of violence against women, and incited more news about women in general. She explains,

from a national perspective, the coverage of the Montreal massacre comprised the majority of the coverage in broadcast media and television news in particular. It composed the largest percentage of their coverage on women’s issues for the entire year at about 15 percent (57).

The “Montreal massacre” affected how the country’s general public acknowledged and discussed issues of violence and violence against women in particular. Hui Kyong Chun (1999) explains that after the “Montreal massacre” the term “violence against women” emerged as a category in the Canadian News Index, which was “a new, comprehensive, gendered name for abuse that was formerly hidden under the label domestic violence” (118). Unfortunately, “domestic violence” is still used regularly in newspaper representations of cases of violence against women and of cases of femicide to describe the sexist violence which most often takes place in the privacy of the woman’s home. This violence is also regularly described as “family violence,” which obscures and ignores the gendered qualities of male violence against women and children.

The shooting of 14 women on December 6th changed Canada and how it dealt with, related to, and acknowledged the regular occurrence of violence against women. The Canadian government eventually established a Royal Commission to investigate violence against women, and declared December 6th an official day of commemoration for female victims of male violence (Hui Kyong Chun 1999, 113, 114). However positive and progressive these commemorations and acknowledgements were the newspaper coverage of the lethal violence committed against 14 women in Montreal was far from progressive, it reiterated problematic and sexist discourses and language. In instances when feminist interpretations were included, the newspaper articles would regularly counter such arguments with backlash views which opposed feminist interpretations with sexist statements.

Newspaper coverage of femicide cases, I argue, reiterates patriarchal understandings of violence, women, and the men that perpetrate misogynist and femicidal

acts. Forsyth-Smith (1995) explains the problem with a great deal of the coverage of cases of violence against women is that “there is so much worry and attention paid to opposing sides of the issue that the substance of the issue is rarely, if ever, covered” (57).

The coverage of cases of violence against women and femicides in the newspapers perpetuate and reinforce patriarchal discourses which rely on stereotypes of women, men, and safety, and routinely include narratives that hide the gendered aspects of these crimes. Unearthing, bringing attention to, and problematizing the patriarchal discourses that were used in the coverage of the “Montreal massacre” demonstrate why an analysis of this coverage is necessary. I feel that it is fundamental to acknowledge the misogyny of the December 6th 1989 shootings and the culture of misogyny that is often both concealed and reinforced within coverage which prioritizes patriarchal explanations of the femicidal crime.

An example of patriarchal discourses found in newspaper coverage that disseminate myths and stereotypes about instances of violence against women is the discourse that reinforces “stranger danger.” This discourse, according to Lori Haskell and Melanie Randall (1998), is regularly used in coverage of rape and sexual assault cases (114). The “stranger danger” discourse, they explain, is patriarchal because it encourages women to think that an attack by a stranger is more probable than an attack by someone known to them. This discourse denies the degree to which male intimates abuse, assault, harass, and kill their female partners, therefore communicating the false message that women should and can feel safe in the privacy of their homes, where in fact far more crimes against women are perpetrated by intimates than by male strangers on the street (114). The “stranger-danger” discourse is regularly communicated by newspaper

reporters who focus more attention on stranger related crimes than on crimes perpetrated by people known to their victim, although the latter occurs more frequently. The considerable extent of coverage dedicated to Marc Lepine's "massacre" of 14 women who he did not know shows the large amount of attention paid to violence perpetrated by strangers and thus illustrates the regular use of the "stranger danger" discourse in the coverage of the "Montreal massacre." The amount of coverage dedicated to the "Montreal massacre" is an example of how the press prioritize the risk of stranger danger over the danger of intimate male violence against women.

Haskell and Randall (1998) explain that crimes against women perpetrated by strangers receive more attention by the media than crimes perpetrated by a man the victim knows well or intimately. An example of the unbalanced attention paid to stranger violence is seen in the lack of coverage of intimate partner femicides or abuse and assault caused by a family member. Haskell and Randall (1998) explain,

murders of women by their partners, even when they are reported, seldom receive the focus and attention that homicides by strangers receive. Perhaps the murder of a woman by her partner is not seen as a threat to other women. It is viewed as a privatized event... Murders of women by strangers, on the other hand, although relatively rare occurrences, are perceived as random and uncontrollable, meaning that any woman could be a possible victim (143)

The message that "stranger danger" is a random and uncontrollable event was frequently communicated by the news media in their coverage of the "massacre" at the École Polytechnique. Haskell and Randall (1998) continue their argument by explaining that intimate femicide is a crime that occurs more regularly than it is reported:

The numbing regularity of cases where a man kills his wife, girlfriend or ex-partner, however, seldom receive more than a few lines in the newspaper and certainly cause [very little or] no resounding public outcry. Women's fear is largely socially created by a society that gives front page news coverage to stories of women being stalked, preyed upon, raped and murdered by strangers (144).

Troubling and patriarchal narratives such as this one relate not only to the coverage of the “Montreal massacre” but also to the number of intimate femicides covered problematically in news coverage, that can go unacknowledged by newspapers which (supposedly) strive toward disseminating information in the best interests of the public.

Forsyth-Smith (1995) explains that news coverage of violence against women cases, and the “Montreal massacre” in particular, rely on extreme detail and focus on the “most sensational end of the spectrum” (58). “The whole range of violence has not really been given substantive coverage in terms of the degree and type of violence that women experience in their lives” (58). The use of sensationalist rhetoric, the lack of accurate portrayals of the violence women actually experience in their daily lives, and the inclusion of sexist language in the newspaper media results in representing cases of violence against women and cases of femicide improperly, problematically, and in a fashion that confuses the extent and high degree of male violence against women. This perpetuates false and sexist messages about the male violence many women endure. Russell and Caputi (1992) explain that the “culture of misogyny” is not only found in the male perpetrators’ motive for killing a woman but also in the press coverage and patriarchal institutions that structure how cases of femicide are represented in news coverage. They state, “misogyny not only motivates violence against women but distorts the press coverage of such crimes as well. Femicide, rape, and battery are variously ignored or sensationalized in the media” (15). The problems lie in the misogyny within the coverage, and implicitly in the institutions that perpetuate sexist language and patriarchal discourses.

Three Attempts at an Explanation

Possible explanations for why the “Montreal massacre” occurred dominated the coverage of the violent event. After reading a number of articles about Lépine’s “massacre” of 14 women, it was clear to me that specific narrative threads stood out as explanations for the killings. The multiple newspaper articles analyzed, conveyed messages that fall within the three separate narratives, as explained/established by Hui Kyong Chun (1999) which I identified earlier but will explain in more detail now. The three interpretations that attempted to explain Lépine’s motive for killing 14 women explained by Hui Kyong Chun are as follows:

The First Narrative

The first narrative explanation coincided with the Montreal police’s interpretation, of Lépine as a mad killer, that he was insane and his crime was random. This explanation garnered people’s attention and relayed the news media’s first assumption about Lépine’s violent event. “According to this explanation,” states Hui Kyong Chun (1999), “there could be no political motivation behind the killings since an insane subject could not act rationally and thus politically.” Within this explanation “there could be no answer to the question, Why did this happen” (115)? Hui Kyong Chun (1999) states that this narrative perpetuated the notion that “the fact that all of Lépine’s victims were female was incidental: it was unfortunate that these particular young women died, but any group could have been targeted” (115). This narrative silenced and/or ignored Lépine’s political motivation and rendered the sexism of his act, the misogyny, invisible to most people.

Positing Lépine as pathological, as crazy, as a “kook” or a “nut” (which were references regularly quoted by reporters in the newspaper coverage of the “massacre”) diverts attention from the female victims and denies that Lépine’s motivation was to kill (only) women. The coverage relied heavily on the narrative that Lépine was mad and that his act was random. It is essential to acknowledge that within this narrative the discourses being reinforced and perpetuated are patriarchal, they obscure Lépine’s misogynist motivation and posit the female victims as helpless, and innocent. Because they were victims of a “mad” shooting spree these women could not be discussed except in terms of their innocence and Lépine could only be/was continually represented only in terms of being unbalanced and sick. The descriptions found within this narrative render the crime and the criminal, according to Meyers (1997), beyond the pale of acceptable human behaviour (60) and thus beyond explanation.

Russell and Caputi (1992) refer to the first narrative’s reliance on Lépine as pathological by explaining that the “fixation on the pathology of perpetrators of violence against women only obscures the social control function of these acts” (14). Russell and Caputi are critical of the media’s focus on the individualistic and excusing explanations of Lépine’s actions and instead relate his killing of women to systemic sexism and the patriarchal control that perpetuates such attitudes. Meyers (1997) is also critical of the “individual pathology” interpretation and explains how the news media created sympathy for Lépine by attempting to explain what happened in terms of Lépine’s unhappy personal life, by characterizing him as “sick” and even blaming his mother (11).

Women are killed by male partners, and ex-partners, more often than they are by male strangers such as Lépine. Therefore, the difference between the “Montreal

massacre” and private or intimate femicides is only in the number of victims killed at the time of the crime and the space in which it occurred. All femicide, including this mass femicide (which has, this time been labeled the “Montreal massacre”), is political and gendered and should be acknowledged as such.

Meyers (1997) explains that the news reinforces the image of male violence against women as a result of “individual pathology or deviance.” She states that male violence tends to be and is usually,

related only to the particular circumstances of those involved and unconnected to the larger structure of patriarchal domination and control. This mirage of individual pathology denies the social roots of violence against women and relieves the larger [patriarchal] society of any obligation to end it (66).

The Second Narrative

The second narrative that attempted to explain the events of December 6th and the “mind” behind the mass murder involved portraying Lépine, as explained by Hui Kyong Chun (1999), as “insane, but as an insane victim” (115). Throughout the newspaper profiles of Lépine’s, his childhood and “obsessive” personality were described. Hui Kyong Chun (1999) states,

Numerous articles describing the childhood of Marc Lépine cited the testimony of child psychologists to show how the physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his Algerian father combined with his steady diet of war movies had shaped him into an antifeminist mass murderer. As a victim of abuse, it was argued; Lépine could not help but repeat the violence around him (115).

This narrative absolved Lépine’s guilt for the shootings of 14 women, the specificity of the victim’s identities vanished, and the explanation that the shooting was a random act of violence was preserved. Hui Kyong Chun (1999) maintains that “once again, any larger responsibility for the “Montreal massacre” disappeared, for, as the product of an

aberrant family, Lépine's actions were comprehensible but in no way representative of Canadian society" (115).

This narrative commits to the communication of patriarchal, essentialist, and dichotomizing messages. First, this narrative invokes a discourse of antifeminism: it assumes that all men who are abused by their fathers could potentially become antifeminist killers like Lépine because his victimization caused him to act violently. Implicit in this message is the idea that Lépine's mother did not protect him from his father's abuse and, therefore, women are to blame and so he chose to kill women. Second, it relies on the idea that Lépine's obsession with war films contributed to his insanity and hatred of feminists. Lépine had a history of liking entertainment that was based in violence. He liked war games, violent video games and war movies. This "obsession" he had with violent media, however, is shared by many young men who watch war films and violent movies and is not problematized in discussions of Lépine's character, reinforcing and perpetuating the construction of masculine subjectivities as aggressive and violent. This discussion also leaves unquestioned the constant consumption of highly violent films and television programs regularly watched by large audiences, especially when geared toward men and male youth. Third, this narrative racializes Lépine's family in citing the abuse of his Algerian father and perpetuates the idea that only "bad people" come from broken homes with ethnic parents. Finally, this narrative is implicitly connected to patriarchy's constant refusal to accept male violence as connected to men's fear and their unwillingness to question and/or challenge male power and oppression over women. Excusing Lépine's actions because he was a victim,

explaining the killings as “he could not help but repeat the violence,” ignores the sexist reasoning and misogynist motivation behind the “Montreal massacre.”

The Third Narrative

The third interpretation of the “Montreal massacre” stressed a feminist interpretation of the shootings of 14 women at the École Polytechnique. This narrative received the least coverage and the most backlash. Similar to my own critical feminist interpretation of the “Montreal massacre,” this feminist narrative as described by Hui Kyong Chun (1999) explains the “massacre” as “both comprehensible and reprehensible” as it is “representative of the violence inherent in patriarchal society, [it was] an intense, spectacular instance of a routine event – the killing of women by men” (116). This explanation directed attention to the sexism inherent in Lépine’s actions but also to (all) the sexism within patriarchal societies. The feminist narrative emphasized the “premeditated nature of the massacre” (116). Feminist activists attempted to explain Lépine’s actions as demonstrative of misogyny.

The feminist interpretation challenged the first and second narratives which reinforced Lépine as an “insane victim.” They criticized the lack of public acknowledgement of the reasons why Lépine did what he did, and which had been explained by Lépine himself in his suicide note which would later be published (Hui Kyong Chun 1999). In the small amount of newspaper coverage dedicated to the feminist interpretation, some space was allotted to a counter-discourse, where feminists, women, and men advocated for and challenged people to question the specificities of the gendered violence. The main message of the feminist narrative provided in the coverage was that this violence is linked to all other forms of violence against women and that men

(white, affluent men particularly) need to begin questioning their privilege and their part in the perpetuation of sexism and violence against women. As essential as the message was and continues to be, however, this narrative received a great deal of angered responses and backlash against feminists and feminism in general. I will show that many articles focused attention on negative representations of feminist activism. Feminists were vilified for being too extreme and radical in their interpretations of December 6th. Therefore, the feminist messages were overpowered by negative, demeaning press coverage. The newspaper coverage reinforced that the feminist explanation was marginal to common held beliefs about what occurred on December 6th 1989 and that men on a whole can not be blamed for the violence of one man.

The feminist challenge to the patriarchal discourses reiterated in the news coverage, and the attempts made to recognize Lépine's actions as based in misogyny, actually coincided with Lépine's own reasoning as spelled out in his suicide note. He explained in his suicide note that he wanted to kill feminists. This narrative did not receive as much attention as the madman discourse and when it did receive attention it was posited as radical, as opportunistic and as an overreaction. I support the feminist narrative that came out as an explanation for the shooting of 14 women; however, I feel that this narrative could invoke a greater understanding and acknowledgement of Lépine's misogyny if it were framed within the language of femicide. The use of the term "femicide" allows me to problematize the language used to describe the event, the patriarchal discourses implicit in the coverage and it also makes possible the politicization of male lethal violence against women.

Feminist Literature Pertaining to Intimate Femicide

The “Montreal massacre” brought about a violent end to the year 1989. Since then, Canada has not since seen such an instance of sexist violence in a public space in terms of the number of victims, however, women in Canada are still killed every year by male intimates, friends and ex-partners. A single woman’s death should be considered on equal terms in our understanding of woman-killing as the 14 women who were killed on December 6th 1989. It remains true that femicide most commonly affects women in intimate relationships. Intimate femicide, according to Gartner et al. (1998) is understood as “the killing of women by intimate partners, including legal spouses, common-law partners and boyfriends, both current and estranged” (152). Most often women are killed when they make the effort to leave their abusive male partners and the violence that they have endured. Women who attempt to leave abusive relationships are at their most vulnerable to becoming the victims of femicide as estranged husbands or boyfriends demonstrate their loss of power over their wives or girlfriends through misogynist murder. Gartner et al. (1998) explain that the separation of the woman from her (usually abusive) husband “appears to be a risk factor for intimate femicide, since women who were separated from their partners were greatly over-represented among victims of intimate femicide” (158). Femicide will continue to occur in a society – like ours – if we continue to deny and ignore male dominance and oppression over women as women continue to be killed by their male partners, estranged or otherwise, whether the news media brings attention to this sexist and hateful crime or not. Patriarchal societies benefit from the subordination of women through violence.

I chose to focus on the femicides of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis⁷ because they are each representative of the occurrence of intimate femicide in Canada, where their male intimate partners reacted to their female partner's departure from the relationship with violence, hatred, and gunshots. Throughout the analyses of the femicides of Arlene May and Gillian Hadley by their male intimate partners, I will include the terminology "femicidal suicide" to describe the violent and predominantly misogynist event which took their lives. The term "femicidal suicide" is explained by Russell (2001) as "men – mostly husbands and significant others – [who] kill themselves after murdering their partners" (37, 38). Russell explains that "the men killed their female partners because their partners planned to leave or refused to reconcile" (38), and this is indicative of the acts perpetrated by Randy Iles and Ralph Hadley against their estranged female partners.

While the coverage related to these three femicides, the number of articles and time spent covering the crime "story," was far less than that devoted to the "Montreal massacre," I feel that analyzing the coverage of this more common form of femicide is essential to this project and to providing a critical view of the coverage of intimate femicides on the whole. After explaining my criticisms of the coverage of the "Montreal massacre," I examine the coverage of the more common occurrence of intimate femicide, because it indicates the actual, every day, reality of the violence men commit against women than does coverage about violence perpetrated by strangers.

⁷ In the chapters about the femicidal suicides of Arlene May and Randy Iles, I will refer to Arlene May as "May" and Randy Iles as "Iles," as these two people do not share the same last name. In the chapter dedicated to the femicidal suicide of Gillian Hadley by her husband Ralph Hadley, I will refer to Gillian Hadley as Gillian because she did share her killers' last name and the same style will remain true with Rosella Centis and her killer and husband, Joseph Centis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND EXPLANATION OF CHAPTERS

The literature on violence against women is a vast collection created through multiple disciplines ranging from sociology to health care, philosophy to self defense training. The concepts specific to femicide have been generated within a feminist project to theorize and quantify woman-killing in a patriarchal society.

In this chapter I will examine the methodologies used by feminist scholars writing about how the media present violence against women. I will then examine how I have approached my subject through critical discourse analysis and feminist critical linguistics. I will explain my choice of methods and their advantages. This chapter also describes how I collected my data.

Feminist scholars who have approached the subject of media coverage of violence against women have greatly contributed to the criticism of media discourses and the media system's hierarchical (and patriarchal) organization. These criticisms relate to women's lack of involvement in news production, but more specifically, with how women are portrayed in news coverage of cases of violence against women. The news media generate social knowledge, and thus, help to create and affect what the reader understands about women in cases of violence. The research methods used in the studies tend to be quantitative methods, such as content analysis. Other studies draw from surveys that measure how readers understand what they have read and what the news is saying about the issues. Other, more qualitative analyses, involve text, narrative, and discourse analyses. Like Meyers (1997) and Los and Chamard (1997), I will employ a feminist discourse analysis of news coverage concerning violence against women to

demonstrate how sexist and misogynist messages continue to be used within news reports of male violence against women.

Discourse Analysis of News Coverage of Violence Against Women

A common methodology used by feminist scholars writing about news coverage of violence against women is discourse analysis. Approaching media coverage of violence against women involves a critical analysis of the ways the news represent cases of male violence against women (Benedict (1992); Forsyth-Smith (1995); Kozol (1995); Los and Chamard (1997); Meyers (1997), and Berns (2001)). These researchers have analyzed and problematized the patriarchal and problematic discourses perpetuated by male-centered language used to explain violence against women in the news. Their research reveals the sexist, stereotypical, and at times misogynist messages used in the print and television media when covering cases of violence against women. Their use of discourse analysis “go[es] beyond using content analysis” considering how fiction and news coverage of domestic violence [her terminology] does not “typically challenge the status quo” (Kozol 1995, 647).

The goal of many critical examinations of news coverage of violence against women, as Berns explains, is to identify discursive strategies that blame women for violence committed against them (Berns 2001, 264). Meyers (1997) explains that discourse analysis allows an analyst to be critical of problematic discursive strategies and assists the analyst in “read[ing] between the lines to expose implicit meanings that are obscured at the surface level of reading” (14).

Many of the feminist researchers conducting discourse analysis on news coverage of violence against women search extensively through news databases to collect their

data, for example, Forsyth-Smith (1995) made use of the Canadian News Index (now the Canadian Index) to understand how violence against women was categorized in the news database, but also to find articles specific to a search on male violence against women. These works deal specifically with the problems of sexist language. They find that the language used by news media reports of cases of violence against women tends to obscure the gendered nature of the violence instead describing it as gender-neutral, or in a framework that blames women for their victimization. The research methodologies of discourse, text, and narrative analysis can expose how media discourses reinforce patriarchal and oppressive ideologies and allow us to find implicit, sexist meanings within news discourses.

Discourse Analysis and Feminist Critical Linguistics

In this research, I have employed a synthesis of two qualitative research methods: discourse analysis and feminist critical linguistics. I will thus be employing what many discourse and linguistic analysts identify as critical discourse analysis, CDA, and for my purposes what I will call feminist critical discourse analysis. This approach enabled me to identify dominant sexist, gendered, mythological or misogynist newspaper messages, as well as problematic mixed messages⁸ in newspaper articles dealing with cases of femicide. The literature previously discussed exemplifies how my work fits into feminist and media criticism, while the method chosen allowed me to uncover and identify problematic representations that the news media perpetuate in their coverage of cases of femicide and violence against women.

⁸ I understand “mixed messages” to mean newspaper articles which include messages that present both a feminist and progressive, or counter-discourse, then contradicting it and undermining feminist themes with a narrative that is based in patriarchal or sexist messages within the same newspaper article.

Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

A feminist understanding of discourse analysis is essential to explain at this point.

“Discourse analysis,” according to Maggie Humm (1995), relates to “[T]he study of patterns and rules controlling language and representations used in film, literature, pictures and texts.” Foucault (1990 in Humm 1995, 66) describes discourse analysis as the investigation of the power structures and assumptions underpinning particular language practices, for example, the discourse of sexuality. A feminist analysis of discourse highlights how dominant social discourses, or discursive practices, misshape women’s identities and become “truth.” Deborah Cameron describes discourse analysis in her work *Working with Spoken Discourse* (2001), as an umbrella term that allows for considerable variation in subject matter and approach. It can deal with socially situated language use in any channel or medium (7). Cameron explains discourse analysis as being concerned with what and how language communicates when it is used purposefully in particular contexts, thus the focus of the analysis is the communicative purposes of the text or interaction (13).

Discourse analysis pays attention not only to what people say and do not say, but also how they say it. This offers insight into the way people understand things and is less about collecting facts than about studying interpretive processes (13). An important aspect of discourse analysis, and essential to my own research method, is that it enables analysis of the words we use that may not be our own, that the words are not original or unique to any one individual. “Discourse analysis can be seen as a method for investigating the ‘social voices’ available to the people whose talk (and text) analysts collect” (15). Analyzing discourse to understand social behaviours, knowledges, and

power structures is essential to understanding how patriarchal discourses are used in society.

This methodology, according to Teun van Dijk (1988) who specializes in the philosophy and processes of discourse and critical discourse analysis, can involve analysis of language, cognition, and interaction. It can reveal underlying personal and social patterns, it can reveal the reproduction of dominant ideologies, and can reveal society's predominant assumptions, values, myths, and stereotypes, and it can also uncover underlying meanings and ideologies (176, 180).

For the purpose of this thesis, I will explain the specific forms of discourse analysis that I have chosen to employ in analyzing newspaper reports of femicide cases. Critical discourse analysis allows a critique of the social meaning and significance of language. Critical discourse analysis (herein referred to as CDA) emerges from critical linguistics and critical social theory. Critical social theory has its roots in the works and theories of cultural theorists like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Critical discourse analysts are critical of traditional ways of thinking and talking about reality, subjectivity and knowledge (Cameron 2001, 50).

CDA understands reality, including aspects of power and gender, as being constructed in and through discourse; acts and practices of speaking and writing. CDA "focuses on how reality is constructed by analyzing actual examples closely, and, importantly, by paying attention not only to their content but also their form" (Cameron 2001, 51). Cameron explains that CDA is concerned with "the hidden agenda," the way that reality is constructed and shaped by various social forces (123). CDA, according to Stefan Titscher, Michael Meyer, Ruth Wodak and Eva Vetter (2000) in their work

Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis, involves studying the ideologies and social mechanisms within discourse and critiques how ideologies “locate human beings in specific ways as social subjects” (145).

CDA is concerned with the “linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures” (Titscher et al. 2001, 146). This form of analysis studies power relations and power in discourse, it analyzes how society and culture are shaped by discourse and at the same time constitute discourse. CDA studies how language use is ideological by analyzing interpretation, reception and social effects of discourses, and it analyzes how discourses are historical and can only be understood in their social context (146). Critical discourse analysis espouses that “language is a form of social practice and attempts to make human beings aware of the reciprocal influences of language and social structures of which they are normally unaware” (147). The research conducted by CDA focuses primarily on language use in (social) organizations, and investigates their prejudices in general, and racism and sexism in particular (147). CDA can be used to analyze not only surface linguistic features but also what is *not* said. This analytic/methodological tool explores the hidden agenda of discourses, and what is presupposed as obvious or common sense (Cameron 2001, 128).

CDA has been used by discourse analysts to identify problematic language use, to identify myths, assumptions, values, and opinions being used in (for example) the media, and to uncover themes within texts that marginalize subordinate social groups. John Fiske (1994), for example, employs a critical discourse analysis as a way to dissect media coverage for its perpetuation of racism. He explains that discourse analysis:

relocates the whole process of making and using meanings from an abstracted structural system into particular historical, social, and political conditions.

Discourse, then, is language in use; language accented with its history of domination, subordination and resistance; language marked by the social conditions of its use and its users: It is politicized, power-bearing language employed to extend or defend the interests of its discursive community (3).

Therefore, CDA can be employed by discourse analysts to identify oppressive forces of power and the language used to perpetuate the marginalization of subordinated groups.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA can tackle issues of race, age, class, ability, and gender, however, it is not necessarily feminist. I feel it is necessary to add a feminist angle to CDA in order to interrogate the discourses used by the news media within the broader context of the patriarchal society in which we live. Therefore, I have included a specifically feminist approach to my critical discourse analysis, feminist critical linguistics. Adding this method to my feminist approach will allow me to identify and uncover sexist, misogynist, and oppressive discourses used in news representations of femicide and violence against women while also providing alternative language, such as “femicide,” and alternative ways to explain femicidal violence.

Susan Ehrlich’s (1995) chapter in *Changing Methods: Feminists Transforming Practice*, describes “Critical Linguistics as Feminist Methodology” as one approach to feminist critical discourse analysis. Feminist critical linguistics, according to Ehrlich, utilizes an approach to discourse and social meaning comparable to that of CDA. Feminist critical linguistics questions the assumptions made within language, it assumes that language is not neutral or transparent, especially when it concerns gender issues. Feminist critical linguistics is critical of language, seeing it as a “vision of reality that does not serve all of its speakers equally” (45). Ehrlich explains the necessity of being critical of the extent to which language “acts as an ideological filter on the world:

language, to some extent, shapes or constructs our notions of reality rather than labeling that reality in any transparent and straightforward way” (45). Feminist critical linguistics allows one to be critical of patriarchal constructs and social relations because it:

considers the extent to which language encodes a vision of social reality that may not serve the interests of certain groups of women... Rather than viewing language as a formal system at a level of abstraction that neutralizes social categories and distinctions, critical linguistics assumes that language is inextricably implicated in the socio-political systems and institutions in which it functions. Thus, the motivating principle behind critical linguistics is the investigation of the role of language in the reproduction of dominant ideologies (48).

This allows one to see, according to Ehrlich, that language encodes ideologies that are assumed to be neutral or unmarked. Dominant ideologies espouse “naturalization,” where speakers are unaware of the power relations and hierarchies influencing social and linguistic behaviour. Feminist critical linguistics explains and illuminates the non-neutrality of language and insists that much remains invisible in dominant discourses (48). A specific example of criticizing language regularly used in newspaper coverage of instances of male violence against women is the label of “domestic violence.” This terminology is gender-neutral and this leaves the male guilty of violence against his female partner invisible and his culpability in the act is ignored.

Both Ehrlich and Deborah Cameron (in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory, Second Edition*, 1992), espouse a feminist criticism of social and linguistic privilege (Ehrlich 1995, 48, Cameron 1992). The meaning and social relevance of language hinges on dominant discourses that privilege white, male elites and perpetuate sexist (and racist) beliefs and values, which are prevalent and pervasive in English language use. Ehrlich explains that a “feminist critique of language challenges the absolute hegemony of meanings as constituted by racist, sexist, and androcentric social values” (Ehrlich 1995,

50). The importance of feminist critical linguistics lies in finding and using alternative language that has the potential to be non-sexist, non-racist and also non-homophobic. It is also, according to Ehrlich, to “expose linguistic practices that are implicated in the maintenance and reproduction of dominant ideologies... Language can become the site for ideological struggle” (70).

Feminist linguistics must be utilized in conjunction with CDA in order to analyze how dominant patriarchal discourses affect communication and social meaning. A feminist CDA can “elucidate the non-neutrality of language, denaturalizing the somewhat invisible hierarchies and power relations embedded in our linguistic practices” (71). I intend to use a feminist CDA when interpreting newspaper articles dealing with cases of violence against women where femicide is the end result.

Methods Used in this Research

Using articles from national newspapers, *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, and highly-circulated “dailies,” *The Montreal Gazette*, or *The Toronto Star*, I demonstrate that the news media fail to acknowledge the gendered nature of women’s deaths. I argue that if the media were to use gender-specific terminology like “femicide” coverage of lethal forms of violence against women would point to the inequality women face in society and how this inequality is manifested in violent ways.

In this thesis I chronicle and interrogate the news coverage of four cases of femicide, beginning with the coverage of the 1989 “Montreal Massacre,” an event that lingers in the memory of most Canadians. I then focus my analysis on three intimate femicides, beginning with Randy Iles’s 1996 shooting of his girlfriend, Arlene May, in her home west of Collingwood, Ontario. This case is important because it was the first

case of femicide in Ontario to incite a public inquest into “domestic violence” leading to death. I then proceed with an analysis of the Hadley murder-suicide case. Ralph Hadley shot his estranged wife, Gillian, in June 2000 in their Pickering, Ontario, home after Gillian struggled to escape. The final case I analyze occurred in September 2001, in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Joseph Centis shot his wife Rosella Centis to death while she was pumping gas. Rosella Centis’s shooting was unfortunately witnessed by her daughter, who was sitting in the passenger seat of the van Centis was filling with gas.⁹

Analyzing the four cases of femicide involved collecting appropriate and applicable news articles of each case. Each newspaper I chose to consider that included articles about the femicide cases selected were analyzed, including *The National Post*’s anniversary coverage of the “Montreal massacre” which came ten years after the event (*The National Post* only began circulation in 1998.)

I collected newspaper articles that covered each femicide case through the use of the CBCA database, an archive of Canadian newspapers. Finding articles specific to each case was a multiple step process. The search for the appropriate articles involved combining key words with the subject (victim and perpetrator names) of each article. The key terms searched for ranged from, “murder and murder attempts”, to “murder-suicide”, to “domestic violence,” as well as searching for the specific dates when the femicides took place within each publication. Simply searching for “femicide” does not result in accessing all newspaper articles about women killed by their male intimate partners or male non-intimates because the media do not (tend to not) use the term.

⁹ I feel it is important to note that the number of children that witness their mothers being killed by their husbands, or male partners, is unfortunately very high in femicide cases.

Once the needed newspaper articles for each femicide case were found, accessing the articles required retrieving them from microfilm/microfiche. I printed out the articles necessary to my analysis, those related directly to the news coverage of each femicide case, from each newspaper I had chosen to examine. My critical feminist analysis of the coverage of the “Montreal massacre,” and the coverage of the intimate femicides of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis was conducted by means of collecting than organizing the newspaper articles about each case in chronological order. I made a list for each newspaper of the articles I collected. I then compiled a list of the articles I wanted to analyze, listing the titles, authors, and page location of the articles and decided which would be considered in my analysis and those that would not be analyzed based on my established criteria and categories of analysis (found in each chapter). I read each article approximately three times and highlighted the problematic, sexist, troubling and important sentences/quotations by following a checklist of discursive mechanisms, explained in the following pages of this chapter. I reproduced the necessary sentences/paragraphs and quotes from each of the newspaper articles that I anticipated to critically analyze by typing them out and then I categorized them according to topic and theme. Once the pertinent information was organized into my chapter’s analytic categories, I wrote out my feminist critical discourse analyses and conclusions about the messages, themes and discourses disseminated by the news media in their coverage of these events.

In viewing the particular articles covering the chosen femicide cases, I was able to see how the newspapers regarded the “worthiness” of reporting on and representing the gendered violence. This was seen by the amount of news space dedicated to the case, the

placement of the article in the newspaper, if illustrations/pictures were involved in the representation, and also the location of the article, the space provided to each article and headlines all shows the newspaper's perception of the importance of the case to the public. Benedict (1992) explains this by noting, "the fact that these crimes were so widely reported and therefore so frequently discussed make them particularly useful as vehicles of public opinion about sex roles" (4).

Comparable to the method employed by Meyers (1997), I applied a feminist critical discourse analysis to the "discursive mechanisms – topics, overall schematic forms, local meanings, style, and rhetoric, for example – involved in the reproduction of ideology within news content" (13). I used feminist CDA to be critical of dominant (male-dominated) discourses, and it enabled me to "read between the lines to expose the implicit meanings" (14), to uncover the ambiguous nature of mixed messages (where feminist and sexist messages are communicated concurrently in the news article), and to show that the news media support patriarchal and sometimes misogynist language in newspaper articles, which marginalize feminist and women's voices and experiences.

In the analysis of each article I posed questions, as Meyers (1997) had done in her work, such as: How are women who are the victims of male violence represented? Are women portrayed as actively resisting/defending themselves? Are women portrayed as passive victims? Are women portrayed within patriarchal dichotomies, for example the good-girl/bad-girl dichotomy, or the virgin/whore dichotomy? Are women portrayed as innocent or are they blamed for their victimization? Is the violence framed in such a way that the woman is represented as an individual or only according to one accepted role – such as that of mother? I also examined how each crime was rationalized/excused,

whether news reports act as a warning to women and as a form of social control that outlines boundaries of acceptable behaviour, whether the perpetrator is represented as insane, crazy, a monster, as pathological, as stressed out by the female partner, and if there is sympathy in the article for the perpetrator/for the victim? I asked if the article questions if the woman was where she “should not have been?” Did she fail to take precautions? Did she provoke the attack?

The devices I needed to analyze representations of violence against women are explained by Meyers (1997) through her use of critical discourse analysis. These devices include: 1) vagueness – concealing responsibility 2) overcompleteness – adding irrelevant detail, 3) presupposition, 4) concealment, 5) euphemisms – an example would be using “domestic violence,” 6) blaming victim, 7) positive self-presentation (male), 8) negative other-presentation (female), 9) systemic analysis of implicitness - what is not said (14). I considered each of these devices in my feminist CDA of the newspaper articles about the four cases of femicide because they helped me to dissect and uncover language that is ambiguous, troubling or language that obscures the gendered nature of the violence. These devices assisted me in my feminist critical analysis of patriarchal discourses used to explain the female victims, the male perpetrators, and the femicidal act.

Application of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Each chapter provides a feminist critical discourse analysis of the newspaper coverage about each femicide. I specifically analyze the newspaper articles about each case of femicide by looking at multiple media tools; language choice, and implicit and explicit narratives and discourses. Central to this analysis is my interpretation of how femicide as a political and gender specific term can and should be put into discourse

when referring to lethal male violence against women. I problematize the language employed within the news articles, criticizing and challenging the use of sexist, demeaning, and sensationalist language to describe instances of femicide.

Language is a tool that explains social events; however, language use and choice is also highly political. Language used in the coverage of the “Montreal massacre” and the intimate femicides of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley, and Rosella Centis are problematized to show that it can function within patriarchal understandings and assumptions about gender and violence. An example of this is the frequent use of the male as generic and dominant and the female as subordinate/other. One of the main challenges of criticizing the newspaper media’s use of language lies in the way language use and choice has been constructed, and operates by communicating common-sense knowledge. This knowledge, however, has been constructed within patriarchal understandings of common-sense that situate the male as primary and the female as subordinate, maintaining the power imbalance between men and women and functioning as a dichotomizing force. This common sense knowledge masks the gendered nature of the femicidal crime, portrays the violence of the male perpetrator as gender-neutral, and does not acknowledge the misogyny behind lethal, gendered events.

In my analysis of the newspaper coverage I examine how femicides are presented in the headlines and pictures chosen to draw the reader’s attention to the coverage of the violent event. I critique the language used in article headlines and the pictures, especially those headlines and pictures placed on the front page of the newspapers. van Dijk (1988) explains that newspaper headlines “are particularly important because, both in production and in the reception of new reports, they subjectively define the most prominent or most

relevant information of the news item” (188). Headlines and pictures are two aspects of newspapers that are essential to selling newspapers and news stories.

My analysis also examines whether the gender of the journalist/reporter affected the representations of the violence, the victim, and the perpetrator. I look at who was chosen as witnesses and “experts” in response to the violence. “Experts” are those who have professional experience with violence, such as police officers, and government or justice officials. Questioning who was interviewed in news articles about femicides allows me to examine if the gender of the witnesses, or experts affected the representations and discourses within the coverage. My aim is to see and understand whose voices, male or female, are prioritized in the newspaper coverage of acts of femicides.

My critical assessment explains problematic language choices. Examining the language involves addressing how sexist language is used to describe the people involved in the femicidal crimes. Language has the potential to disseminate specific views about femicides, and thus I have chosen to dissect and question it to see how certain language choices can obscure the gendered qualities of femicide. I problematize the use of non-gendered, or gender-neutral, language because it perpetuates ignorance of male culpability for the femicide and conceals the man’s dominance over the female victim. I also examine problematic wording to see if it affects how this form of gendered violence is explained. This enables me to be critical of language that perpetuates problematic understandings of femicide, and those people involved with the case of femicide. An example of this is the overuse of “girls” to describe adult women in media representations of violence against women.

I will also bring attention to sensationalist rhetoric, a device regularly used in media reporting. The use of sensationalist rhetoric can be dangerous as it can obscure the sexism and general misogyny in cases of male violence against women. Sensationalist rhetoric includes the use of gory detail and false descriptions of the perpetrator and the victims that rely on provocative detail. It diverts attention from the sexist and oppressive qualities of male violence against women.

I will then analyze the implicit and explicit discourses used in representations of femicide victims, as well as how the perpetrator is described. This allows me to problematize how patriarchal social constructions of male/masculine and female/feminine subjectivities are perpetuated within news coverage of cases of femicide. This critical analysis of newspaper representations of femicide aims to expose and challenge patriarchal discourses found in the coverage. False and problematic representations of femicide, and the patriarchal discourses that explain them, perpetuate ignorance of systemic gender inequalities as they rely on essentialist conceptions of male and female behaviour which posit men as dominant, aggressive, and violent and women as subordinate, helpless, and passive. These discourses also marginalize feminist interpretations and viewpoints in the press, therefore, I criticize how feminists are represented as (negatively) radical and extreme. Patriarchal discourses found in news coverage of femicide neglect questions of the sexism and misogyny physically manifested in acts of femicide. I question why men's aggression, jealousy and power/control issues displayed in cases of femicide can transcend into lethal acts against their female partners, or against females in general and examine how the gendered act is

usually ignored or obscured, which can perpetuate the objectification and subordination of women by men.

Throughout my analysis of patriarchal news discourses, I challenge the messages in articles of cases of femicide that tend to include mixed message in the newspaper's/journalist's attempt to present/offer a balanced view of the news story. I understand mixed messages to mean messages that propagate information which begin and commits to one argument, however, also includes information that refutes the first, established, argument. Articles perpetuate mixed messages by including quotes, representations, and editorials that go against what has already been stated, for example, the inclusion of a feminist interpretation, or expert opinion, followed by a sexist or patriarchal explanation. Howe (1997) explains the problems associated with using mixed messages. She explains that periodically "old standbys of masculinist commonsense understandings of gender relations are reproduced as editorial opinion in a valiant effort to counter the views of feminist experts" (197). I am critical of such contradictory and confusing messages which help to perpetuate patriarchal discourses that are usually upheld as the correct interpretations, while feminist explanations are represented as marginal and/or radical, or not included at all. I also examine the lack of solutions suggested for dealing with crimes of femicide, as well as remaining critical of attempts to provide solutions and/or explanations for each instance of femicidal violence because the solutions provided in the newspaper articles may not necessarily confront or include an understanding of the violence as gendered.

Throughout my critical analyses I discuss the importance of using femicide within a feminist discourse of resistance to patriarchal discourses. Examining the coverage of

the four chosen cases of lethal male violence against women through the use of the concept of “femicide” enables me to offer a solution toward the news media’s coverage and challenge the continual use of patriarchal discourses, sexist language, and ignorance of women’s actual experiences with male violence. The central argument of this feminist critical discourse analysis is to employ the concept (and discourses of) femicide as it explains the gendered politics of acknowledging when females are killed by males because they are female.

Explanation of Chapters

The chapters in this thesis correspond to each femicide analyzed. I have chosen to begin my critical analysis with what has come to be known as the “Montreal massacre,” Marc Lépine’s murder of 14 women in Montreal on December 6th 1989, Canada’s own example of mass femicide. This incident prompted a new understanding of violence against women in Canada and changed how we speak of men killing women. Our understanding of violence against women was forever changed by the events of that day.

The newspaper coverage and representations of the other three instances of femicide analyzed in this thesis are explained by following them chronologically and dividing them into two chapters, the first of the two chapters deals with the femicide of Arlene May, and the second chapter concentrates on two separate femicides, the femicide of Gillian Hadley in 2000 and the femicide of Rosella Centis in 2002. These two chapters focus specifically on intimate femicide. The over-representations we receive in our Canadian newspapers about the risk of an attack by a stranger, as explained by

Haskell and Randall (1998) in the previous chapter, tend to mask instances of intimate femicides that are more common but usually are under reported.

Chapters Five and Six will deal predominantly with the intimate femicidal suicides of Arlene May (committed by Randy Iles) and Gillian Hadley (committed by Ralph Hadley). In the chapter about Gillian Hadley's femicide, however, I do include analysis of the two *Globe* articles that explained the intimate femicide of Rosella Centis in Nanaimo, British Columbia. The coverage of that case was minimal, and the analysis within the chapter will reflect this. Her femicide is still remembered, however, and the representations of her in the newspaper articles will still be critically analyzed, as minimal as they were.

I will show that the coverage of the three intimate femicide cases is problematic in its representations of the victims, the perpetrator, and the violence itself, as the coverage about these crimes explains the violence through patriarchal discourses of feminine and masculine subjectivity. The language used in these discourses tends to perpetuate obscuring/masking the gendered nature of the male violence. My examination of the femicidal suicides of Arlene May and Randy Iles and of Gillian and Ralph Hadley differs from my examination of the coverage of the "Montreal massacre" in that I will also analyze the language and discourses included in the coverage of the recommendations that were made in response to the public inquests called into their deaths. My critical feminist analysis of the femicides of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley, and Rosella Centis will encompass the same categories of analysis, such as examining the journalists, witnesses and "experts," the problematic language, the patriarchal discourses and mixed messages and the representations of the female victims and male perpetrators as I did in the chapter

about the coverage of the “Montreal massacre.” I believe the analysis of the coverage of each femicide must encompass examining them within the categories listed. Of utmost importance to my analysis of these three cases is how the newspaper articles described the female victims by including descriptions that are based in patriarchal constructions of the feminine, which limits how women are represented and thus understood. The representations convey the female victims through essentialist, patriarchal, explanations, such as only defining the female victim exclusively through her role as mother. I will challenge this essentialist view of the female victims and critically confront the language included, and patriarchal discourses perpetuated, in the Canadian national newspapers that covered and represented these cases of sexist and hateful acts against women.

The following chapters, Chapters Four, Five and Six, are my own thorough feminist critical discourse analysis of the way four major Canadian newspapers represented separate cases of femicide. The newspaper coverage of the femicide cases I have chosen to analyze demonstrates the lack of adequate information provided about issues concerning violence against women, how women continually remain marginalized and treated unequally in media representations, and how the newspaper media chooses to focus on the male perpetrator’s ascribed “pathology” rather than on the sexism and misogyny inherent in his actions. Analyzing cases of women who have been victims of femicide through a feminist poststructuralist framework, enables me to show that misogynist, sexist, violence is regularly ignored; that it is not acknowledged in terms of its patriarchal formulations, and that women’s cries for help usually go unheard in the news media. The women in the femicide cases analyzed throughout the next three chapters deserve to be remembered and those media sources that took on the

“responsibility” of disseminating information about the sexist violence these women endured deserve to be criticized and denounced if they reaffirm patriarchal power and oppression. Acknowledging femicide allows us to view women’s deaths as positioned within a patriarchal society that perpetuates discourses about essentialist gendered subjectivities which position men as oppressive and women as subordinate, this is manifested in and translated through femicidal violence which accepts and perpetuates violence that takes place on, in, and through women’s bodies.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE COVERAGE OF THE “MONTREAL MASSACRE”

On Wednesday, December 6th 1989 around 5:00 p.m., Marc Lépine¹⁰ dressed in hunting/military clothing, entered the University of Montreal’s engineering school the École Polytechnique with his motive in mind. Lépine moved through the school carrying a rifle and hunting knife. He chose to enter one of the senior engineering classrooms where students were listening to presentations in one of the last classes of the fall term. Lépine entered the classroom, shooting one shot from his gun, and asked the class of approximately 60 students to separate: one side of the room for the ten women and one side for the men. He asked the men to leave the classroom. Alone with the women, Lépine shouted “I am here to fight against feminism that is why I am here.” One of the female students, Nathalie Provost, attempted to speak with Lépine to (perhaps) avoid violence. He responded, “You’re all women, you’re going to be engineers. You’re all a bunch of feminists. I hate feminists.” He then opened fire, shooting as many women as he could. Lépine left the classroom and continued through the building yelling “I want the women.” He shot more women as he walked. At approximately 5:35 p.m., Lépine killed himself with his suicide note tucked inside his pocket. 14 women were dead, thirteen were studying engineering and one was a member of the staff of the École Polytechnique.¹¹

Then began the discussion of what is known as the “Montreal Massacre.”

¹⁰ Lépine changed his name from Gamil Roderigue Gharbi to Marc Lépine when he turned 18.

¹¹ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s article “Unbearable Witness: Toward a Politics of Listening” (1999) provided information about the events that took place on December 6th 1989 as well as extensive reading, on my part, of the procession of the femicidal event. At the beginning of each chapter about the newspaper coverage of the femicides I have chosen to analyze, the femicide of Arlene May and the femicides of Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis, I will describe the sequence of the actions committed by the male perpetrator against the female victim. This will explain the femicidal crimes based on the information I have gathered from extensive reading of newspaper coverage of each femicide case.

Introduction

The mass femicide of 14 women on December 6th 1989, changed how the Canadian public understood and viewed safety, fear, “mass murder,” and especially violence against women in Canada. It forced many people to question how this could have happened and to what degree are women affected by male violence. The link between the “Montreal massacre” and systemic violence against women, however, was not, and continues not to be, the focus of the national coverage of the femicidal event in our newspapers. In fact, when the link made by feminists between the “Montreal massacre” and systemic violence against women was covered in the newspapers that focused on the mass femicide, it received, and continues to receive, hostile and resistant responses from readers. At the time of the “Montreal massacre,” the feminist interpretation of the events that took place at the École Polytechnique generated more backlash than any other attempts to explain this “mass murder.”

This chapter analyzes the coverage of the “Montreal massacre” because it brought violence against women in Canada in to focus for many people, and because it is an accurate example of femicide in our country’s recent social history. The “Montreal massacre” became a point in history that forever changed how Canadians discussed and understood male violence against women, and also how we as a nation fit into this discourse. These events affected the Canadian view of safety, the view that violence does not occur in Canada as it does in the United States, and it changed how people discussed violence; the “Montreal Massacre” became a reference point for discussions of mass violence but also violence specifically directed at women.

I argue that two of our national newspapers and two of our “daily” newspapers prioritized and perpetuated patriarchal discourses in their representations of the “Montreal massacre.” Further, I argue that they posited the killer, Marc Lépine, as a mad man, as a victim, and as a pathological killer who had no “reason” for committing mass murder/femicide, all without directly and immediately challenging the sexism of his actions. I believe that the newspaper coverage of the mass femicide ignored, covered over, hid, and diverted attention away from the main reason Marc Lépine killed 14 women in the Montreal engineering school, misogyny.

Feminist Critical Analysis of the Coverage of the “Montreal Massacre”

To begin, I will state that having analyzed four newspapers’ approaches to the “massacre,” I feel I am now able to pronounce that the discourses present in the articles are troubling, problematic and sexist. I found differences in the schematic forms, which is the simplistic or formulaic description of something/someone which is usually inappropriate to the complexities of the subject matter (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001, 1661) included by the reporters, as well as with the use of sensationalist writing between the four newspapers. I found that, *The Toronto Star* (hereafter *Star*) incorporated a greater amount of extreme language and sensationalist rhetoric, “over the top” detailed descriptions, illustrations that seemed unnecessary and created a narrative of competition between men, women, feminists, and “experts” on mass murder. Keeping these things in mind, my frequent references to the *Star*’s coverage as sensationalistic should come as no surprise.¹²

¹² Sharon D. Stout’s (1993) analysis of feminism, the press, and violence against women argues that the *Star* is a “newspaper which pursues the mass market” and that the *Star*’s liberal tone “is meant to interest as large a readership as possible” (381).

The Gazette (hereafter *Gazette*) also incorporated sensationalist themes and descriptions that employed gory details and invoked more fear and disgust than understanding for what occurred the evening of December 6th. The *Gazette* focused their attention on the madness of the killer, the innocence or innocent passivity of the female victims and relegated feminist interpretations to a page location deep inside the newspaper so, “out of sight.”

The Globe and Mail (hereafter *Globe*) was the least sensationalist and provided coverage that was better than most in terms of actual reporting balance. The *Globe* identified and incorporated the feminist narratives more and sooner, than any of the other newspapers. However, I will show that while the *Globe* did report a more balanced account, as they referred sooner to feminist explanation of the “Montreal massacre,” its inclusion of mixed messages and patriarchal discourses resulted in the *Globe* perpetuating and reinforcing problematic messages/discourses. The *Globe* also used troubling and sexist language.¹³

The National Post (hereafter *Post*) included the least amount of coverage because its circulation began nine years after the events of the “Montreal massacre.” In its tenth year anniversary coverage of the “massacre” it perpetuated patriarchal and problematic discourses. The *Post*’s “experts” challenged feminist interpretations and fueled the flames of doubt about Lépine’s motivations and actions.

¹³ Stout (1993) explains the *Globe*, generally, “caters to business and professional interests and it is attended to by high-level politicians.” The *Globe*, she states, “has an intellectual and conservative tone and is meant to appeal to an elite audience” (381).

The Coverage in the Headlines and in Pictures

Headlines

A major attraction of newspapers, and a major reason why people are drawn to them, is their use of headlines and pictures that proclaim the newspaper's view of the most important issue of the day. In his analysis of news discourses and ethnic minorities, van Dijk (1988) states that "headlines and leads are often the only information read or memorized, they play an important role in further information processing and possible effects of news about ethnic minority groups" (189). The same remains true in the coverage of cases of violence against women.

The headlines related to the killing of 14 women by Marc Lépine on December 6th helped to draw attention to the article and displayed the direction the newspaper article would take. They regularly included sensationalistic wording to draw the readers attention to the newspaper, as what came to be called the "Montreal massacre" was repeatedly used in newspaper headlines. The headlines reveal examples of sensationalism and problematic terminology, beginning on the morning of December 7th, 1989. The *Star* and the *Gazette* both employed disconcerting language in their headlines, whereas the *Globe* used the most direct language to describe the shooting.

The *Star*'s first headline about the shooting was "14 women killed in Massacre" (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). The clear indication that 14 women were killed is not problematic; however, the use of "massacre" meaning an indiscriminate and brutal slaughter of people (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001, 1138) is troubling. This assumes the perpetrator was indiscriminant in his choice of victims and that he randomly shot people. Lépine did not randomly shoot his victims because he specifically targeted

women. This headline also obscured who killed the 14 women, the perpetrator remains genderless.¹⁴ The *Star* also included a second headline, smaller than the first: “Montreal gunman’s letter spewed hate at feminists” (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). The *Star* repeatedly referred to Lépine’s “hate” of feminists in its headlines and sub-headlines, but neglected to relate the crime to misogyny and sexism, as “spewed” does not offer an explanation for the killer’s motive, it is simply a sensationalist way of referring to the hate Lépine had for feminists. The *Star* appears to have no problem continually highlighting the hatred Lépine had of feminists. The *Star*’s headlines are sensationalist and perpetuate confusion about the sexism inherent in Lépine’s crime, and they neglect to focus on the killer’s misogynist reasoning for killing the 14 women.

The *Gazette*’s first headline about the “Montreal massacre” is also problematic; it simply read “Campus Massacre” (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). This headline denotes no sense of who was killed by whom, and it also uses “massacre,” which assumes an indiscriminant or random killing. The *Gazette* included two sub-headlines: “Gunman kills 14 women before shooting himself” and “‘You are all feminists!’ He screamed as he fired” (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). While I commend the *Gazette*’s use of gender specific language in the two sub-headlines, I am troubled by the rhetoric and use of extreme detail, especially because the coverage did not follow this theme. The headlines directly referred to the fact that he killed only women because he thought of them as feminists, but the coverage that goes along with these headlines did not relate the shooting to Lépine’s misogynist motivation.

¹⁴ I will continue to mark “massacre” in quotation marks because I consider the term to be problematic and sensationalist; it is ambiguous and obscures the gendered characteristics of the crime.

The *Globe's* first coverage of the event had, in my view, the most appropriate headline. "Man Kills 14 Women in Montreal" (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). This headline directed attention to the male perpetrator and the female victims, and placed the crime in a specific location, Montreal. I feel that this headline properly indicated the gendered elements of what every other story had already defined as a "massacre."

Headlines are essential indicators to newspapers intentions and attitudes. The *Globe's* use of specific language markers allowed the reader to understand the context of the crime, the victims, and specifically that the crime involved a male killing 14 females. The headlines of the *Star* and the *Gazette* are sensationalist using language that was, provoking and tantalizing, instead of indicating the femicidal nature of the killings.

Pictures

Pictures are a powerful device as they demonstrate the focus of the newspaper's article, and take advantage of our increasingly visual culture. Upon examining the pictures repeatedly included in the coverage of the "Montreal massacre," I saw that many of the pictures included in the newspapers were of Lépine, of injured students, of crying and grieving women, and a map that laid out how Lépine moved throughout the building where the "massacre" took place. The *Star's* coverage incorporated five pictures of Lépine, the *Gazette* included six, and the *Globe* included only two pictures. The pictures included images of Lépine, his apartment, one of the homes he grew up in, and guns, like those used in the shooting.

The *Globe* included only one image of individual pictures of the 14 victims. The *Gazette* included three individual pictures of three of the victims, and the *Globe* and the *Star* included one image of ten individual pictures of (ten of) the victims. Through their

use of pictures it became clear that the newspapers chose to focus on the killer rather than on the victims. Particularly in the *Star* and the *Gazette's* coverage, Lépine provided the focal image and was the only person involved that these newspapers wanted their readers to remember.

The images in the *Star* and the *Gazette* demonstrate how the focus of attention was on the perpetrator. The lack of pictures of the victims of the crime demonstrates the lack of attention the newspapers paid to the female victims. Pictures of the 14 victims were rarely included. While the newspapers incorporated pictures of some of the women killed by Lépine, there is still a great degree of unbalanced focus paid to the killer as evidenced in the number of pictures included of Lépine.

The Journalists, Witnesses and “Experts”

The Journalists

The coverage of the “Montreal massacre” involved representing the impressions, opinions, testimonies, and sentiments of the members of the Canadian press who first reported the events of Lépine’s shooting of 14 women, the students and professors who witnessed the shootings, and the individuals chosen to share their official/“expert” interpretations and explanations of Lépine’s actions.

Both male and female journalists covered the events of December 6th. Stout (1993) explains, in her work on the press and the feminist movement, that any interpretation of the press coverage of the “Montreal massacre” must account for the distribution of male and female reporters and newsroom workers. According to media critics, Marc Raboy and Diana Bronson, “an adequate explanation of the press coverage must include the significant presence of women as reporters, columnists, and editors in

the newsrooms of the dominant press” (Stout 1993, 380). Many women did cover the “Montreal massacre,” however, after analyzing the newspapers’ approaches to topics related to Lépine’s killing of women, I have found that the women journalists, most notably those representing the *Star*, were no better at representing feminist perspectives, or the female victims and survivors than men. The journalists writing for the *Star* were mostly women, including Jane Armstrong, Shelley Page, and Lois Sweet. I believe that having a balance of women and men in the newsroom is essential to creating change in gendered representations in the media, however, the presence of female newspaper representatives in no way guarantees feminist interpretations or creating space for ideological struggle in the Canadian press (mainstream press).

The journalists writing for the *Gazette* were mostly men and I found the same problematic themes and discourses in their coverage. This suggests that both men and women working in news production and dissemination covered the events of December 6th 1989 in similarly problematic and ambiguous ways. The *Globe* typically relied on the Canadian Press,¹⁵ for coverage of the events, therefore the gender of the journalists was not apparent. The editorials from the *Globe*, written by both men and women, did offer feminist interpretations sooner than the other newspapers and appeared to see these explanations as more newsworthy than any other newspaper. The *Post*’s coverage was conducted by one woman and two men ten years following the “massacre.” Although, the journalists chosen to cover the “Montreal massacre,” included more women than was usual at that time (Stout 1993, 380), they did not produce critical explanations for this event which perpetuated patriarchal understandings of male aggression, mass murder and violence against women. The journalists also did not provide space for feminist criticism

¹⁵ Canadian Press refers to Canadian journalists not necessarily affiliated with one specific newspaper.

or interpretations of feminist critiques free from backlash or contradictory messages. I believe that the problematic representations of instances of violence against women by both male and female journalists demonstrate the news media system's adherence to covering these cases in traditional and patriarchal ways, so as not to disrupt common, hegemonic, explanations of men, women and violence.

The Witnesses

In my analysis of the witness testimony, and looking at who was included as "experts" to explain Lépine's mass femicide, I have found that the newspaper reporting prioritized male testimony and opinion. These male impressions and explanations can be organized into two general categories: those from male witnesses to the event and those from male university, government and police officials, and male "experts." The number of men interviewed far surpassed the number of women consulted. Journalists were more likely to consult women than men where Lépine's motive was in question, or proof of his insanity was needed. Women's testimony was less frequent, and was used to substantiate Lépine as "crazy." One example of this is found in the *Globe's* December 7th 1989 coverage, "Montreal students slain by gunman who prowled building on 'human hunt'" (A1). The one woman interviewed, 22 year old student Dominique Berubé, said, "All I know is that a crazy guy came in here and began shooting at anything that moved." Women's impressions of the events were most likely to be included when they supported the first or second narrative explanations of Lépine's actions, as they are explained in the previous chapter. The inclination of the news articles to refer to male testimony, however, is of primary concern to me as the crime was perpetrated against women.

The newspaper coverage of the “Montreal massacre” included mainly the testimony of many students who witnessed Lépine’s shooting of 14 women; very few women were asked for their interpretations of the events. The *Star*’s December 7th 1989 coverage provided impressions from reactions of male students and professors as the central witness testimony. The *Gazette* and the *Globe* also provided more space to male witnesses. The *Star*’s articles, located on A1 and A34, quote men as saying: “It seemed like a joke – until the killing” and “Killer separated men, women.” Eric Chavarie was one of the primary male witnesses interviewed by all three newspapers. He was in the classroom in which Lépine divided up the men and women. Chavarie referred to thinking “it” was a joke, and was also quoted as saying Lépine “separated us into two groups, the guys in one corner and the girls in (another) corner. When that was done, he asked the guys to leave. He left the girls in there” (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). Following Chavarie’s explanation of Lépine’s actions, more male witnesses were consulted. For instance, two male students, Francois Lamarre and Pierre Robert, also thought it was a joke, and Robert referred to Lépine as “really calm.” Testimony from Yvon Bouchard, the professor of the class where the shootings took place, was also included in the newspaper coverage. The professor remarked that he too thought Lépine’s actions, his gun, and his intrusion into the classroom presentations, was a joke. A number of other male students offered their impressions of the violent events, for instance, Stephen Guay and Luc Gauthier. Gauthier is quoted as saying “there is a crazy guy in there.” Many students believed Lépine to be crazy at the time of the shooting. However, as I argue, Lépine’s actions must be considered as politically motivated and rationally orchestrated.

The articles that involved witness testimony of the event all included this quote by male student Francois Bordeleau: “it was a human hunt, and we were the quarry” (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A34). This witness’s expression of what he thought was taking place during Lépine’s misogynist raid on female engineering students was used in many articles that followed. Other male students asked for their impressions were Vanthona Ouy and Serge Bacon, who was also quoted as saying he had thought Lépine’s actions were a joke. The press’s reliance on male testimony is problematic. Lépine’s lethal hatred was directed at women and only women, and yet the newspaper coverage that followed these femicidal events clearly did not consider women’s testimonies necessary to their in the coverage as they did not include female testimony the day following the “massacre.” Representations of the “massacre’s” aftermath and impressions of what occurred in the École Polytechnique rarely referred to the views, impressions or testimonies of women who survived the shooting or the female students who attended the École Polytechnique. The prioritization of male experiences and male voices is problematic because women’s impressions and personal explanations of Lépine’s misogynist mass murder were silenced.¹⁶

The *Gazette*’s December 7th 1989 coverage included the following: “13 Université de Montreal students in hospital,” and on A2, “Gunman slays 14 women, then kills himself.” The journalists of these articles, Marian Scott, Jeff Heinrich, and Peter Kuitenbrouwer, offered sensationalist rhetoric, and focused on male testimony. Roger Tiffault, one of the men who was in the school at the time of the shooting, was quoted. I

¹⁶ In my analysis of (problematic) representations of women in the coverage of the “Montreal Massacre,” I focus on the coverage of one of the female survivors, Nathalie Provost. She was interviewed in the newspapers I analyzed and I focus on the representations of Provost because the newspaper articles that covered her press conference included statements made by her that reinforce patriarchal understandings of Lépine’s misogynist act.

am critical of the quotations that were included in the article because Roger Tiffault's reply to being asked why he had not been killed was, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know" (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1+). The inclusion of this quote is interesting because Lépine's motive and victim choice was made clear by police in the December 7th articles in the *Gazette*. Including this statement allows the newspaper to disseminate the impressions of witnesses that go against viewing Lépine's femicidal act as gendered. We know why he was not shot and killed... because he was a man.

The *Globe's* December 7th 1989 article "Man Kills 14 Women in Montreal" offered male testimony about what occurred in the classroom of the *École Polytechnique* once Lépine walked in and ordered the men to leave. An interview with Louis Hamel, a male student in the engineering school, paid attention to the fact that the students thought Lépine's entrance into their classroom was a joke. Hamel described how "all hell broke loose" (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). The *Globe's* reliance on male testimony continued on page A5 where they included Bordeleau's descriptions of a "human hunt" in the article's subtitle. In this article a male student stated that Lépine "was clearly gunning for the women," (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A5). The inclusion of this quote is essential in that it directs attention to Lépine's intention to kill women. The coverage, however, continued to prioritize male impressions and explanations. Michel Guy, a male engineering student, said "I was holed up in the corner on the second floor with three friends, we were joined by a woman who was bleeding profusely, I saw another woman take a hit in the head" (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A5). The *Globe* also referred to the same list of men interviewed by the *Star*, Eric Chavarie, Pierre Robert, Yvon Bouchard, the professor of the class Lépine interrupted, as well as the testimonies of Luc Gauthier, Francois Bordeleau, and

Serge Bacon. One woman's interview was included at the end of the *Globe* article, however, her testimony does not explain that women were Lépine's chosen victims. Yannick Lacoste was quoted as saying, "I hurried to the door. I was very nervous. You don't know if the shots are aimed at you" (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A5). The reliance on male impressions and explanations is problematic as they contribute to and maintain women's silence about these experiences with violence. The amount of attention paid to male testimony in this case exhibits the high priority the newspapers place in male experience and male-centered narratives, and indicates that male accounts of the femicidal shooting are somehow more credible.

The "Experts": University, Government, and Police Officials

The newspaper articles that sought to discover what caused Lépine to kill 14 women regularly referred to the opinions of psychiatrists, doctors, criminologists and anthropologists. The *Star* and the *Gazette* both discussed the opinions and research of Memorial University anthropology professor Elliott Leyton, an expert on mass murder. They quoted his work from the book *Hunting Humans* (1987) a great deal. The *Star* included Leyton's impressions of Lépine's lifestyle and childhood. Leyton's explanations for Lépine's actions were included in multiple articles which focused on Lépine's profile as a "mass murderer."

The *Gazette's* inclusion of expert opinion was found in the December 8th 1989 article "Mass murderers find themselves failing in life, anthropologist says." Reporters Kate Dunn and Janet Bagnall interviewed several doctors, psychiatrists, as well as Dr. Leyton. The reporters highlighted that their experts considered Lépine a "mass murderer" and the article routinely ignored his specific choice of victim. Instead the

experts focused on his actions as compared to those of mass murderers of the past. The article committed to profiling Lépine as a “mass murderer,” instead of disseminating information about the gendered nature of his act. This commitment is seen as Leyton was quoted saying: “The essence of [mass murderers] is that they find themselves failing in life. They didn’t achieve what they wanted, be it a position in society or romantically or in their jobs” (*Gazette*, Dec. 8, 1989, A4). The frequent comparisons made between Lépine and other acts of mass murder are problematic because the comparison obscures the gendered manifestations of Lépine’s misogynist actions. Mass murderers usually kill their victims randomly, not by gender. Therefore, the inclusion of Leyton’s comparison of Lépine to mass murders ignores Lépine’s political motive and the sexism implicit in his actions. Only one female expert, a forensic psychiatrist was consulted, in the *Gazette*’s December 8th 1989 A4 article. Dr. Renée Fugère explained Lépine’s rage against women as unusual, which was the extent of female expert opinion on Lépine’s mass femicide.

The researchers and doctors asked to discuss Lépine’s “mass murder” described the abundance of press coverage surrounding Lépine and his “massacre” as Lépine “winning,” “Murderer has won” (*Gazette*, Dec. 8, 1989, A4). By including this quote, that indicated Lépine had won, the article makes reference to mass murderers who kill to be talked about in media stories and to gain people’s attention. Thus, including such references as provided by the chosen “experts,” demonstrates the newspapers’ reliance on fitting Lépine into a mould according to descriptions of him as a “mass murderer.” This reliance causes the misogyny of Lépine’s actions to go unchallenged and ignored because cases of mass murder generally involve random killing of victims, regardless of gender.

Throughout the newspaper articles, descriptions of what occurred at the École Polytechnique on December 6th 1989 came from men, male university, government and police officials. Male officials were the primary sources of information and were the primary voices heard in representations of the mass femicide. In the *Gazette*'s December 7th 1989 coverage, police officer Claude St. Laurent was interviewed as was the professor, Yvon Bouchard, who was teaching the class Lépine interrupted. In the newspaper coverage, city and government officials were provided room for responding to the shootings of the 14 women. The interview with Jean Doré, the mayor of Montreal, quoted him as saying the massacre was "the act of a maniac" and Rolland Doré, director of the École Polytechnique, was quoted as saying something similar. Including the impressions of city and public officials demonstrates the importance and severity of this crime, however, the inclusion of these remarks helps to formulate the crime in particular ways. The mayor and the director of the school were both quoted as saying the "act was that of a maniac" (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1+), this directs attention to Lépine's (supposed) insanity and thus conceals his political and sexist motivations for killing women.

The *Gazette*'s December 7th 1989 coverage also included a male spokesperson for the university, Richard Doin: "Doin speculated the bloodbath was the work of a psychopath" (A1). Again, the male narratives posit Lépine as insane and include details about the bloodshed but not about the gendered characteristics of the crime. The *Globe* continued this trend by relying on the statements and impressions of male police officers, for example police officer for the Montreal Urban Community Police (MUC) Claude St. Laurent, as well as a director for the École Polytechnique, Louis Courville. Men are

the primary subjects in the articles which describe the events that took place the evening of December 6th 1989 in the newspaper coverage I examined.

The examination of the people interviewed and which witnesses were provided space to speak about Lépine's mass femicide is crucial to a feminist critical discourse analysis as it demonstrates the centrality and priority our nation's newspapers accord to male opinions and narratives. The attention paid to men in a case where only women were killed is demonstrative of patriarchal power, male impressions and explanations were made the priority while women's voices were and continue to be silenced through omission or backlash.

The Use of Problematic Language and of Sensationalist Rhetoric

Problematizing and challenging the manner in which newspapers use, and choose, language questions the notion that language is fixed, that only one meaning is the correct meaning or is the "truth." Challenging the language used by these newspapers enables me to question the use of patriarchal language that assumes one meaning and one truth. Examples of such patriarchal language constructions are the use of the male as generic, as well as the problems inherent in using gender-neutral language to describe violence that is profoundly gendered. Problematizing language also challenges the assumptions that gender-neutral language can generate. Examples include the words "massacre," and "rampage." Their use indicates that the violent act or crime involves indiscriminant, random or uncontrollable behaviour. To describe Lépine's actions in the shooting of 14 women as indiscriminant or uncontrollable would be false according to his suicide letter and the way he conducted himself according to witnesses. The shooting was planned,

calculated and the choice of victim was motivated by misogyny and already in Lépine's mind.

My analysis challenges the continual use of problematic language that denies, ignores or directs attention away from the specificities of gendered violence. Examples included the use of sexist, gender-neutral, language, as well as language that excuses the perpetrator and perpetuates ignorance about the calculated nature of his femicide of 14 female engineering students. Language that describes the female victims as innocent, as this assumes them to be passive and helpless must also be criticized. Women, feminists, particularly, are often portrayed (through language) as marginal and women are usually referred to as "girls." The newspaper coverage that described the female victims of Lépine's mass femicide were repeatedly referred to as "girls," which infantilizes women affected by violence. The construction of women and feminists as marginal, subordinate, and helpless reiterates and reinforces the patriarchal, liberal-humanist understanding of women as unequal to men. Constructing feminine subjectivities in this way only perpetuates inequality and denies how violence against women is a physical manifestation of patriarchal power and oppression.

Femicide, as a concept that describes the killing of women by men, is a specific language tool that can politicize the killing of females by a male, and thus, the use of the term "femicide" is necessary to communicate the unequal and gendered manifestation of male violence in newspaper coverage. "Femicide" challenges, pays the needed attention to, the patriarchal, sexist and misogynist motivations behind femicidal acts. "Femicide" as a term necessary to explanations of what occurred at the *École Polytechnique* will be discussed throughout the chapter. Examining language choice, problematic wording, and

the use of sensationalist rhetoric are all aspects of my critical analysis of the newspaper coverage about the “Montreal massacre.” It is through language where particular meanings and messages, political discourses in particular, are reiterated and disseminated.

Problematic Wording

My critical feminist analysis uncovers the problematic way that words perpetuate meanings, and false assumptions. The first day of coverage, December 7th 1989, included problematic words to describe the violence that actually took place. The first day of the *Star*'s coverage included words like “massacre,” which became the chosen word to describe the event. “Pandemonium” or “rampage,” which is defined as a period of violent and uncontrollable behaviour (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001, 1534), were also used, and both can be considered sensationalistic. The first paragraph of the *Star*'s article: “Hospitals were a ‘combat zone’ but doctors and nurses coped,” found on A3 included “Montreal hospitals became “combat zones” last night after the university massacre” (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A3). The use of war analogies is troubling because it assumes that the event was similar to war or combat. This falsely assumes there were two groups fighting against one another. The hospitals were indeed dealing with an influx of patients as many students were rushed to hospitals with injuries, however, the use of the term “combat zones” only serves to dramatize and titillate readers with the suffering of women and men injured by Lépine. The inclusion of “massacre” in this statement also has ambiguous and dramatic connotations, which function to draw in more readers without explaining the specific gendered realities of the event. “Massacre,” in this case, is a non-gendered term that has been attached to a gendered, misogynist, act.

The *Gazette* also chose problematic wording in the articles about descriptions of Lépine's shooting of 14 women. In the December 7th 1989 article "13 Université de Montreal students in hospital" found on A1, language such as "rampage" was used to describe Lépine's actions, "14 young women are dead after a gunman went on a rampage at the Université de Montreal last yesterday afternoon." In choosing to use the term "rampage," the newspapers obscured the motivations behind the violence and perpetuated the assumption that the violence was random, that women just happened to be the ones killed. The headline of the article on page A1 perpetuated viewing the crime as if it were gender-neutral by referring to the women who were killed as "students." On December 9th 1989, three days after the mass femicide took place, and after Lépine's motives had been made clear by police, journalists continued to use this gender-neutral and ambiguous language and while maintaining confusion around Lépine's motives. In the December 9th article, "Killer's father beat him as a child," Rod MacDonell, Elizabeth Thompson, Andrew McIntosh, and William Marsden, included troubling references about Lépine's actions. They write, "during a mad rampage through the École Polytechnique..." (*Gazette*, A1+), which is problematic because "mad rampage" assumes Lépine was crazy, absurd, wild, which he was not and that the violence was an act of uncontrollable behaviour. This neglects that Lépine was motivated by misogyny and perpetuates the idea that he was a crazy "mad" killer. Lépine was violent, but he was also in control of his actions as he planned the killing of women and followed through on this plan. The *Post*'s "anniversary" coverage of December 6th 1999 employed the same problematic wording. On page A8, in the article "Massacre in Review," words like

“deadly rampage” were included which do not acknowledge Lépine’s sexist and misogynist motivations.

In another article in the *Gazette*, “Slayings not part of trend, analysts say,” reporter Ingrid Peritz used language like “bloody campus rampage” (Dec. 9, 1989, A3). This language choice is sensationalistic and perpetuates ambiguity about Lépine’s intentions. In this article, also, Peritz used gender-neutral terminology such as “family violence,” and “homicide” to explain the violences women endure at the hands of their male partners. “Family violence” is terminology regularly used by newspapers’ articles that report on violence against women cases (Forsyth-Smith 1995, 60). This terminology does not indicate the gender of the perpetrator nor does it indicate the gender of the victim. This language, as it is used in the newspaper, fails to acknowledge the specificity of male (intimate) violence against women and perpetuates the idea that women and men are equally to blame for violence that takes place in the home, which is troubling, as men’s violence against women is the more common form of “family violence.”

The use of the term “homicide” to describe woman-killing is, according to Diana Russell (2001) in her second work *Femicide in Global Perspective*, problematic and sexist as the term homicide is far too ambiguous a term to use when explaining and/or theorizing woman killing. She attests that such terms as manslaughter and homicide perpetuate a male-centered and male-biased approach to crime and the law (13). The use of gender-neutral or ambiguous language perpetuates patriarchal understandings of crimes committed against women because such language ignores the degree to which it is women that are the victims of violence and disproportionately to men who are the

perpetrators. This continues to evade the real issue of male violence against females as a physical manifestation of gender inequality and denies male oppression over females.

The *Gazette* refers to the terminology “domestic violence” in their December 8th 1989 coverage on page D11, “Killing on campus called a symptom of widespread hatred.” This article, which gave space for a feminist interpretation, dealt with the way the “Montreal massacre” is connected to violence against women. This article, however, included the words “domestic violence,” which like “family violence,” is problematic because it neglects to represent the fact women are being abused by men. In this article the male generic “spokesman” is used to describe Susan Hyde, who represented the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. This reveals the continual use of male centered language and the use of the generic as male. The *Post* also uses the term “domestic violence” twice to explain violence against women, specifically in their December 7th 1999 A1 article: “Marc Lépine madman or social barometer?”

Like the Peritz’s article, the *Gazette* included problematic wording in its coverage. On December 7th 1989, reporter Jack Todd wrote a sensationalistic, confusing article about Lépine’s shooting of 14 women. In “Killer smiled, then told men to leave” found on pages A1 and A2, Todd writes: “What had been an incident, a story, had become an enormous, bitter, tragedy.” This reference Todd makes to the incident of the “Montreal massacre” being a “tragedy” is very unclear and troubling as his descriptions of the “tragedy” do not acknowledge the gendered nature of the shooting. The entire article neglected to refer to Lépine’s violence as gendered. “Tragedy” is a similarly gender neutral term, and I believe that a more direct, politicized term could have been used to explain the event, such as bitter “femicide.” The *Gazette* included the word

tragedy in the December 8th 1989 A1 article “Nothing prepares you for such savagery” and used the term in many other newspaper articles to refer to the femicidal event perpetrated by Lépine. The problem with “tragedy,” according to Meyers (1997) is that even when acknowledgement is made that the “tragedy” was planned, “tragedy” denies the perpetrator’s responsibility and posits him as a victim. She explains that “Tragedy does not happen to the perpetrators of the crime” and therefore to represent the events in terms of a tragedy places Lépine as a victim just as the 14 women were (44).

The *Globe* regularly chose to use the word tragedy to describe the consequences of Lépine’s actions. On page A1, in the article “Quebec mourns slaying of women at university,” reporters Patricia Poirier and Barrie McKenna represented the mass femicide with the word tragedy, a genderless term that does not problematize that Lépine killed 14 women. Poirier and McKenna also included the word “triggered” in an attempt to explain Lépine’s crime, “wondering what had triggered this man’s vendetta against innocent women and questioning how this could have happened on the staid University of Montreal campus.” (*Globe*, 8 Dec.1989, A1). “Triggered” assumes something snapped, that Lépine had no control over his choice of victims, which is not true. In the December 11th 1989 coverage in the *Globe*, “tragedy” is used again in “Thousands of mourners wait in silence to pay final respects to slain women.” It read “people read them [notes of condolences] intently, as if they might hold some explanation for the tragedy” (A1). “Tragedy” does not problematize the femicidal nature of what happened, and it also continues to perpetuate the idea that this act had no sane or rational grounds, that there is no explanation.

The *Star* continued to use problematic wording in its later coverage. On December 10th 1989, the article “Devastated families say sad goodbyes” mentions that the mass femicide was a “calculated rampage” (A2). This disseminates a mixed message because it acknowledges that the killing was calculated/planned, however the term “rampage,” as has been noted, means a period of violent and uncontrollable behaviour.

Problematic wording was regularly used in descriptions of Lépine. For instance, the *Star*'s December 7th and 8th coverage and the *Globe*'s December 11th coverage focused on Lépine's inhumanity and representation of him as a mass murderer in their explanations of his shooting of women students: “Witnesses to the mass murder said the gunman, dressed in a hunting outfit, seemed inhumanly calm as he carried out the slaughter in the university...” (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1) and “Witnesses to last week's mass murder said that when Mr. Lépine burst into the classroom at the École Polytechnique...” (*Globe*, Dec. 11, 1989, A1+). Using terms like “inhumanly” removes the responsibility of the perpetrator from behaving humanely, from being responsible for his actions. “Slaughter” also perpetuates the assumption that Lépine's actions were gender neutral. Positing Lépine within the discourse of “mass murderer” is also problematic, because referencing Lépine in terms of “mass murder” does not problematize that a man committed the misogynist act exclusively against women. Lépine is characterized according to conceptions of mass murderers, murderers that usually commit the act of multiple murders against random people, instead of him being considered a misogynist murder.

Language that Perpetuates False and Sexist Understandings of (the) Crime

The newspaper coverage also chose terms that communicated false and/or sexist understandings of the “Montreal massacre.” False understandings of the misogynist killer were perpetuated with the use of words like “madman,” in the quotation, “what can you do when some idiot, some madman, comes in” (*Star*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1+). The articles suggested Lépine had psychological problems, but no psychiatric history was found; referred to, or even produced, as the police stated he had no known psychological problems. A similar example is found in the *Gazette*’s December 7th 1989 coverage on A1. Montreal Mayor Jean Doré was quoted as saying the “massacre” was “the act of a maniac” and regular references were made to a “nut shooting” (A1, A4). Like the false classifications of Lépine as a madman, nut, or maniac, quotes were included in the *Globe*’s coverage that referred to Lépine’s shooting of victims as the “terrifying scene as a gunman began firing at random” (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A5). Words like “random” were used regularly; that he fired at random, although Lépine’s actions clearly were not random.

The frequent use of “senseless killing” also perpetuates false understandings of the mass femicide. An example of the use is, “Quebeckers tried to come to terms with a man’s senseless killing of 14 young women” (*Globe*, Dec. 8, 1989, A1). The use of “senseless” in regard to Lépine’s murder of 14 women actually supposes that his act was meaningless, crazy, illogical, irrational or insignificant, which this femicide, and Lépine’s expressed political motivations, were not. Perpetuating the theme that Lépine’s actions were senseless throughout the coverage reveals the sexism inherent in the coverage.

Perpetuating this message denies/obscures the sexism and extreme misogyny of Lépine's actions.

Use of Sensationalist Rhetoric, Extreme and Gory Details

A large majority of the newspaper coverage includes representations of Lépine and descriptions of the mass femicide that use sensationalist and highly detailed rhetoric. Sensationalist writing is a device regularly employed by reporters to sell their stories. The coverage that draws the most attention usually includes persuasive and titillating language as well as gory and extreme descriptions. Helen Benedict (1992) explains sensationalism as a journalistic tradition: “news must be the unusual, never the usual, [which] virtually guarantees that the press will ignore typical rapes or assaults [...] in favour of the bazaar, sensational, or gory” (8). The coverage of the “Montreal massacre” had ample examples of sensationalist writing and the inclusion of unnecessary details. Examples include the *Star*'s December 7th 1989 description of one of the women shot by Lépine: “Isabelle Charest's bloodied face. Charest, 19, lost an ear and had part of her face torn off” (A3). I find these reports to be too detailed. The coverage is sensationalistic, the rhetoric is exploitative, and the language used is included to draw attention to the more gory details of the crime.

The *Star* continued to use sensationalist words to describe the mass femicide at the École Polytechnique. In the December 8th 1989 coverage words like “bloodbath” and “obsession” are used regularly. The language used and the schematic forms, the way the articles employ great detail in describing Lépine and the killings, are meant to draw attention to the article, and sell more newspapers. The *Gazette*'s coverage of December 7th and 8th 1989 provide a great deal of detail including the amount of blood left from the

shooting and a description from an Urgences Santé doctor who exclaimed “what we saw is indescribable. There was blood everywhere” (A1). Jack Todd’s article, found on the front page of the *Gazette*, wrote “Someone heard the gunman say ‘I want the women.’ And he got them. In the classroom, in the corridors, in the cafeteria” (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). The reporter, Jack Todd, described the women shot by Lépine as if they were hunting prizes; this is very sensationalist, too simplistic, and disturbing. I believe Todd’s writing style to be problematic because he objectified the female victims of Lépine’s sexist and misogynist mass murder by explaining them as “and he got them,” he also ignores the sexism of Lépine’s act by describing it without explaining Lépine’s intent for “wanting the women.”

The use of extreme detail is common in the *Gazette*’s December 7th 1989 article: “Policeman finds his daughter among the victims of bloodbath” (A1), reported by Elizabeth Thompson. The language, including words like “bloodbath,” is extremely sensationalist and unnecessary. Thompson interviewed Richard Doin, spokesperson for the University, in her article: “Doin speculated the bloodbath was the work of a psychopath” (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A1). This quote reiterates the first narrative explanation (as explained in the previous chapter) that considered Lépine, a mad man. The December 7th 1989 article goes on to quote Doin again: “I am personally a hunter and I think it might have been a really powerful rifle,” he said (A1, A4). I find this quote to be unnecessary because I do not believe that the focus of the article should be on Doin’s hunting experience. Other examples of sensationalist writing include: “he shot his way through three floors,” “bloodbath,” “his obsessions” (*Gazette*, Dec. 8, 1989, A1) and sensationalist language also is used, by reporter Hubert Balch in the *Gazette*’s December

9th 1989 coverage, where Balch describes “city of walking wounded,” “victims of a madman consumed by volcanic hatreds and armed with an automatic hunting rifle,” “butchery,” and “got into the hands of a kook” (B1).

The final examples of sensationalist rhetoric I will draw attention to are found in the December 10th 1989 article on page A1, “We Mourn” by reporter James Quig. The opening statements of the article are problematic as the language is based in war analogies: “They were killed in action. They died in a war” (A1). The reporter chose to write in stereotypes, “they wanted to be more than sugar and spice everything nice” (A1). This draws on the social construction of females as non-oppositional, as good and nice, and maintains what girls are supposed to be like. The women killed by Lépine, however, were seen (by him) as breaking the rules, as wanting more than what they were supposed to, so as transgressive. Quig then chose a male role model, Martin Luther King, with whom to compare the 14 women killed by Lépine: “[A]nd they had a dream,” he writes, “that was their only weapon, a dream” (A1). I find the reference made to a male role model troubling, as the reporter could have included a female engineer role model, also the reference to “weapon” is relying on violence/war analogies which is violent in nature and unnecessary.

The language these reporters chose in these articles diverts attention away from Lépine’s political and misogynist motivations and focuses instead on gory details, false explanations about Lépine’s actions and demeaning and objectifying descriptions of the female students. Many reporters who covered the events of Lépine’s mass femicide concentrate on aspects of the crime that obscure the sexist and highly misogynist foundation of the shooting of women.

Representations of Female Victims and Survivors, and of Women in General

The representation of women in the newspaper coverage of the “Montreal massacre” reveals the problematic and sometimes sexist views of the news media in its consideration of women. Benedict (1992) explains that women “fare badly at the hands of the press. Pushed into subordinate roles of sex objects, wives, mothers, or crime victims, they have little opportunity to be portrayed as self-determining individuals” (23). Benedict’s assessment of representations of women in the press remains true in the coverage of the “Montreal massacre,” where women were continually depicted in limited and problematic ways. The articles concerned with the “Montreal massacre” frequently posited the female victims as “innocent girls,” female survivors were portrayed as passive and apolitical, and feminists were often represented as radical opportunists. A feminist critical discourse analysis provides a challenge and problematizing of the newspapers reiteration and reinforcement of patriarchal constructions of feminine subjectivities.

In the newspaper coverage women are routinely represented negatively or as subordinate and passive. Patriarchal constructions of feminine subjectivities are demonstrated in the newspaper’s continual presentation of women as purely innocent victims; the 14 women killed by Lépine are represented in this limited way. Female survivors are also represented in limited ways, for example as apolitical, as the interview with female survivor, Nathalie Provost, will show. Feminists and/or professional women are frequently portrayed in negative and demeaning ways.

The feminist critical analysis I employ in this thesis demonstrates the sexism and unequal representations implicit in the patriarchal discourses used by the newspapers that

covered the “Montreal massacre.” I will specifically analyze how Lépine’s female victims were represented; typically they were infantilized as girls or presented as innocents with limited to no agency. I will also examine how the language chosen to describe women in the coverage is problematic and sexist. Central to this analysis, however, is the reiteration of patriarchal definitions of feminine subjectivities.

Patriarchal discourses are particularly reiterated and perpetuated in the news coverage of Nathalie Provost’s testimony. Nathalie Provost was one of the women who survived Lépine’s femicidal violence, she described her experience in a press conference that will be analyzed in this section.

Women as “Girls”

References to female students in numerous newspaper articles regularly involved labeling the murdered women as “girls.” The female students attending classes at the École Polytechnique were all adult women, over the age of 19, each of them planning to become engineers. The incessant reference to women as girls is common in North American society, more regular than referring to adult men as boys, where we are most familiar with “boy” is through the racial subordination of African American men. Benedict (1992) explains that “young men in their twenties are called men or youths, not boys,” whereas a woman in her twenties is “not only occasionally referred to as a girl, but even as a ‘little girl’” (21). Male students, professors, university officials, police officers and parents regularly used the word “girl” instead of woman in their descriptions of the 14 women killed by Lépine. An example of this is found in the *Star*’s December 7th 1989 coverage where male witnesses referred to the women in the classroom (violently separated by Lépine) as “girls.” In “It seemed like a joke – until the killing” (A1). Eric

Chavarie is quoted saying Lépine “separated us into two groups, the guys in one corner and the girls in (another) corner. When that was done, he asked the guys to leave. He left the girls in there” (A1). I acknowledge that men are also regularly referred to as “guys,” however, I do not believe “guys” signifies youth and infancy the same way “girls” does when used to describe adult women. “Girls” linguistically and symbolically infantilizes the women killed by Lépine, who was always referred to as a man, “twenty – five year old gunman” (*Star*, Dec. 8, 1989, A1).

Other examples of infantilizing representations are found in the *Globe* and *Star*'s descriptions of the female victims. The *Star*'s, “The 14 women gunned down in Montreal” (Dec. 9, 1989, A1) is an example of this, as one of the victims, Barbara Daigneault, 22, is described as “a marvelous girl, very nice, very smart” (*Star*, Dec. 9, 1989, A1). Another victim, Anne-Marie Edward, 21, is described by a neighbour as “a really sweet kid” (*Star*, Dec. 8, 1989, A1). In the December 10th *Star*, the article “Devastated families say sad goodbyes” refers to the women's youth and innocence. For example, the reporter wrote that, “The bullet wounds had been skillfully hidden, but youth and innocence were still pathetically evident” (A1). It is interesting that it is their age that makes this sad to the newspaper's reporter, not that 14 women were killed. The article referred to women as “girls,” as well as “kids.” References such as these posit the women killed by Lépine in an infantilized fashion, encouraging the view of these women as passive, juvenile, dependent and innocent. Few representations of the female victims describe them as self-determining, independent women. Referring to the women as “kids” is also problematic as it is another example of infantilizing and gender neutral language.

Innocent “Girls” Discourse

Representations of the 14 female victims were repeatedly framed within an “innocent girls” discourse. This discourse situates the women shot by Lépine on December 6th 1989 as purely innocent, which maintains the idea that the female victims are inactive and passive. Meyers (1997) explains that women who are the victims of rapists or mass murderers “tend to be cast in the news as innocent. However, even these women can be deemed guilty of causing their own demise if they have transgressed the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour” (118). Lépine believed that the women he set out to kill were the cause of their own demise as they were taking engineering positions away from men like him. The news coverage frequently referred to the female students at the École Polytechnique as students in a traditionally male discipline, a traditional “male bastion,” which, within patriarchal discourses, implicitly places the women in a space where they should not be.

The *Gazette*’s December 7th 1989 article “Couple’s evening to celebrate turns into nightmare” (A3) provides an example of the regular references made to “innocent women.” The reporter wrote of: “wondering what had triggered this man’s vendetta against innocent women and questioning how this could have happened on the staid University of Montreal campus” (A3). The reference to the female victims as innocent is found throughout the newspaper coverage. I do not deny that these women were innocent victims; however, this description posits the women in limited ways that perpetuate feminine passivity and compliance. This limited description is problematic because the women were rarely, if ever, represented as self-determining, as active in resisting Lépine, or as strong and independent women.

The December 11th 1989 article of the *Star*, “Flowers fill ‘Chapel of Rest’ as 8,000 express grief” (A1) and continues, “Thousands line up to mourn slain women” (A3). Reporter Shelley Page included the reaction of female engineering student, Marjolaine Lachance: “I always thought there was no safer place to be than at school.” This statement compliments the idea that violent killings do not happen in Canada, as many people were quoted as saying in their response to the “massacre.” This perpetuates the silence that surrounds the everyday violences women experience and endure in patriarchal cultures and on university campuses specifically. The female student, M. Lachance, is then quoted as saying, “It wasn’t like these girls were on the street or involved in drugs, they were innocent” (A3). This statement is very problematic because once again it refers to the women killed as “girls.” It also maintains the discourse that newspaper coverage about violence against women tends to perpetuate: that only women who are “bad-girls,” who are involved in drugs, or living on the street are those that get hurt, raped or killed, but also that violence against those “kinds” of women is understandable and acceptable

Meyers (1997) demonstrates the enforcement of the patriarchal good-girl/bad-girl discourse; as she has shown, newspaper coverage regularly reinforces this “good-girl/bad-girl” dichotomy. She states, “the representation of women who are the victims of sexist violence polarizes around the culturally defined “virgin-whore” or “good girl-bad girl” dichotomy so that women appear to be either innocent or to blame for their victimization” (9). Meyers believes that the “good girl-bad girl dichotomy evident in news coverage of violence against women reflects patriarchal notions about the “proper” place and role of women” (24). The pervasive patriarchal dichotomy of women victims

of violence as good girl/innocent, or bad girl/deserving of violence, is reinforced and perpetuated by the *Star*. Lachance's quote also shows that women believe in this dichotomy and enforces the idea that the women killed by Lépine were good, innocent girls who did not deserve to die. No woman deserves to die at the hands of male violence. This discourse is problematic because it represents patriarchal language, and because it perpetuates patriarchal discourses and sexism, a form of patriarchal discourse.

Problematic Descriptions of Women

Descriptions of women in the coverage of the "Montreal massacre" have proven to be problematic and deserving of criticism as they often perpetuate sexist and demeaning representations of women. Apart from the constant use of patriarchal dichotomies, positioning "good and bad girls" against one another, the *Star*'s coverage also included problematic language in its descriptions of women. In the December 9th 1989 article "Inside the Mind of a Mass Murderer" (D1), Lois Sweet depicts Lépine and his motive, based on an interview with anthropologist Elliott Leyton. Sweet focuses on Lépine as a mass murderer and represents the female victims in a negative, demeaning way, according to Leyton's classification of women engineering students as arrogant. Leyton describes people like Lépine as "deprived of their place in society, most often it was race, social class, or ethnic group that was the perceived threat, here it looks as if it is gender, uppity women" (D1). This reference is problematic for many reasons. Initially it denies the large number of femicides that have taken place throughout history, as Leyton's comment does not acknowledge that violence, especially violence against women, can be and usually is gendered. It is problematic because he is saying "it looks as if it is gender," when Lépine exclaimed, and the police broadcast, that his murder was

gendered. Lépine wanted to kill women and only women. It is also very troubling that he refers to the female student as “uppity women” because this references the idea that women had actually transgressed gender boundaries. While Lépine may have perceived the women engineering students as transgressing gender boundaries, the inclusion of Leyton’s reference to the women as “uppity,” further demeans the female students killed by Lépine.

Leyton demeans the female students by claiming they were simply uppity women and represents them using sexist language. In Leyton’s statement about Lépine’s murder as resulting from the perceived threat women in engineering symbolized; Leyton could have framed his description of the women engineering students as educated women. Uppity, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2001), means self-important, arrogant (2035). I have problems with the way this academic characterizes Lépine and the women he killed. His language choice blames the women for being killed because they are seen as arrogant and self-confident which women are not suppose to be in a patriarchal society. His description of these women as uppity causes them to be seen as having crossed the line of appropriate female behaviour, as transgressive and, thus because of this, they were killed.

The *Gazette* coverage regularly referred to women in problematic ways. For examples, they describe one of the women according to her clothing. In the *Gazette* December 7th 1989 article, “Massacre started in cafeteria, spread to the halls and classrooms.” Reporter Lynn Moore provided a detailed and gory account of the events of December 6th 1989. One woman was described according to what she was wearing and her hair colour. The article read, “She was a blond who had worn a bulky, black, white

and red sweater to school that day. She lay north to [Lépine's] body" (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A4). These types of representations limit how the readers understand and view women as they simply objectify the woman based in her external appearance.

Representing women according to their appearance and not to their intellect coincides with patriarchal constructions of "proper" feminine subjectivities. Gendered social constructions of feminine and masculine identities within patriarchal societies have relegated more worth to women according to her physical appearance and her sex-appeal, than her intellect. Male subjectivities have been and continue to be constructed according to their intelligence, power and strength. Discourse based in gendered social constructions of women and men are regularly perpetuated through media, in advertisements, film, magazines, and newspapers coverage.

The Coverage of Nathalie Provost

On December 9th 1989 the coverage of Lépine's "massacre" of 14 women directed attention to one of the female survivors who chose to speak with the press about the shooting. Two of the three newspapers who covered the "Montreal massacre," the *Gazette* and the *Globe*, each prioritized the interview with survivor Nathalie Provost. My analysis will demonstrate that because of the quotations the press included of Provost's account of the shooting, her comments about Lépine and the violence he committed, they correspond with the problematic discourses already presented by the news coverage. The messages the newspapers included from Provost's interview also helped to reinforce patriarchal understandings of Lépine's misogynist killing. Representations of Provost's experience denied Lépine's sexism and ignored male privilege in patriarchal societies.

This analysis will also examine how the newspapers' focus on the interview with Provost reiterates and reinforces patriarchal constructions of "proper" feminine subjectivities.

The *Gazette* and the *Globe* covered Provost's interview and each placed a large picture of the recovering survivor on their front page. The *Gazette*'s article, "Victim tried to reason with killer," reported by Walter Buchignani explains Provost's reasons for meeting with the press. Provost is quoted as stating she wanted to speak to the news media; she was the only "hospitalized student to have done so" (*Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1989, A7). Provost wanted to deliver three messages. Her first message, she said, was: "she doesn't want anyone to feel guilty about what happened" (*Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1989, A7) and made reference to being upset over suggestions that some students (perhaps the men who were forced to leave the classroom) could have tried to stop the gunman. Secondly, she said, "it's important for students at the École Polytechnique to continue their lives" and "try to forget what happened" (A7). Provost's third message was to women, saying that they should not be dissuaded from entering engineering, or any other male-dominated career. She said "I ask you to envision that possibility with the same enthusiasm that you had before what happened Wednesday" (A7). Provost's messages are honourable and positive. This one female survivor used the pervasive power of the media to communicate her sentiments about Lépine and the "massacre."

The coverage, however, focused less attention on her three specific messages to the public than on her other statements that posited her as apolitical, not feminist, and as exhibiting "appropriate" feminine behaviour of feeling sorry and compassionate toward Lépine. The inclusion of Provost's quote, "I still don't understand" (A7), in the December 9th *Gazette* article perpetuates the idea that Lépine's motives were not known,

and reiterates the first narrative, which described Lépine as a crazed killer. However, Provost was aware that Lépine was at the École Polytechnique on December 6th to kill women, because she was in the classroom where he shot many of the women killed that day. Thus the quote included in the article, that Provost did not understand what happened, is problematic because it denies the sexism and misogyny inherent in Lépine's actions. The *Gazette's* article relied on how Provost made no mention of the fact that the killings were gendered; and these omissions, therefore, represent Provost as a perfect witness for the newspapers which continued to reiterate that the crime was not an indication of male violence and misogyny against females in Canadian society.

Provost explained to the news media that she attempted to speak to Lépine before he shot the women he had stand in front of him. She tried to reason with Lépine by saying "we are only women in engineering who want to live a normal life" (*Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1989, A1+), however, this proved to be futile. According to Provost's quotations included in the article, Lépine asked the women if they knew why he had come. She said, "Obviously we said no" and he continued by saying it was because he was "against feminism" (A1, A7). Lépine would not have wanted women involved in engineering whether they were feminists or not, he set out to kill women because he felt women were taking his position in the engineering school, a position he believed was rightfully his as a man, and because he felt women were taking power away from men for becoming more involved in society. Provost's statement that "we are only women, we are not feminists, and even if we were it does not mean we have anything against men" (A7), demonstrates that she did not directly link his violence to something systemic. The newspaper articles about Provost's press conference represent her as naïve, as innocent, and apolitical as she

did not want to, or could not, associate his hatred of women with the killing of 14 women at the university that night. In the *Globe*, as in the *Gazette*, Provost is quoted as encouraging people “not to entertain bad feelings of guilt about the tragedy” (*Globe*, Dec. 9, 1989, A1+). References made to Lépine’s mass femicide as a tragedy does not problematize Lépine’s sexism and misogyny, or his belief that men were rightfully more deserving of education than women. His sexist thoughts about women’s “place” worked to justify his femicide of the 14 female students. The quotations included in the articles by Provost did not challenge the sexism inherent in Lépine’s motive for the mass femicide, at a time when his reasons were publicly known.

Provost’s testament, as it is represented in the newspaper articles, I believe is an idealized version of what happened and she is an ideal female witness, survivor, for the newspaper to interview. The selective representations of Provost reinforce feminine subjectivity that patriarchy has defined as “proper.” The most direct example comes from her own reaction to Lépine’s lethal violence. The *Globe*’s December 9th article “Don’t have feelings of guilt, woman hurt in massacre urges her fellow students,” quoted Provost as she explained her feelings of pity for Lépine, “I have not forgiven him yet, but I have a lot of pity for this guy” (*Globe*, Dec. 9, 1989, A1+). This is worth problematizing because the newspaper prioritized Provost’s admission that she felt pity, felt sympathy for Lépine, over prioritizing the three messages she wanted to communicate in the press conference and thus represents her according to an “appropriate” feminine reaction, as feeling pity and sympathy for Lépine is not aggressive, non violent, and non-threatening. It is also a non active and apolitical response. At first Provost said that she was so mad at him she wanted to kill him “if I

could. Now, after a few days of thinking about it, I am still angry, I still don't understand, but I have pity for him, you know?" (A1, A2). This quote is confusing and it is hard to understand what Provost is saying. Youth say "you know" quite often, and to quote it shows the representation of her as young and naïve. As well, the mention of her saying "I wanted to kill him if I could" shows her anger, but positions her in a passive feminine role, which is constructed in a way as to accord with the idea that women do not react to violence, that they do not stand up for themselves against male violence.

The structure of the articles about Provost's press conference, the messages and quotations the reporters included, describe Provost in ways that position her as unaware of the misogyny of Lépine's violence and how this misogyny can turn violent. Provost is reported in the *Globe* article as having tried to reason with Lépine, she said "Look we are just women studying engineering, not necessarily feminists ready to march on the streets to shout we are against men, just students intent on leading a normal life" (Dec. 9, 1989, A1, A2). This obviously did not keep women from being shot. Lépine still shot the women because they were women, and he was determined to kill women, which is a clear example of his misogyny. However, Lépine's misogyny continued to be ignored in the newspaper coverage of December 6th while discourses about his insanity and mass murderer status remained central in the newspaper articles. Lépine decided that he wanted to kill women because they were usurping his power and he wanted it back!

Provost urged the reporters to "use the power of information to explain to men that women are equal to them. I am as much a human being as if I were a man; I deserve as much respect, and I have the right to have my life the way I want it" (A1, A2). Provost's statement is again, honourable however, the representations and the quotes

included in the articles of Provost rely on and perpetuate the “myth of meritocracy,” and show her as denying that men are more powerful and have more access to established systems in the public domain and have more control within social intuitions and social structures. The quotations expressed by Provost that the December 9th newspaper articles included did not integrate any statements that would cause her to be perceived as a feminist as she was represented, through her own statements, not to be seen as one. Saying she is as much a human being as a man, Provost is, according to a feminist critical analysis, unfortunately misled. Misogyny, sexism and anti-feminism played out in the deaths of the 14 female students at the École Polytechnique. This mass femicide demonstrates how women are not considered equal; Provost does not admit this.

The newspaper articles about Nathalie Provost’s reaction to Lépine’s mass femicide are constructed in such a way that position Provost as non-feminist, and thus reluctant to be seen as political. Focus on Provost is directed, instead, to her sympathy, her pity, for Lépine. Provost comes across as a perfect icon of passive femininity for those newspapers that continually ignored the misogyny of his act. She remained apolitical about Lépine’s motivations and as the only woman interviewed directly after the mass femicide, she was seen as a valid “first hand” source. Unfortunately, the limited representations of Provost’s testaments symbolize and perpetuate patriarchal constructions of feminine subjectivities as through her own narrative and the newspapers’ focus position her as non-aggressive, non-threatening, sympathetic and compassionate. The representations also reinforce the newspapers’ patriarchal discourses which did/do not link Lépine’s lethal, femicidal, violence with sexism and systemic violence against women.

The Perpetrator

The newspaper coverage of this mass femicide directed most of its attention to the male perpetrator. The newspaper reports concerned themselves with providing a large amount of information about Lépine's childhood, his personality, his "obsessions," and the final days before he took the lives of 14 women and then his own. The newspaper paid far more attention to the male perpetrator than to the 14 female victims. This disparity in the coverage indicates the priority the news media places on violent men over victimized women. The disproportionate focus on men was even more evident in the excessive amount of attention directed toward Lépine.

A feminist critical discourse analysis of the articles concerned with Lépine's life and personality is crucial as it illustrates the continual attention paid to male perpetrators rather than attention paid to women who are the victims of lethal male violence. This analysis explains how the articles position Lépine, his subjectivity, in problematic ways, which in turn perpetuate patriarchal constructions of male subjectivities. Male identity is constructed within patriarchal societies by conceptualizing and positioning the male as powerful, as "naturally" aggressive, and (at times) as violent. These constructions of male subjectivity are perpetuated through the articles about Lépine because so much attention is paid to his hyper-masculine identity (in the media's glorification of the "Montreal massacre").

Critical analysis of the articles profiling the Montreal "mass murderer" demonstrate that the coverage focused on Lépine's intelligence, and concurrently, his madness and supposed insanity, his abusive childhood and ethnic family, his inability to have relationships with women and his lack of involvement in drugs or alcohol.

Throughout, patriarchal discourses are called upon to rationalize or excuse Lépine's misogynist act, ignore his actions as inherently sexist, and to perpetuate discourses that encourage the notion that strangers are of more danger to women than men they know. This obscures the reality of women's everyday experience with violence committed by men they know.

The Constructed Profiles of Marc Lépine

The coverage of the two days following the mass femicide directed attention to the police's conceptualization of Lépine's reasoning for the murders of 14 women, however, the coverage quickly displaced attention to Lépine as a madman, his pathology, and his troubled childhood. The *Star* and the *Globe* each included responses from police who explained Lépine's actions. The December 7th 1989 *Star* article "14 women killed in massacre," quotes police officer Jacques Duchesneau saying, "He had a kind of grudge against women" (A1). Explaining Lépine's misogyny as a "grudge" is problematic, it suggests that the women had "done" something to Lépine, thus he held a grudge, and it belittles the misogynist act and the sexism in Lépine's motivation. It does explain, however, that Lépine's actions were specifically directed at women. The police officer continued to explain that Lépine was troubled, "Marc had been unhappy for the last seven years and was rejected by the armed forces because he wasn't a 'social person.'" (A1). This statement suggests a rationale and introduces the multiple excuses made for Lépine's actions, many of which were included in numerous articles about him.

In constructing a profile of Lépine, the *Globe* also reported on Lépine's reasons for committing the mass femicide of 14 women at the École Polytechnique. In the article "Suicide note contains apparent hit list," the *Globe* quoted police officer Duchesneau

who referred to Lépine's suicide note which explained his reason for the December 6th "massacre," "he mentioned he was doing this for political reasons. He said feminists have always ruined his life" (*Globe*, Dec. 8, 1989, A1). The inclusion of this quote demonstrates the political reasoning behind Lépine's actions. Therefore, the interpretations that followed the "massacre," those which posited Lépine's actions as random and that labeled them as crazy and senseless, and the interpretations that denied his violent act was associated with gendered relations of power, were false constructions of Lépine's motivations.

The newspapers, the *Star* and the *Globe* in particular, provided vast amounts of details about Lépine's behaviours and mental state. Critical analysis of the coverage illustrates that the descriptions of Lépine disseminate mixed messages and a high degree of presupposition. In the *Star*'s December 8th 1989 article "War videos obsessed murderer, Lépine prepared hit list of 15 female victims, letter reveals," police were quoted saying Lépine could be "gentle and courteous" with women, but if something went wrong in a relationship he fled to his room and refused to speak" (A1). Positing Lépine according to his lack of, or strained, relationships with women was a common theme in the coverage. This explanation positions Lépine as humane, gentle and courteous, but then communicates that he was odd and once he "fled to his room" if something went wrong. This information is mixed and confusing. The articles detail Lépine's life throughout their profiles of him: single, unemployed, obsessed with war films, and was never involved with alcohol or drugs, which was also referenced regularly.

The *Star*'s December 9th 1989 coverage included two articles, located on A12 and A13, which both relied on explanations of Lépine as strange, obsessive, and pathological.

In the article “Gunman was a loner, teachers recall,” Lépine is continually portrayed according to his abstinence from alcohol or drugs, his obsessions with war films and electronics, and that he was a loner. Analyzing the articles written about the “Montreal massacre” shows that these references were made routinely and repeatedly. This demonstrates that Lépine is constructed as strange, mad, a loner, a recluse, obsessed, but never intoxicated. These references about Lépine, his behaviour, as “obsessed,” and like a “recluse,” perpetuates the notion that he was pathological, even though the news coverage explains that he had no psychiatric history. The coverage includes quotes from witnesses and neighbours which posit Lépine as abnormal. One man, his neighbour, is quoted as saying, “He didn’t strike me as a normal person. He had these strange eyes, sort of cold” (*Star*, Dec. 9, 1989, A12). This implies that Lépine was bound to commit the crime. It is difficult to consider Lépine as rational when constant references are made about his abnormality.

The article on A13 of the *Star* “City of tears to bury dead at Notre Dame,” again diverts attention from the female victims and focuses it on Lépine’s constructed pathology. The *Star* article quoted one of Lépine’s teachers, “He was very usual, average, plain and typical,” Ouellette said.” The article continued with, “But he is left with an uncomfortable feeling that something sinister lurked beneath an ordinary exterior” (*Star*, Dec. 9, 1989, A12). This reference is problematic as the reader does not know if the teacher actually said this. Also, the teacher interviewed knew Lépine as a high school student, which does not mean, should not mean, that the readers should understand Lépine had these murderous thoughts during his high school years. The rhetoric included in the article positions Lépine in the image of an unpredictable and

sinister person. There is a great deal of presupposition here; it is assumed that Lépine was a bad person, one who was able to commit such a crime because he had “these strange eyes,” and because he was a loner. This article is sensationalistic and problematic because it relies on assumptions about Lépine based in limited explanations and limited information about his character.

The confusing and problematic coverage continued as the *Gazette* detailed Lépine’s lifestyle. On December 8th 1989 in the article “Lépine was a recluse and noisy at night neighbor says,” reporters Graeme Hamilton and Andrew McIntosh emphasized Lépine’s abnormalities and constructed him through his neighbours’ (who did not even know Lépine) opinions. In this article the reporters interview people that lived near Lépine. They reinforce that he was an introvert, a loner, a recluse. The reporters, however, also quote a neighbour as saying “He looked like a recluse, an introvert, but he didn’t look like a killer.” Why include such a quote? I believe that the newspaper coverage is using references like this one to posit Lépine as unlike any one else the reader might recognize, in order to position him as an aberration. This is a strange reference that functions to perpetuate and reiterate stereotypical narratives of types of killers and “bad people.” Lépine is being posited as a crazed and irrational killer. The newspaper’s omissions and their refusal to consider him as a misogynist killer is structured through the emphasis on the inclusion of quotes that see him as crazy by people who knew him and thus, his actions as everything but sexist and misogynist, because to be sexist and misogynist would be normal ways of being and this is antithetical to his abnormality.

The *Gazette*’s December 9th 1989 article “Killer’s father beat him as a child” by Rod MacDonell, Elizabeth Thompson, Andrew McIntosh, and William Marsden to

illustrate Marc Lépine's childhood. They interview Lépine's childhood friend Jean Bélanger, who receives a great deal of space in the paper coverage because he knew Lépine when they were children. The reporters posit Lépine as a normal guy, intelligent and active, yet they continually reference that he had no girlfriends, that he was very shy, and a loner, and again that he never took to drugs, alcohol or smoking. There are constant references made to Lépine's inability to have relationships with women, usually this is all that is said, "Lépine's inability to have a relationship with women" (*Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1989, A1, A7). However, this ignores other statements which say he never seemed interested in women, or was a complete loner.

The article situates Lépine's behaviours between abnormal and normal, thus perpetuating mixed messages and confusion. The articles lack a coherent message about Lépine's personality and focus attention on his obsessions and habits as opposed to questioning the sexism and misogyny he grew up with and later performed. Lépine, unfortunately, was a victim of child abuse. However, men who are victims of child abuse do not routinely kill women like Lépine did, therefore the narrative about his child abuse causing the "massacre" is false and does not problematize Lépine's sexism and hatred of women, of feminists. The articles chose to include information that is titillating and persuasive, information that is unnecessary and overindulgent. The newspaper coverage did not challenge Lépine's sexism even after mentioning his acts were politically motivated and directed at (killing) feminists. Instead, they perpetuated discourses that view Lépine as isolated from society, as inhuman, which positions him as a deviation who cannot be held responsible for his misogynist actions.

The *Globe*'s coverage, while less detailed in its accounts and less sensationalist in its rhetoric, still perpetuated problematic constructions of Lépine's behaviours and mental state. On December 8th 1989 the first article devoted wholly to Lépine, "Killer's Letter Blames Feminists, Man very intelligent, but deeply troubled, police say" included a narrative about Marc Lépine. The article explained that the police considered Lépine "a very intelligent, but deeply troubled young man, with no known psychiatric history" (A1). The police described Lépine as unemployed and said that he had serious difficulties establishing relationships with women. In my analysis of numerous articles about Lépine, I have understood that Lépine was pleasant to his best friend, Jean Belanger's girlfriends, and it would appear that he had a decent relationship with his mother, but this is not made clear because she is described as never being home, as always working. The coverage does not appear to include accounts of Lépine as having very many, if any, other relationships with women. Therefore, the constant references to Lépine's "difficulties establishing relationships with women" are rarely explained, and perhaps suggest that the absence of women is related to these difficulties.

The constant references made to Lépine not having relationships with women are possibly included because the reporters are searching for an explanation for his violence. Perhaps if he had abused his girlfriend his mass femicide would have established a pattern? The articles concerning Lépine are questionable and problematic, they do not focus attention on Lépine's misogyny and they ignore the sexism of his actions. Discourses about Lépine's obsessions and insanity, about the childhood abuse committed by an abusive father, divert attention from his sexist act and perpetuate patriarchal discourses that focus on the fear of violence committed by random strangers rather than

explaining that Lépine's mass femicide was directly related to patriarchal power and control and the physical oppression and violence of men.

The *Globe*'s article: "Suicide note contains apparent hit list" also describes Lépine as intelligent; he read a lot, was "obsessive" in terms of his collection of aggressive and violent media like war movies, and he really enjoyed electronics. The references to his supposed "obsessions" are not all that different from those of many young males' interests, meaning many young men and boys centre their entertainment on aggressive (and violent) entertainment. These references to his "macho" interests are interesting as it raises the issue of constructed masculine subjectivities and what is appropriate for men to enjoy as entertainment. Lépine's interests are "obsessions" while millions of dollars are made in the sale of violent entertainment like video games and movies which are representations of violence and, most often, of male aggression. The articles do not problematize the amount of violence in the media and instead posit Lépine as pathological for being "obsessed" with violent war films. The discourse perpetuated implicitly reinforces masculine identifications with violence through entertainment without questioning its larger social effect. This discourse perpetuates the understanding of the perpetrator as unique which functions to isolate Lépine (and his violent mass femicide), separating him from others who consume large amounts of violent and aggressive entertainment. The *Globe*'s December 8th article relegates Lépine to a subjective status separate from all of humanity, this presents problematic messages as the article does not question the violence in media, it blames Lépine for being aberrant and violent because he consumed a great deal of the media himself.

Both the *Star* and the *Gazette* included a two-part series of articles about Lépine's life. The first focused on Lépine's childhood, his parents, the abuse he suffered at the hands of his "Algerian father," his schooling, and his behaviour as a young man. The second part examined his actions leading up to December 6th. I am not convinced that the profile was necessary as it glorifies the killer by providing such a great deal of space in the newspaper to Lépine. The profile disseminates a construction of Lépine's family according to religion, Lépine's father was Muslim, his mother was Christian. This also contains a narrative about good versus bad families, and Lépine came from a bad/broken family. It is easier to demonize Lépine, and to excuse him as well, because he did not come from a "nuclear" family.

The attention paid to Lépine's family and to his abusive childhood posits Lépine as a victim; however, the way the article was framed, it posits Lépine as an equivalent victim to the women he killed. The article also encourages the notions that the abuse caused him to become an insane victim, and that the abuse caused him to kill 14 women at the École Polytechnique. The *Star*'s December 9th 1989 article "Lépine beaten by father, mom says," consists of a narrative based in Lépine's childhood as the narrative explains, rationalizes, Lépine's killing of 14 women because he was a victim of child abuse at the hands of his "Algerian father." The coverage continually examined Lépine in an individualized manner, separately from the society where the crime occurred. The article enforces the idea that because of the abuse he endured as a child he became the killer of 14 women. This profile does not acknowledge the systemic injustices women endure, the misogyny that fed Lépine's hatred, nor does it comment on the regular

occurrence of femicides in our societies: when husbands, boyfriends, or past male partners kill the women with whom they were intimately involved.

The feminist critical discourse analysis I applied to these articles allowed me to challenge the omission and lack of acknowledgement of Lépine's misogyny. References were made to Lépine's abusive father as sexist, however, few admission were made of Lépine's murderous act being sexist itself, especially in those articles that offered profiles of Lépine's life. Lépine's hatred of women, of feminists, was ignored unchallenged, this perpetuate ignorance of the connection between Lépine's actions and violence against women, while focusing instead on the individualized pathology of the misogynist killer. Meyers (1997) explains that the news, as socially constructed, reflects the values of the male-dominated social order: "By perpetuating the idea that violence against women is a problem of individual pathology, the news disguises the social roots of battering (and femicide) while reinforcing stereotypes and myths" (50). The perpetuation of such discourses reaffirms and reinforces patriarchal control and oppression by concealing the every day sexism and misogyny inherent in Lépine's actions, while also encouraging ignorance and a lack of acknowledgement of femicidal violences, rooted in the male view of females as subordinate and expendable.

Masculine Subjectivities in Question

The language and the schematic forms employed in the coverage of Lépine, the constructed profiles of a "mass murderer," pathological killer, insane victim employ great detail as they are meant to draw attention to the newspapers and to be persuasive in forming the readers' opinions about Lépine. The extreme, detailed accounts, unfortunately, do not deal with the sexism and misogyny in Lépine's actions or

sentiments about women, nor does it problematize Lépine's aggressive behaviour. Discourses disseminated about Lépine's interests: the army, war films, and electronics indicate a highly macho, masculine man; as a society we condone aggressive behaviour in men, aggressive acts and masculine interests. Lépine's highly masculine interests, however, are considered obsessive even though aggressive and violent masculine subjectivities are often admired and glorified in the media and in society on a whole. For instance, our soldiers are considered heroes, and their heroism constructed through violent acts; violent (war) films, video games that include extreme violence, make a great deal of money. Thus, to root Lépine's mass femicide in the fact that he was "obsessed" with war films, violent games, and the army, helps to rationalize why Lépine did what he did. The discourse that is being perpetuated is that men who are loners, who are highly masculinized in terms of viewing violence and wanting to be in the army, are capable of becoming perpetrators of this type of crime. This rationale, however, does not question the large number of men who consume extreme violent media, nor does it problematize the amount of money made and invested in violence as a form of entertainment.

Lépine is constantly referred to as an aberration of the norm, even though many men live their lives like he did. Lépine was vilified according to his obsession with violent media in the news, even though patriarchal discourses of male subjectivity continually reinforce that men should be powerful and aggressive. Through denying how male violence against women is detrimental to society, patriarchal discourses in turn perpetuate images of men as violent. The way men deal with anger is regularly dismissed as "male aggression." When this aggression turns lethal, however, for example when men kill their wives, the male perpetrator is excused, or his actions are seen as crazy, as

an aberration of the norm, just as Lépine was characterized. This coverage must question how it is that masculine subjectivities are constructed, why masculine subjects manifest aggression in violent ways; and ask how it is that some men manage aggression through femicidal manifestations of power and control. Patriarchal discourses are challenged and seen as problematic in this thesis because they encourage the fixed understandings of men and women as unequal. Patriarchal discourses also reinforce constructions of masculine and feminine subjectivities, which posit the feminine, as subordinate and expendable and the masculine, manifested through aggression and violence, as powerful. This power is perpetuated and disseminated through the fixing of language within patriarchal discourses reiterated and reinforced in the news media which thus help to maintain the unequal, sexist society in which women are killed because they are women.

In the *Gazette*'s December 9th 1989 article "Killer's father beat him as a child," a quote from one of Lépine's teachers is included. Robert Ouellette is quoted as saying: "If you told me that a guy who was my student had done that, I would have thought of a lot of other names before coming up with his." The article continued stating that, "Ouellette described Lépine as always courteous, polite and pleasant – a normal person, that's all" (A1, A7). These two quotes send mixed messages about male subjectivities. In the first case the teacher admitted that he would have considered other boys/men from the class as being more capable of this violent act than of Lépine, admitting the violence and misogyny of male students he had taught. By suggesting Lépine was polite and pleasant, he goes against the theme of most articles – that Lépine was a mad killer with a monstrous past – this sends mixed messages about Lépine and the mass femicide. The coverage of all three newspapers constantly reaffirms this crime as isolated and yet, by

situating Lépine as both normal and abnormal, the articles disseminate mixed message about Lépine and the events of December 6th. The newspapers mixed messaging only confuses the reader and Lépine's inherent, violent, sexism goes unchallenged.

In the *Star's* December 9th 1989 profile of Lépine "Inside the Mind of a Mass Murderer," the reporter encouraged a discourse that maintains Lépine as a mass murderer (that he shot people randomly) instead of as a misogynist killer. This denies Lépine's political motivation and does not question the hyper-masculine identifications he embodied. The mass murderer discourse is explained in this article according to the work of anthropologist Elliott Leyton. Leyton compares Lépine to descriptions of different types of mass murderers, and Lépine is positioned within the "pseudo-commandoes," "the Rambo-types" (D1). This is not only sensationalistic, but draws on popular masculine movies to compare the misogynist killer; this is troubling because it ignores Lépine's sexism and misogyny but enforces how masculinity is perpetuated through images of violent, aggressive men.

My assessment, based in terms of a discourse analysis that includes the concept of femicide that explains the misogyny and rampant attitudes of sexism and how these attitudes contribute to acts of violence against women, problematizes the hyper-masculine identifications Lépine embodied and links them to misogyny and anti-feminism. Lépine chose the women he killed because they embodied, and performed, subjectivities deemed not appropriate for women within patriarchal societies.

Patriarchal Discourses and Mixed Messages

The discourses included in the media representations and coverage of the "Montreal massacre" disseminate patriarchal understandings of the killing of 14 women

by Marc Lépine. The discourses included by the newspaper coverage are rooted in patriarchy because they perpetuate ignorance toward Lépine's sexist and misogynist reasoning for the femicide of 14 women. The newspaper representations condone highly aggressive masculine subjective identification by not problematizing the way men's power issues, aggression and jealousy manifested in violence. The over-reliance on male, and sometimes female, backlash toward feminist interpretations of the mass femicide entrench patriarchal discourses as they vilify and demonize feminist interpretations. These discourses perpetuate ignorance about the link between Lépine's mass femicide of 14 women to systemic sexism and misogyny in society. Analyzing the newspaper coverage that relied on the first and second narrative explanations (as previously explained) of Lépine as an insane victim, and the aggressive backlash to feminist interpretations, allows me to explain the discourses as political and patriarchal.

This section examines how the coverage of the "Montreal massacre" disseminates problematic, patriarchal discourses. I found that a great deal of the coverage about the "Montreal massacre" communicated mixed messages. These include mixed messages in representations of the mass femicide that lead to the perpetuation of patriarchal and false understandings of the femicidal events over that of feminist explanations and interpretations.

I also found that four prominent narratives were disseminated in the newspaper coverage. The four main narratives that disseminate patriarchal discourses were as follows: reaction and backlash to feminist interpretations of the events of December 6th; support for the first and second narrative explanations which posited Lépine as insane and as a victim; the situating (forcing) of Lépine into the "mass murderer" categorization

which does not consider the gendered nature of his killing of only women; and the perpetuation of the “stranger-danger” discourse and the myth of safety, that crimes like Lépine’s do not happen in Canada.

Reactions and Backlash to Feminist Interpretations

A compelling example of problematic patriarchal reactions to Lépine’s killing of 14 women was found in the December 8th 1989 coverage of the *Star*. The article “War videos obsessed murderer, Lépine prepared hit list of 15 female victims, letter reveals,” written by Jane Armstrong and Shelley Page, provides an account of the police’s view of Lépine and his crime. In this article the MUC (explained earlier) explained that they were refusing to release the three-page suicide letter found in Lépine’s pocket. The article indicated that their rationale was: “We don’t want to give any bad ideas to other people out there, said Jacques Deschesneau” (A1). Including this statement, made by police, indicates that they believe that these sentiments are shared by many people in society. However, there is no mention of the killer’s misogyny or of social, systemic, misogyny. Because the article did not include a comment on the (sometimes) violent misogyny within patriarchal societies the media neglected and ignored Lépine’s deadly intentions to kill women, and allowed for the perpetuation of interpretations of the crime that were (and are) false.

Hui Kyong Chun (1999) explains that the police closed down their investigation into Lépine’s “massacre” on the day following the release of the police’s statement that they did not want to give any bad idea to others, because they (the police) feared that continuing the discussion would unleash an unstoppable flow of antifeminist violence. Hui Kyong Chun states that “the only way to contain the contagious potential of Lépine’s

example – the only way to re-repress the desire to kill feminists – was to make the whole Montreal Massacre taboo” (113). Representations of the police response in the newspaper coverage continued to explain the mass femicide as an isolated and incomprehensible event. The *Star*’s December 8th article included the suggestion from police to the media that reporters (female reporters especially) should not dwell on the matter, and explained that the police were “assuming that the desire to kill feminists was already present in segments of the general public” (113). The police and the news media chose to ignore the systemic sexism and violent misogyny that exists throughout Canadian society and closed the discussion on Lépine’s hatred of women. This perpetuates a lack of acknowledgment of what happened to women on that day and demonstrates the ignorance of patriarchal institutions (like the media) to the continual violence that affects women daily. While the “massacre” was an isolated event in terms of the number of women killed, it is not incomprehensible as the police maintained. Misogyny and sexism are reasons why men kill their wives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters, daughters - women. Lépine’s violence is not an isolated incident; femicide occurs throughout Canadian society and affects many women. The *Star*’s December 8th 1989 article indicates the lack of attention paid to everyday violence committed by men against women and perpetuates ignorance of how all forms of violence against women are linked to patriarchal power and the subordination of women by men.

The *Star* gathered reactions from government officials in its December 8th 1989 article “All of Canada in mourning.” This article is considered problematic as it communicates mixed messages. The article included statements from multiple interviews with government officials who spoke about their reactions to the “massacre,” many were

quoted as saying it was a “senseless crime” (A1). The report included a response from Rosemary Brown, a former New Democrat Party Member of Parliament, who issued a statement saying that the killing of 14 women at the École Polytechnique was part of the continuum of violence women endure that ranges from pornography to murder. The mixed messaging is represented; however, in the way that Brown’s statement was followed with that of Barbara McDougall, who was Minister responsible for Status of Women Canada at the time, who “hesitated when asked whether the massacre was the product of a sexist society. She urged women not to overreact to ‘an irrational act’” (A1). MacDougall responded instead by individualizing and isolating Lépine’s actions from systemic violence against women when she said: “He had a problem of his own that he tried to direct against women” (A1) and thus showing the mixed messages disseminated in the article. MacDougall, who was responsible for Status of Women at the time, perpetuates the explanation that Lépine was insane and also neglected to acknowledge that the “massacre” of 14 women was an act of misogyny. The Minister also spoke of women in a radical, negative, light – warning women “not to overreact” (A1). Concluding the article with MacDougall’s impression of the events perpetuates the representation of Lépine as insane and denies the sexism implicit in his actions, and it what readers remember, rather than Brown’s more feminist arguments.

Multiple examples of male backlash to feminist, and women, organizing after the “Montreal massacre” came through in the newspaper coverage. The result is that the newspapers prioritized the male and patriarchal perspectives about not only the “massacre” but also about how women (and feminists) dealt with the femicide of 14 women. On December 9th 1989 the article “Men are barred from vigil in Ontario” found

on page A13 of the *Star* demonstrated a fierce backlash to women organizing in the name of the 14 women slain by Lépine. This article is particularly interesting because coverage of the vigil in Thunder Bay, Ontario, was included by every newspaper because women actually tried to have a vigil without, separate from, men. The article explained how the director of the Thunder Bay Northern Women's Centre planned to hold a female-only vigil for the 14 women killed on December 6th 1989. The director made very valid points as to why this decision had been made. However, a (local) alderman is quoted and given ample space in the coverage saying, "he does not approve of the segregated vigil." He is then quoted saying "I think it's crazy extreme," he said. "I find it radical even, maybe some kind of mind terrorism." (A13). By including the references made to this vigil being "crazy extreme" and "some kind of mind terrorism" in the article is very problematic. The quotations included represent the man's (and men's) refusal to accept and acknowledge the regular and systemic violence women endure at the hands of men, and of the danger of women's desire to have their own spaces where men are not allowed. The inclusion of the reference made to "mind terrorism," is extreme and demonstrates the alderman's sense of being threatened by women organizing separate from men. The inclusion of this statement, I find, was not only indicative of the threat men feel, this man in particular, of women-only organizing but it represents the violence as something that should not be mourned, as well as including language that is extremely violent. By including the alderman's reaction, the article ignores the many sectors of patriarchal societies that are "all male bastions," and places where women are traditionally excluded; engineering schools is one such male bastion, the golf/business

network, the management sector of the business world, and much of the political world is still largely held by (white, upper-class) men.

It is possible that the reporter felt that including such statements offers balance to the newspaper's attention on the vigil. Unfortunately however, all this article does is show the alderman's extreme sexism and bigotry. This is an example of the extreme backlash against a feminist event.

Similar examples of backlash to the feminist explanation of Lépine's femicide of 14 women continued in the *Star's* December 13th 1989 coverage. Lois Sweet writes about the debates that ensued after the "Montreal massacre" in her article, "Massacre forces men to debate issues"(A1) and continues that on "Mass slayings rekindle debate on society's attitude to women" (A20). This article was extremely problematic in terms of a feminist critical reading of the, mostly male, reactions and interpretations of the femicidal events committed by Lépine. Firstly, the title is written in a way that places women outside of, marginal to, society, "society's attitude *to* women," as if women do not comprise half of the population and are not part of society. The language and discourses perpetuated in the article are problematic because the article posits feminists as extreme and radical and belittle the frequency with which women are victimized by male violence.

In this December 13th coverage in the *Star*, I find that instead of including a feminist discourse about the effects of the "massacre," this article presented feminists as over exaggerating the issues; feminists are represented as aberrations to the social norm and as radical. "They" is used as a reference to feminists, so not "us." Who does the journalist, Lois Sweet, mean when she identified feminists as "they?" Feminists are

lumped together as a single group who think the same way on the issues of violence against women. This is inaccurate. It seems as though the reporter is grouping all feminists together and positioning them against the rest of society. The article states, “feminists argue that it is females who are repeatedly the victims of rape, spousal assault, and psychological abuse” (*Star*, Dec. 13, 1989, A1). It should not read, “feminists argue,” because national statistics demonstrate that women are the victims of these crimes and not only feminist argue this point.

Sweet made clear in the December 13th *Star* article that at a number of events commemorating the female victims of December 6th 1989, men were not made to feel welcome. This is problematic in my critical analysis because the reporter posits women/feminists against men, and thus it appears as though women and men can never organize together against male violence against women. She also invokes sentiments of guilt, that as women “we” are suppose to feel sorry for men because they were excluded from some of the vigils. Sweet writes “others (other men) find the entire feminist analysis of the mass murders irrelevant, if not personally offensive” (A1). This perpetuates the demonization of feminist interpretations and the belittling or ignorance of the killer as a misogynist. Sweet arranged her article by prioritizing male perspectives and leaving male complacency towards violence against women unchallenged. In stating that men believe the feminist interpretation is irrelevant, Sweet perpetuates the inability of our patriarchal society to question acts of violence against women and what male violence represents about society on a whole, and also it is important to see that she presented the male perspective as monolithic, anti-feminist. To say that the feminist

analysis of the mass killing is personally offensive to men ignores how men “offend” women physically, verbally, mentally every single day all around the world.

The *Star*'s December 13th 1989 article also perpetuated the idea that Lépine was insane and that his violent actions were not related to misogyny. A man is quoted as saying, “you can't take that particular instance and generalize from it about all men. This guy who goes out and shoots 14 people is in another category altogether, he adds. This is insanity” (A1, A20). Including this statement in the article, Sweet causes, and allows for, the newspaper to deny the sexism inherent in Lépine's shooting of 14 women, not people but women, and ignores the pervasive patriarchal, violence women endure in society. Including this man's sentiments about the “massacre,” in the way Sweet did, also perpetuates the notion that Lépine's act of misogyny is isolated from all other violent acts, when in actuality women are murdered by men more regularly than newspaper coverage would have us believe. When Sweet includes these statements, she actually encourages the idea that feminists (all feminists) are radical and that the feminist interpretation of Lépine's actions is insane. Sweet does this by including and prioritizing the man's statements, as his statements took aim at the feminist interpretation by saying it was insane for feminists to question the sexism inherent in Lépine's mass femicide and the patriarchal culture that condones such violent acts. This article communicates the idea that men in general can not be considered violent when only some of them act out this type of violence. The discourses contained in this article do not allow one to problematize what Lépine did in terms of woman-hating, inequality, and sexism because it focused on the resistance of (some) men to acknowledge that Lépine's acts are

indicative of the systemic inequality of women instead of acknowledging the crime as gendered and femicidal.

An alternative framing of this debate could have been an article about men acknowledging the issues of violence against women and how it relates to the mass femicide of December 6th 1989. Instead it offers a discourse of patriarchal ignorance and power. The men that do acknowledge the feminist interpretation, those that are progressive and agree with the feminist analysis, are represented as few and far between: “Organizers (of the men’s forum against violence) have invited people from both cities, including MPs and city councilors. But they aren’t holding their breath about the response” (*Star*, Dec. 13, 1989, A20). This demonstrates men’s general unwillingness to confront the issues of sexism and the oppression of women, and also of violence against women.

Another problematic quote, a quote that disseminates mixed messages, was included by Sweet in her solicitation of male responses to the “Montreal massacre,” she interviewed random men, one of them named Russell Kelly. Kelly is quoted as saying, “But this incident seems so far removed from the kind of violence women encounter daily that to equate the two seems to be stretching the point, almost to the point of exploiting the tragedy to political ends” (*Star*, Dec. 13, 1989, A20). Many problems arise from Sweet including this quote in her article. Firstly, the “incident” is a gender-neutral term and does not explain how Lépine’s shooting of 14 women is related to systemic violence against women, as femicide is part of a violence continuum which includes all forms of violence against women. Also, Lépine himself linked hating feminists and killing them for political reasons. Secondly, while Kelly acknowledges that women

“encounter violence daily” it sounds as if he is saying women stumble upon the violence or come across the violence unknowingly. He does not say “male violence” though, and believes that to link the two (general violence against women and the “massacre”) is absurd. By including Kelly’s view, and the implicit political discourses within what he is saying, Sweet perpetuates denial of the misogyny behind the act of December 6th, which Lépine claimed himself. Thirdly, Kelly says “feminists are exploiting” the event. I disagree with the reporter’s inclusion of Kelly’s statement, as feminists did not exploit this event but politicized it and attempted to hold the patriarchal constructs that perpetuate pervasive male violence against women accountable. Thus, Sweet perpetuates backlash against the feminist interpretation by incorporating the sentiments of men who did not link the “massacre” to systemic sexism and male violence against women.

At no other point has violence against women been publicly discussed to such a great degree, so I must ask, why has feminist interpretations not been allowed to be represented free from backlash in articles such as the one discussed above? The exploitation Kelly, the man interviewed, spoke of exists within the media coverage and not in the feminist analysis linking the mass femicide to violence against women in general. Kelly also uses the term “tragedy,” a gender neutral term for what he denies was a political act, when Lépine himself wrote he was committing the act for political reasons. Lastly, by including the statements of men like Kelly, which inspire complacency and ignorance toward the systemic violence against women, the newspaper reinforced and reiterated general-held, patriarchal interpretations of violence against women and prioritized male views and opinions even in their most extreme form.

This article is filled with patriarchal discourses about violence against women in general and feminists in particular. It is also filled with mixed messages articulated by the men. Some who did believe Lépine's mass femicide was a sexist, misogynist act; however, they were represented as a very small, ineffective minority. This article also belittles feminist analyses which are represented as radical and as "taking advantage" of the 14 women's deaths in order to communicate the sexism and misogyny implicit in Lépine's femicidal act. Femicide should be used in order to politicize the killing of 14 women and to acknowledge their link to systemic every day violences against women.

The *Star* continued its December 13th 1989 coverage of the "Montreal massacre" with an article about problems at the Queen's University engineering school. The article, "Unease at Queen's campus" (A20) written by Robb Tripp perpetuated problematic messages. This small article extends the problematic representation of feminists as women who blame all men for the actions of Marc Lépine. The opening paragraph stated, "Some male students at Queen's University feel they've been unfairly targeted by feminist opportunists in the wake of the Montreal shootings and sexist incidents at the Kingston university" (A20). The reporter perpetuates the idea that feminists blame all men for this violence, when a feminist interpretation was really meant to question male privilege and to cause men to acknowledge the link between Lépine's actions and systemic violence against women. The *Star*'s December 13th article provided space to a message that represented men as victims who feel badly for being blamed for the events of December 6th. It also represented feminists as opportunists, taking advantage of the deaths of 14 women. The theme of this article is part of a backlash against feminism. The article is problematic also because of what information the reporter decided to

include and what information he decided to omit. He makes comparisons between male engineering students who mocked a Queen's University (mostly female) student "no means no" campaign with a "battle" that included "an occupation of the principal's office by masked women, telephone threats made to sexist sign makers, and the appearance of graffiti around campus" (*Star*, Dec. 13, 1989, A20). This comparison is troubling and problematic because the actual mocking, which the reporter left out of the article, consisted of signs made by male students that read "No means kick her in the teeth," "No means tie her/me up," and "No mean give her more beer" (*Globe*, Dec. 8, 1989, A7). This perpetuates an extremely violent message toward women who say no to sex. I find this article to be very troubling because Tripp focused his attentions on male students, students who acted aggressively against the female students attending Queen's University with the images of rape fantasies represented in their "no means..." campaign. The female students who reacted to the aggression of male students were demonized and vilified, and the male students who made the sexist signs were not criticized for their aggressive and threatening behaviours and their sexist actions were not even described by the reporter, while the female students' actions against sexism and violence in engineering schools were criticized.

The reporter demonizes women students in this article and the men who are responsible for making the sexist "no means..." signs are not condemned for their actions. The reporter also omitted the graffiti that appeared on many campuses across the country; one example being at Western University where, after the "massacre" of 14 women occurred, the words "kill feminist bitches" were found on the University walls. The reporter exhibited a bias towards the male students in this article by vilifying women

activists and by refusing space to women students to provide their side of the argument. Tripp provided these male students space in the newspaper to speak out against feminists and feels badly for the male students and the engineering department at Queen's University because it had gained a bad reputation. This is extremely problematic as it prioritizes male responses. Men are given space in the newspapers to speak and comment on the mass killing of 14 women while women are not. This article demonstrates male sexism and the unequal treatment women deal with in academe, on University campuses, and in violent relationships.

The *Gazette's* coverage included patriarchal discourses in representations of feminists. The December 8th 1989 article, "Nothing prepares you for such savagery," written by Mary Lamey, is interesting as it mentions that it was specifically women who were killed by Lépine because they were women. In this article, however, the reporter pays extra attention to the vigil where "feminists" caused an argument in the crowd of people who had gathered to remember the 14 women killed by Lépine. "Women in the crowd shouted Plourde (student association president) down when he used the male pronoun (ceux) to describe the dead students" (A1). The reporter continues the article by quoting a female student who said, "We're not here to make distinctions. It's not about male or female. We are here to be together." It would be assumed at this point that the *Gazette* is attempting to provide a balanced view, however, the article names "feminists" as causing the problems between students. Unfortunately the reality of Lépine's mass murder of women was that the killing was about gender, and in quoting students who said not to make distinctions about the women who had died the reporter perpetuates the idea that gender was not the reason why the 14 women were killed. The reporter provided

space for an explanation that denies the gendered qualities of the “massacre” and that Lépine’s actions were not motivated by gender distinctions.

In the *Globe*’s December 8th 1989 article, “Quebec mourns slaying of women at university,” the newspaper directs attention again to negative reactions to feminist explanations of Lépine’s mass femicide as misogynist. This article concerns the vigil held at the Université, organized to commemorate the women killed by Lépine. The article details about how there was “a brief scuffle near the end of the rally as a group of women tried to prevent a man from addressing the crowd, saying it was a gathering for women” (A1, A14). One woman told the crowd that the slaughter “shows the extreme of hatred from men which women must live with in our society, but she was drowned out by boos and catcalls from male and female students in the crowd” (A1, A14). This article perpetuates mixed messages. It refers to Lépine’s hatred of women but also directs attention to women being uncooperative. The women, who were trying to recognize the crime as a misogynist act, are represented instead as pushy and offensive. Attention was drawn to women and men being positioned against each other and vilified women who acknowledged Lépine’s misogyny through the article’s reference to the crowds boos and catcalls. One of the few women interviewed, Johanne Prud’homme, was quoted as saying “we’re not here to make distinctions,” she said “We’re here to be together” (A14). The inclusion of this quote is interesting because she, as one of the few women who were interviewed in this article, is saying that the mourners should not be divided. This is an implicit way of forwarding a non-feminist explanation of what happened. The coverage communicated that women should not want to organize separately from men, and should

not be able to do so, thus negatively portraying women and feminists who felt organizing separately (and acknowledging the gendered violence) as necessary.

In the *Post's* anniversary coverage of the "Montreal massacre" that related to feminists, they directed attention again to Lépine's motives. This coverage brought his motivations and the interpretations of them back into public debate ten years following the femicidal event of December 6th 1989. On A8 of the *Post's* December 6th 1999 issue, they included the article, "Murderer's motive remains in dispute." This article posited feminist interpretations of the "massacre" against those of "anti-feminists" who said his actions were those of a lone madman (A8). The responses were dichotomized, situated one against the other, with no room for agreement. Unfortunately positioning feminists against "anti-feminists" seems essential to the reporter. The article included the assessment that, "Ironically, Lépine's own self-understanding places him closer to the feminist view, which has always taken the "crazed killer" stance as an evasion" (A8). Therefore the *Post* acknowledged the feminist interpretation as following Lépine's own reasoning, yet still offered a narrative that discounted the argument. The article simply represents mixed messages as the *Post's* coverage continued to position the feminist interpretation as marginal and focused on the explanation that Lépine was a mad man.

The newspaper continued the debate between feminists and non-feminists by continually questioning Lépine's motivation, even though feminist interpretations coincided with Lépine's own confession. The *Post's* articles also refuse to acknowledge the gendered nature of women's deaths at the hands of men and perpetuate the social construction of male subjectivities as naturally aggressive and violent.

In the *Post*'s December 7th 1999 coverage of three prominent women, two self-proclaimed feminists, who were interviewed about the link of the mass femicide of 14 women to violence against women in general. Hedy Fry, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Status of Women, related the mass killing to gender-based violence, however, neglected to say that women specifically were Lépine's chosen victims. Judy Rebick, former head of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, is quoted as saying the killings had heightened awareness of violence against women and children. Michele Landsberg and Joan Grant Cummings, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, both commented on the violence's link to male control and power, to women's poverty, and to violence against women.

The explanations provided by notable (feminist) government and social commentators, however, were refuted by the *Post*'s inclusion of and focus on one woman's response. The article stated, "Yet such linkages seem incorrect to observers, such as Ms. Pearson... the fact that Marc Lépine chose women reflects nothing but Marc Lépine" (*Post*, Dec. 7, 1999, A1+). A great deal of space is provided to those that disagree with the feminist interpretations, for instance Donna Laframboise who is quoted in the *Post* as saying: "by scapegoating men for the actions of one, 'we too sank to his level'" (A1, A8). A man representing *Fathers Are Capable Too*, an organization dedicated to protecting the rights of fathers' custodial rights, is also interviewed and links the feminist interpretations of Lépine's mass femicide to blaming all men and invoking nothing but fear in women. Feminist interpretations are represented as radical and extreme. The article ends with "But at least one woman who lives in the shadow of the shootings is more sanguine" (A1, A8). Julie Gaudreault, an engineering student at the

École Polytechnique, is quoted in the final lines as saying “It’s an isolated event... He was a sick guy” (A8). Ending the article with this quote reaffirms and reiterates the refusal to consider the feminist interpretation of Lépine’s violent act as demonstrative of a larger cultural misogyny. The *Post*’s article provided support for the first narrative explanation (as previously explained) which, even within this article, was in debate. The first narrative explanation continued to be reinforced through the inclusion of the quote made by a woman connected to the femicidal events.

Support for First and Second Narrative Explanations of Lépine’s “Massacre”

The *Star*’s coverage of the “Montreal massacre” included many articles written about Lépine’s senseless killing of “innocent women.” Like the false designation of Lépine’s actions as senseless, many articles perpetuated discourses supporting the interpretations that Lépine was a mad man, that he was a victim, and that his actions were incomprehensible. In its December 10th 1989 coverage, the *Star* disseminated messages of sympathy and sadness for the victims of the “massacre” as well as messages that absolved Lépine’s guilt. The article, “Devastated families say sad goodbyes” written by Shelley Page, the article described how friends of one of the women killed felt “no hatred toward the gunman” (A2). “It was senseless, but it was so unpredictable” (A2). This article focused on interviews with women who said the killings were senseless. Therefore, the article prioritizes women who were close to the event, but only those women who were supporting the first narrative: that Lépine was a madman with no reason for killing the women. Referencing women in this way, positing them as apolitical, provides the newspaper with support for the view that the killings were random

and not motivated by misogyny and it contributes to the newspaper's patriarchal discourses which obscure what really happened.

In the same December 10th 1989 issue one of the *Star*'s reporters, Slinger, wrote a problematic article about Lépine's insanity and the relation to other "insane" crimes. In "There's no place to hide from a madman," Slinger belittles systemic violence against women by saying that maybe this would not have happened if "men were nicer to women" (A2). Nicer? This reporter chooses to ignore the extreme violence many women are confronted with in patriarchal cultures and denies that men should acknowledge their privileged status and their power over women through the use of violence. This reporter fails to offer solutions to end violence against women and does not acknowledge the injustices men commit when they are violent toward women. This perpetuates the belief that men simply have to be "nicer" to women and that would alter the problems of inequality. This does not problematize the patriarchal constructs that keep women subordinate to men.

Slinger writes, "Marc Lépine's commitment to his purpose, insane commitment, insane purpose" (*Star*, Dec. 10, 1989, A2). This reporter sees Lépine's killing as separate from its misogynist intentions, rationalizes the event by saying Lépine had a purpose, even though it was an "insane purpose." Slinger then suggests "There is no known remedy for an idealistically minded assassin" (A2). Slinger responds to the mass femicide through complacency, that there is nothing we can do about the violence. The feminist interpretation did and does attempt to offer a remedy, to view Lépine's mass femicide as an act of misogyny, and work to challenge such violent manifestations through changing the patriarchal constructs that allow this violence to take place.

Prior to the troubling and problematic coverage contained in the December 10th 1989 coverage, the *Star*'s December 9th 1989 coverage included the article "City of tears to bury dead at Notre Dame" (A13), which appeared to focus on the grieving families and grieving city. However, the article also focused on Lépine, his disposition, and his motivation. It stated in the first paragraph, "Montreal, a city of tears, mourns the 14 women massacred by a sexist killer tormented by a miserable love life" (A13). This article acknowledged that Lépine was sexist, however, the reporter then focused on Lépine's abusive childhood and how that affected his outlook about women and his propensity toward violence.

Remarks about Lépine being tormented by a miserable love life were a regular theme. According to the majority of the newspaper coverage about Lépine, he did not have a love life, he was a loner, isolated, and he did not speak much to women. This is a very troubling and confusing way of explaining Lépine's violence. This article also made reference to his Algerian roots, how he was "obsessed with war films and was the product of a broken home" (A13). Explanations provided about Lépine and his act of mass femicide rarely, if ever, challenge the interpretation of him as mad and obsessed.

In the *Gazette*'s coverage more problematic messages supporting the first and second narratives grew. The December 8th 1989 coverage "Nothing prepares you for such savagery," included regular references to people stating "how this could happen to those women for no reason" (A1). This rationale refuses the gendered nature of the crime and constantly reinforces that this shooting could not have been rooted in misogyny. They contain a great deal of mixed messages, at one point some people in the article

admit that 14 women, and only women, were killed, however, the theme of the article was that there is no explanation for the shooting.

In the December 9th 1989 coverage of the *Gazette*, support for the first narrative explanation was found on the editorial pages. Don Macpherson writes “Massacre reveals stark face of fear.” This editorial deals with how the author could not believe that women have to deal with fear all the time. After having visited New York City, MacPherson comments on how he was scared and felt he had to be on edge because he was in a “big, dangerous city” (B3). The theme of his argument was that he could not believe that women had to deal with this fear no matter where they live. He implicitly connects the fear of being a victim of random violence with the “Montreal massacre.” Macpherson explained that he understood how women must feel in having to deal with constant fear after having been in New York, where he felt fearful, as he was not used to “big cities.” Macpherson, however, does not question why women are more fearful than men, and he does not question the myth that women should be more fearful of strangers, he perpetuated the myth in his article and ignored that violence against women happens more often in intimate and private settings, such as the home. This reporter perpetuated the idea that the “incident was isolated, only in the degree of its violence and insanity” (B3). This article relied on the first narrative explanation that Lépine was insane. It does not question the culture of fear that surrounds us, it only reiterates that Lépine was crazy, and perpetuates the idea of “stranger-danger.”

Macpherson’s editorial also refers to Violette Trépanier, the minister responsible for Status of Women in Quebec, that “she is a woman and she did not see fit to issue a statement on the incident” (B3). Including this statement, as he has, reinforces the

message that we do not have to deal with the violent sexism and misogyny in Lépine's act and throughout society, that it is everywhere and that they are banal parts of the society in which all women live. Macpherson, unfortunately, ends his article with gender neutral wording, "The problem is that one-half of us are not free from violence, fear, intimidation and hatred, simply because of sex. And it will not be solved quickly or easily" (B3). He does not offer any solutions, nor is he specific in his language about who was killed, who is victimized - women – he simply invokes and reiterates fear.

Hubert Balch wrote in his December 9th 1989 *Gazette* article: "we are all potential victims of the madness in our midst." His reference to "we" is questionable as he does not explain who the "we" he is speaking about is, and "all" were not victims, only women were Lépine's victims. Balch relied on the extreme fear of violence committed by strangers and that this sort of violence does not happen in Canada. Balch's article does not deal with questions of violence or relations between men and women, the discourse included in his article is gender-neutral, and neglects to offer the explanation that Lépine's mass femicide was gendered. Instead, Balch focused on how he could not believe something like this could have happened in Canada, in Montreal. He stated "not in kindler, gentler Canada" (B3). This article does, however, make reference to the link feminists made between the massacre and violence against women in general. Balch concludes his article by dealing with how aggression and violence are regularly seen in the media, but does not problematize how these images affect gendered identifications with violence. The reporter does not problematize the event in terms of gendered violence.

In the *Globe's* coverage, the newspaper made regular references to Lépine's insanity. I found an example of support for the first narrative in the December 7th 1989 article, "Montreal students slain by gunman who prowled building on 'human hunt.'" The one woman interviewed for the article, twenty-two year old student Dominique Bérubé, was quoted as saying "All I know is that a crazy guy came in here and began shooting at anything that moved" (*Globe*, Dec. 7, 1989, A5). Including this quote in the article helps to reinforce the first narrative explanation that Lépine was a "crazy guy," and the article is more successful in doing this when a woman is quoted saying Lépine was crazy. This quote is troubling because it reinforces that those involved on the day of the shooting support the idea that Lépine was insane and randomly shooting anything he could, which he was not. Articles with quotes such as these only perpetuate false understandings of Lépine's actions and neglect to question and challenge the misogyny and the "lust for power" Lépine had in mind.

In the *Post's* December 6th 1999 article "Murderer's motive remains in dispute" the newspaper provides space to the second narrative as explanation of Lépine's violence in the ten year commemoration and remembrance of the 14 women killed by Lépine. The article includes references to how Lépine was raised, specifically references about his Algerian-born Muslim father, and the childhood abuse he endured at his hands. The *Post's* article links the childhood abuse to the killings of 14 women. Lamey, the reporter covering this story, provided mixed messages as he quoted friends/sisters of those killed by Lépine who remarked that "(Lépine) was sick, but that he chose his targets for a reason, which had everything to do with hating women" (A8). This quote provides support to the feminist explanation, that the friends and sister of one of the women killed

believed Lépine's mass femicide was linked to misogyny, however, at the end of the article one of the parents of one of the female victims, is quoted as saying, "He's dead," Mr. Laganière stated simply. "He was a man who didn't know what he was doing" (A8). This shows the mixed messages the paper is projecting about Lépine and his motive for the mass femicide. It perpetuates doubt and uncertainty surrounding what occurred on December 6th 1989. Instead of using gender-specific language to describe the events the reporter communicated messages of doubt, confusion, and contradictory opinions, leaving Lépine's motives open to unnecessary debate.

Mass Murderer Narrative

Many articles about the "Montreal massacre" included narratives that posited Lépine as a "mass murderer." Because of this designation, consideration for the gender of his victims was removed because the associating made to Lépine being a mass murderer assumes he shot people randomly. The patriarchal ignorance of the effects of femicide was maintained. Lépine's actions instead were framed through descriptions of him as a pathological loner who decided to take his revenge out on the students of the engineering school he was hoping to attend. Exhaustive interviews were conducted with a male "expert" on mass murder, Professor Elliott Leyton (author of *Hunting Humans* 1987, of Memorial University). He is regularly referenced in the newspaper explanations of Lépine's motivations and the results of his "mass murder."

The *Star*'s coverage included an exhaustive account of Lépine's life, on page D1 of the December 9th 1989 issue in, "Inside the Mind of a Mass Murderer." The article focused on how men such as Lépine are very much "men of their time," meaning men who are disenchanting and unhappy with their lives. In the fourth to last paragraph of the

third column of the article, the *Star* quoted criminologist Ross Hastings who states “there are probably hundreds of Canadian men who fit his profile - unhappy childhood, asocial, et cetera” (D1). This reference is problematic as it offers mixed messages. It suggests Lépine was just like those men of whom Hastings was speaking and does not address men who do not commit these types of violent acts even though they are disenchanting with their lives, their childhood. There are mixed and contradictory messages in this article. Discussions of Lépine’s actions to general society are only made through reference to his unhappy, victimized, childhood, which accordingly affects “hundreds of men.” This article suggests that “we need gun-control, media control, not glorifying the act” (D1), however, this article is doing just that. This article places Lépine, in terms of the attention paid to him, above every one and everything else associated with the events of December 6th 1989. Lépine was fit into a categorization of “mass murderer” by those who were interviewed in this article, which fails to declare misogyny as the reason for the killings, which fails to see cultural/systemic misogyny.

Multiple articles established the “mass murderer” narrative as explanation for Lépine’s violence and this was reiterated in multiple articles in the coverage of the “Montreal massacre.” In the *Gazette*’s December 8th 1989 article “Mass murderers find themselves failing in life, anthropologist says” Kate Dunn and Janet Bagnall dissected Lépine’s personality and situated him among other mass murderers. This allows the newspaper to isolate Lépine’s actions apart from the inherent sexism of his act and allows for the perpetuation of ignorance about violence and misogyny. The article states: “Choosing a gender as a target is not common. Mass killers are generally quite insensitive to gender” (A4). This message displaced the explanation that Lépine

committed the act out of misogyny, because instead the coverage focused on the explanations provided by doctors, psychiatrists, and Professor Elliott Leyton who positioned Lépine among those described as a “mass murderer.” The professionals or “experts” interviewed about “mass murderers” stated that such perpetrators “need to feel like they won” (A4). The headline of this article’s coverage did this: “Murderer has won” (A4). This competitive narrative, the win versus lose dichotomy, is very disturbing. It ignores the 14 women who were killed and instead focuses on Lépine’s success, that he was successful in following through with his motive.

The *Globe* also relied on the opinions of criminology experts; they focused the December 11th 1989 coverage to the explanations provided by Professor Leyton, who referred to Lépine as a mass murderer. Leyton stated that “society provides the killer with the publicity that they seek” (*Globe*, Dec. 11, 1989, A8). This article’s focus indeed provides this publicity.

The *Post*’s December 7th 1999 article, “Marc Lépine madman or social barometer? A question of context” by Luiza Chwialkowska placed Lépine within the “mass murderer” narrative ten years after the “massacre.” This article began with an interview with Patricia Pearson, who “has spent the past ten years studying and writing about murderers and mass murderers” (A1, A8). This is in itself unfortunate because the newspaper is trying to fit Lépine into the category of mass murderer regardless of the gendered nature of the crime. Patricia Pearson stated, “If you look at that crime from the point of criminology instead of the gender war, it’s completely insensible to interpret it as being an indicator of violence against women” (A1, A8). This article is very troubling because it assumes that criminology can not consider a gender interpretation when

examining crime, it also uses a war analogy to describe the feminist interpretation of Lépine's mass femicide. This interpretation, the individualizing of Lépine, is given more space in the newspaper coverage than the feminist explanations of this crime. This article ignored Lépine's confessed motive and focused on the debates between experts.

This article posited Pearson, who is the author of *When She Was Bad* (1997) as well as a reporter for the *Post*, as coming from an "anti" feminist interpretation and posited her against the feminist interpretation. The *Post*, it would appear, was more interested in communicating feuds between "experts" than explaining Lépine's motives were misogynist.

Fear, Safety, and the Stranger-Danger Discourse

The extensive newspaper coverage of the "Montreal massacre" included multiple references to people's shock that such a crime could happen in Canada. The inclusion of such statements also regularly coincided with the discourse of "stranger-danger:" that people, and more specifically women, are more at risk of being attacked by a stranger than by someone they know. This discourse is prevalent throughout the coverage of the "Montreal massacre;" as confirmation of this lies in the fact that Lépine was a stranger to all of the women he killed. Messages perpetuating the prevalence of attacks perpetrated by strangers, according to Haskell and Randall (1998), are more regularly disseminated by the news than abuses committed by people known to their victims (143).

The newspaper coverage of the "Montreal massacre" repeatedly referred to witness testimony that found Lépine's femicide of 14 women "impossible," and felt that such crimes "could not" take place in Canada. In the December 7th 1989 *Gazette* article, "Couple's evening to celebrate turns into nightmare" by Andrew McIntosh, attention is

directed to one man's beliefs that such a tragedy could not happen in Canada. Robert Leclair, boyfriend of France Chrétien, (one of the women wounded by Lépine) ends the article by saying he never thought "a senseless tragedy would happen in Canada, much less Montreal" (*Gazette*, Dec. 7, 1989, A3). Statements such as these are frequently quoted throughout the coverage. Such statements, however, are problematic as they ignore the gendered characteristics of Lépine's shooting, encourage fear, and assume such violences can not occur in Canada and that Lépine's femicide was an aberration. Relying on the notion that femicidal violences do not occur in Canada ignores the number of cases of violence against women that do take place in Canada, femicide specifically, and thus perpetuates the myth that extreme violence does not occur here. The continual reference to crimes such as these not happening in Canada reinforces the assumption that Canada avoids violent crimes that occur in the United States. This is not true, however, as Canadian women are not safe from being victims of femicide.

On December 8th 1989, the *Gazette* continued this theme in the article "Mass murderers find themselves failing in life." This article focused on the violence caused by attacks by strangers and the sexism of men who assault women. Doctor Elliott Baker, forensic psychiatrist from Midland Ontario, is quoted as saying "there are a lot of men with a lot of anger towards women." (A4). He continued to say "Some of the scary rapists I've known really hate women, all women..." (A4). The doctor admits that there is a "cultural misogyny," as he stated he thought the violence was understandable with "You can see how the guy got there. And you know there are a lot of people out there with the same psycho-dynamic" (A4). However, his statements are problematic because he relates Lépine's actions to those of deranged psychotics, suggesting that woman-

hating is a common attribute of these “psycho-dynamics.” This misogyny is not problematized in the article and instead of questioning how male psychotic states can turn femicidal, the reporter quoted the Doctor when he said “some of the scary rapists I’ve known really hate women.” This statement perpetuates the idea that nothing can be done about men who harbour hate for women which can be manifested through violence. It also perpetuates the fear that attacks on women by strangers are more common, while also suggesting the idea that not all rapists are scary: “the scary rapists.” I do not understand what Dr. Baker means when he says “scary rapists.” This article positions male understandings of violence committed against women as more important than the voices of women who have experience male violence. The misogyny within violent men is left unchallenged.

The *Gazette*’s December 9th 1989 article, “Fear is legacy women share after killer’s fury is spent” by reporter Kate Dunn, is interesting to my analysis as it pertains to women’s fear of “stranger danger” and the myth of safety. The reporter wrote the article by positioning herself as a woman who is more fearful since the “Montreal massacre.” Having a woman write this piece brings attention to the fact that men threaten and scare women, including her, but the message that is communicated is that women are fearful when they should not be, that this fear is irrational because crimes like Lépine’s do not happen in Canada as they do in the United States. This article made a reference to “misogyny” as a possible explanation for Lépine’s killings; however the reporter places Lépine within the “mass murderer” category instead of focusing on his misogyny. The article relied on the idea that women are more fearful of an attack by a stranger or random killer because this type of attack seems more possible and probable. Dunn

described how women deal with fear all the time; “women deal with fear daily but it gets placed on the backburner” (A1). This statement contributes to the message that women must not question this fear (felt in patriarchal societies) and that we must believe, instead, in safety. Dunn also wrote in her article about how misogyny is uttered by a newsroom editor: “What does it mean, this – this - this misogyny” (*Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1989, A1), as if it was the worst profanity he had ever uttered. He was outraged while I was overcome by fright” (A1). This quote suggests the degree to which newsroom editors (at this time and this one editor in particular) were unaware of women’s issues and the hatred of women in general society. This article perpetuates the notion that women should be more fearful of mass murderers, and attacks by strangers than an attack by someone they know, which is more common than attacks by strangers. This article contributes to the false notion that women are assaulted more by strangers, based in the reporter’s own description of her fear of strange men, than by someone they know intimately. The article also perpetuates the idea that certain men can and do continue to ignore misogyny while women continue to live in fear of misogyny’s violent manifestations.

In the same day’s coverage, on page A3 of the *Gazette*, the article “Slayings not part of trend, analysts say,” also presents an ambiguous argument. This article included a description of women as more fearful of violent attacks because of the “massacre,” however this fear is presented as pointless because the mass shooting is not a sign of a trend of violent crimes against Quebec women. The report focused on crime statistics that show men are far more likely to be homicide victims, and that men are more likely than women to be armed robbery victims. This is true, and I am not denying these statistics, however, the coverage did not deal with the fact that women are,

disproportionately, the victims of murder (femicide) by their male partners. The crime statistics quoted, “women are no more victims today than in 1985” (*Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1989, A3) posits women’s fears as irrational. There is a reference in the article to women being victims of homicide by their husbands; however, it is placed in the article before a statement saying wives kill their husbands, which is problematic because it focuses attention on crimes perpetrated by women against men which occurs much less than crimes perpetrated by men against women. The statement, “it was an isolated incident” (A3), was frequently included in the newspaper coverage. While this is true in terms of the degree of violence and number of women killed, this statement ignores the women who are continually the victims of femicide at the hands of their husbands, boyfriends, and of male partners in their own homes. This article positions women’s fears of male violence as irrational. This article offered mixed messages to the reader and posits women as irrational; communicating patriarchal constructions of safety as legitimate and rational when, for women, they are not.

The extensive coverage concerned with the “Montreal massacre” relied heavily on patriarchal discourses. The coverage perpetuated messages that crimes perpetrated by strangers, and mass murderers should be feared while ignoring the more prevalent crimes perpetrated by men against women within the private relationships. The coverage included multiple representations of backlash and negative reactions to feminist interpretations and explanations to Lépine’s misogynist killing of women, and posited Lépine as a pathological, obsessed loner who shot randomly through the halls of the École Polytechnique. Constant references made to Lépine’s “senseless” crime remove and excuse Lépine’s guilt and deem it to be irrational, uncalculated and crazy. Lépine’s

misogyny, his specific choice of victim, is sheltered within descriptions of mass murderers and the fear of a possible attack from a madman.

The mixed messages found in the news representations obscure Lépine's motivations for his femicidal act by relying on one opinion and then refuting it by quoting witnesses who say the opposite, as this undermines the message that was described in the first part of the article. This functions to obscure and confuse the information provided in the article leaving the reader with questions rather than answers about the violent event.

Throughout the articles there is a striking (implicit) theme of remaining silent about everyday abuses committed against women, assault, harassment, abuse, and femicide. This silence contributes to the perpetuation of patriarchal ignorance about the "Montreal massacre" while radicalizing and demonizing feminist explanations. Femicide, or mass femicide in this particular case, does not consider nor allow women to be marginal to the crime, the reaction to the crime, and the understandings about the event as a political act against women. Femicide is the acknowledgement of the politics of women's deaths as a result of male violence.

Concluding Remarks

In terms of my feminist critical analysis of the coverage of the "Montreal massacre," I have considered those articles which perpetuate problematic and sexist language, and the coverage which reiterated patriarchal discourses as primary explanations of Lépine's mass femicide. The news media focused attention on contradictory explanations of masculinity, situating Lépine as both normal and abnormal, but excusing Lépine through unrelenting explanations of his pathological and unbalanced

state. The coverage also perpetuated problematic discourses about acceptable representations of women, representing the female students as pure and innocent and apolitical. The discussions and narratives about Lépine were constructed in such a way as to enforce patriarchal discourses about violence against women as Lépine's misogyny and sexism was continually and repeatedly ignored, or omitted. This was also done by relegating Lépine to a mass murderer designation which does not consider his misogyny. The mass murderer designation perpetuates the reluctance and refusal of patriarchal societies, and Canada specifically, to acknowledge woman-killing as political and a representation of male oppression.

However, there are also articles that have a feminist message, these articles constitute a small minority of the coverage, as the backlash against feminist interpretations received more attention than the feminist interpretations and explanations themselves. The majority of the space provided to counter-discourses, or feminist messages, was given to male journalists which is problematic as women feminists were regularly ignored and seen as overreacting. Also, the location of the feminist messages is problematic as they were often located in the middle of the paper. For instance in "Speaking about the Unspeakable" in the *Globe*, a male journalist offers a counter-discourse to the first and second narrative explanations of the mass femicide, however the article is located on A7, so what we have is the really sensationalist, male-dominated, writings on the front, more prominent, pages of the newspaper and the counter-discourses or feminist messages hidden in the middle of the newspaper and provided little space. The *Gazette* offered one feminist explanation of Lépine's actions. It was found on D11 of the December 8th 1989 coverage, deep inside the newspaper. This demonstrates the

newspapers reluctance to represented feminist and counter-discourses and thus shows the priority given to patriarchal and false constructions of Lépine's mass femicide.

The patriarchal discourses, implicit and explicit, in the coverage of the "Montreal massacre" rely on male testimony, male views and opinions which marginalize women's and feminist testimony that countered male impressions of the killing of 14 women. The inherent misogyny and sexism in Lépine's actions were denied, ignored, and silenced offering a discourse instead that encouraged and continued male complacency regarding male violence against females. The newspapers isolated Lépine's femicidal act as he was excused and the event was rationalized. The femicide discourse is necessary and feminist involvement in disseminating information about violence against women is crucial. There must be room for feminist discourse in the media apart from backlash and marginalization. The inclusion of the term femicide allows us to remember and speak of Lépine's killing of (only) women on December 6th 1989 as a political, gendered, manifestation of male power over and oppression of women.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE COVERAGE OF THE FEMICIDE OF ARLENE MAY

On March 8th 1996, Randy Iles shot and killed his ex-girlfriend Arlene May in Craigeith Ontario. At the time of the shooting, Iles was free on bail on the condition that he stay away from May and her children. Iles ignored the court order and confronted May at her home with the intention of killing her. He was armed with a shotgun he had obtained from a Canadian Tire store, a gun he should not have had while released on bond for the previous assaults he had inflicted on May. He entered the home where May lived with three of her young children and locked the kids in a closet. The children escaped Iles's violence and ran to a local corner store to call the police. At approximately 4:00 p.m. gunshots were heard from May's house. Iles had killed May, shooting her in the chest, and then killed himself. The femicide of Arlene May prompted a coroner's inquest that brought attention to the number of women killed by male partners in the province.¹⁷

Introduction

Arlene May's femicide caused officials in the justice system and the Ontario government to question the frequency with which men were killing their female (intimate) partners. While the newspaper reporters, and some government officials, chose to describe this femicidal suicide of Arlene May by Iles using euphemisms like "domestic situation," my feminist critical analysis views and understands the death of Arlene May as a femicide. This case of femicide is an example of the most common form of male violence against women in patriarchal societies, those committed by a male intimate partner, a man who the female victim was once intimately involved. This case

¹⁷ Please refer to note 11 on the first page of Chapter Four: The Coverage of the "Montreal Massacre."

of lethal male violence against women provoked the province's representatives in the justice system to acknowledge that women were dying violent deaths at the hands of their (often estranged) male partners.

Randy Iles killed ex-girlfriend Arlene May after months of violence used to control her. He had assaulted and threatened her prior to the shooting. Iles's shooting of May is an example of intimate femicide, and while this gendered form of violence receives less coverage in the news than attacks by strangers (Haskell and Randall 1998), it is essential to analyze how the news accounts for and represents the more regular occurrence of lethal violence against women by male intimates because it is intimate violence that is more of a threat to women.. May died because Iles enacted sexist and misogynist violence against her, the woman he had objectified and controlled through years of physical and mental abuse.

This chapter will critically evaluate how newspapers represented this case of intimate femicide, the problematic discourses that were perpetuated within the representations of the violent act, and the ambiguous language and hazardous messages the articles disseminated about the victim, perpetrator and this instance of gendered violence. I will question the patriarchal social structures that continue to neglect and ignore women who are the victims of male abuse. I will also criticize the language used in the newspaper articles that explained attempts made by justice officials to confront this specific form of violence through the calling of a coroner inquest. I criticize the inquest findings and recommendations reported in the newspaper articles as they too included problematic language and ignored the systemic inequalities between men and women in patriarchal societies. The inquest recommendations highlighted in the newspapers denied

the gendered characteristics of the intimate violence Iles committed by including language in the recommendations that was gender-neutral. I argue that the use of language that masks the gendered nature of femicide as in the case of the coverage of Arlene May's death, perpetuates ignorance about intimate gendered violence which is committed disproportionately by males against females.

Feminist Critical Analysis of the Coverage of the Femicide of Arlene May

The newspaper coverage of the femicide of Arlene May by Randy Iles was more limited than coverage of the "Montreal massacre." Three of the four newspapers analyzed in this thesis covered the shooting. The *Star* was the only newspaper that detailed the events of the shooting the day following May's death. The *Star*, the *Globe* and the *Gazette* each included articles about the inquest into the gendered murder-suicide in their July 1998 coverage. The *Globe's* coverage of the Arlene May femicide did not begin until the inquest into her death was called. Both the *Globe* and the *Gazette* did not focus on May's femicide until the information about the inquest was reported to the two newspapers. It is interesting that the *Globe* and the *Gazette* covered the inquest into May's death but not the femicide itself, this may be because neither newspaper felt the actual femicidal event was worthy of reporting to their reading audiences, however, they did report on the inquest findings which could indicate that the subject of violence against women should be considered as both a local and national issue.

The death of Arlene May, and any instance of lethal male violence against women, are described as (intimate) femicides because, as Russell (2001) explains, locating these deaths within the politics of femicide "rejects the popular conception of woman-killing as a private and/or pathological matter. When men murder women or

girls, the power dynamic of misogyny and/or sexism are almost always involved. Femicides are lethal hate crimes” (3).

The Coverage of the Arlene May Femicide in the Newspaper Headlines

The *Star*'s first piece of coverage related to Arlene's May femicide began with its March 10th 1996 article. The article's headline stated, "Abuser on bail slays mother of 5, kills self" (*Star*, Mar. 10, 1996, A1). In this headline the woman killed is posited simply as mother, mother of 5. An alternative framing of this gendered crime could have included more precise and gendered language, for example "femicidal suicide" to describe the sexist crime. Headlines, such as this one, offer very limited explanations of the misogynist and sexist act Iles perpetrated against May. The March 10th 1996 coverage continued on A10 with the headline "Woman's 'clever' tormentor murders her, takes own life." The subtitle on this page reads, "Police find bodies of mother and ex-boyfriend." The perpetrator here is conceptualized in terms of his intelligence despite being a tormentor. This headline portrays Iles through a positive description, while the articles' theme causes the reader to think of him as threatening and menacing. This mixed messaging of the headline and the article demonstrate the newspapers' attempt to describe Iles in a balanced manner, an approach rarely taken in the newspaper descriptions of the female victim, May. Limited descriptions of May are included in the sub-headline which posits May only in terms of her status as mother, constructing her in a fixed and limited representation regulated through patriarchal definitions of appropriate femininity.

The *Globe*'s first article appeared at the time of the inquest into May's femicide, beginning on February 16th 1998. On page A8 of the *Globe*, the headline read:

“Domestic abuse focus of inquest.” The same page sub-headline read: “Three-month probe of couple’s violent life and death is first of its kind in Ontario.” The headlines for this article are problematic for they employ language that does not specify the gendered qualities of the violence and abuse Iles committed against May. “Domestic abuse” is problematic because Iles abused May, thus the violence should be recognized as male violence against a woman. Also, the inclusion of “couple’s violent life and death” pays no attention to the fact that both deaths were the result of Iles’s violence. The lack of gendered terminology allows the reader to assume that both May and Iles were violent when it was Iles who was violent toward May.

The *Globe* followed up its inquest coverage in July. It began its July 3rd 1998 article on A1 with the headline “Home violence called epidemic” with a sub-headline reading, “Coroner’s jury in murder-suicide calls for review of province’s domestic abuse programs” (A1). Both headlines are problematic in that the language chosen to describe the violence does not explain who is being violated; “home violence” is non-gendered but also highly unspecific as to who is affected by the violence. “Home violence” does not explain that women are disproportionately victimized in the home. The subtitle also includes problematic language; it does not specify who was murdered and who committed suicide. The person reading the headline would not know what case of murder-suicide the newspaper was referring to, nor is it gender specific in explaining the violence. Instead it employs the terminology “domestic abuse” to explain programs set up for victims who experience male violence in the home. These headlines lack gender specific language and perpetuate an understanding of male violence against women as simply “domestic abuse,” which does not offer insight into the sexism and misogyny of

such violence. This perpetuates the status quo in which male power over women (especially female intimates) is rendered invisible.

The *Gazette* also included a small article on July 3rd, on page A8, referring to the inquest into the femicide of Arlene May. The headline read, “Inquest urges action on domestic violence.” This headline is evidence of the similar language problems to those seen in the other two newspapers that focused on the inquest, in its reference to femicide as “domestic violence.” Including language such as this does not specify who is victimized in instances of “domestic violence” and instead makes generalizations about violence that occurs in the home. Walter DeKeseredy and Linda MacLeod (1997) refer to the problems with the term of “domestic violence” in their text Woman Abuse: A Sociological Story. “Framing the violence as a “domestic” affair or a “family” event strongly reveals the importance that this viewpoint attaches to keeping the family, [keeping a man, woman and children], together” (17). Referring to male violence as “domestic” or “family” violence shows the patriarchal influence in the newspaper reports, including this terminology reinforces the view of the necessity of the nuclear family and maintains the subordination of women in the institution of the family and in society.

The Journalists, Witnesses and “Experts”

The journalists who wrote the news articles that appeared in the newspapers chosen for this analysis are both male and female. I have found that both male and female reporters integrate problematic, gender neutral language that perpetuates misinformation about the prominence of male violence against women. As was found in the coverage of the “Montreal massacre,” the reporters in this case also relied on male testimony, male justice officials and male “expert” opinion. The “experts” included the

professionals who investigated the crime, including the police, lawyers, and the inquest jury members who were interviewed about the inquest's recommendations.

The Journalists

The first reporter to cover the May femicide and Iles's suicide from the *Star* was male, Jim Rankin. Further coverage included reports from Rob Andrews, Frank Calleja, and Jane Armstrong. All of the reporters, regardless of gender, represented May, Iles, and the violence Iles committed against May in problematic ways that perpetuated non-gendered understandings of Iles's act. The *Globe's* reporters included Kim Honey and Jane Armstrong. Once again, these female reporters did not offer a feminist, critical analysis of the violence, nor did they include gender specific language to explain the crimes Iles perpetrated against May. The article from the *Gazette* was written by Richard Foot. Like the reporters from the other newspapers, Foot included troubling and ambiguous language to explain Iles's sexist violence. Both male and female reporters continue to include traditional language, language that is formed and used in the interests of patriarchy and continued patriarchal control. I have observed that the press's reliance on ambiguous and gender-neutral terminology to describe femicides has been strongly upheld by reporters in the newspapers analyzed in this thesis.

The Witnesses

In the *Star's* March 10th 1996 article, a long-time friend, Michael Collins, describes Iles's violent behaviour: "The man was violent... He beat her up umpteen times. I don't know who's to blame for this tragedy," he added. "Who's responsible – is it the crown attorney? Or the judge for granting him bail?"(A1). "Tragedy" is a problematic word. As in its use in the "Montreal massacre" coverage, it is a gender-

neutral term and does not explain what actually occurred: a femicidal suicide. The term characterizes Iles as an equivalent victim as May. Iles, however, chose to kill himself, May did not choose to die that day. Collins explains that Iles was repeatedly violent towards May, and frequently abused her before he killed her. “Tragedy,” does not acknowledge who committed the violence and ignores the oppressive, dominant, and controlling aspects of the violence Iles committed against May. Collin’s statement, however, also places blame on something else – the justice system – ignoring Iles responsibility for the violence committed against May and diverting attention away from Iles’s actions. This displaces the blame from Iles.

Another male witness was interviewed in the *Star*’s March 10th 1996 article: “Iles ‘knew the system,’ said Steve Bowden, a neighbour of May’s who had comforted her before” (A1). This demonstrates the newspaper’s reliance on male testimony and opinion. This implicitly communicates that men’s impressions of the violence are more generally accepted and in turn believed more so than those of women.

“Experts”: Justice and Government Officials, Members of the Inquest Jury, and Women’s Rights Advocates

Throughout the coverage of the femicide of Arlene May, justice officials, crown attorneys and lawyers were frequently interviewed to provide explanations for the violence, the crime and its repercussions. Regrettably, the statements included in the coverage of May’s femicide made by justice officials rarely explained the violence as gendered. This willful ignorance involved in refusing to communicate Iles’ violence as sexist, as femicidal, perpetuates the patriarchal (and thus systemic) proclivity for treating women unequally.

The *Globe's* July 3rd 1998 article explained the recommendations made by the inquest jury on the May femicide case. The changes recommended by the Crown Attorneys, such as Tom Marshall and Al O'Marra, were consistent with those of the jury, which was made up of two women and two men. One of the men on the jury, John Popkin, was provided space in the article to explain the suggestions that the jury had put forth: "calls on the provincial government to fund and set up a steering committee to review all domestic violence programs... to create one 'seamless' program across Ontario" (A8). The men on the inquest jury, more than the women, are provided space to offer their opinions about "domestic violence" in the article. I believe it is essential that women be given space to provide their opinions and thoughts about the needed changes to the system, especially considering more women than men are affected by male violence in the home. The newspaper, however, focuses attention on male testimony rather than talking to women who are making changes within the system, including those working in the courts and the shelter system. Male lawyers and jurors provided the information in the article about the needed changes to the justice system when dealing with cases of (femicidal) "domestic violence."

When dealing with a problem that predominantly affects women, those women who are affected by the violence, or those working to end it such as feminists or shelter workers, should be consulted to provide information about what has to be done. Consulting such activists would allow the newspaper to offer a counter-discourse based on women's opinions and thoughts about change to the current patriarchal justice system. The article explained that two community organizations that deal with violence against women were granted standing at the inquest, Toronto's Committee Against Violence and

the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Women from these organizations were not interviewed. Instead, the newspapers prioritized male responses over female, or feminist, responses.

Al O'Marra, the coroner's chief counsel and one of the men interviewed in both the February 16th and July 3rd 1998 *Globe* articles, stated that he believed "attitudes toward domestic violence are changing, given the media's interest in the May-Iles case" (July 3, 1998, A8). This statement makes reference to increased attention and interest paid to issues related to male violence against women, however, it does not confront the problematic, sometimes false and sexist, way the media represent cases of violence against women. The inclusion of O'Marra's statements in the July 3rd article does not describe cases like May's femicide with language that confronts the gendered nature of male violence against women nor do they recognize the way patriarchal society, including the male-dominated justice system, perpetuates the subordination and objectification of women and thus the systemic violence women endure under patriarchy. O'Marra's states: "In the past we've heard that domestic violence was treated as a private matter, something to be kept in the home and it has only been in the last twenty years that it has really come into the court process." (*Globe*, July 3, 1998, A8). O'Marra's statement addresses how "in the past" violence perpetrated by men against female intimates in the home was "something to be kept in the home." He explains that currently, "over the last twenty years," this has changed, as police can now enter the private domain and arrest the person who is being violent toward others. However, his statement is problematic because it assumes that with the changes made to how police conduct themselves in "domestic violence" situations, by arresting the men who are

violent toward female partners in the privacy of the home, it therefore means that the home is a safer place. By including O'Marra's statements, the *Globe* perpetuates the mythology that with such changes, by arresting and bringing violent men to court, women are safer in their homes. This is not the case for many women who are still abused, raped, assaulted and killed in the home. The *Globe* article's inclusion of O'Marra's statement about the changes made to deal with violence in the home does not confront the sexism inherent in the patriarchal structure of both the private and public domains. He does not acknowledge that this "private matter" refers to women who are still being killed and abused in the home.

The Use of Problematic Language and of Sensationalist Rhetoric

I have observed that the coverage of Arlene May's femicide did not include gender-specific language, and therefore denies the seriousness and the political implications of the gendered crime. By not including gender-specific terminology to describe femicide, the male perpetrator's guilt is obscured and ignorance about the regularity of femicide is maintained. The news coverage of Arlene May's femicide repeatedly included gender neutral language that conceals Iles' responsibility for killing May. When gender neutral language is employed to describe the femicidal suicide it suggests that both May and Iles were equal victims. False understandings are perpetuated about violent gendered acts when the press continually use gender-neutral language.

Euphemisms are included in newspaper coverage of violence against women, wording such as "domestic situation" and "spousal violence," are frequently used to describe instances of femicidal violence. This wording regularly employed to describe

the intimate violence men commit against women serves to belittle acts of violence, like the violence Iles perpetrated against May, and denies the sexism inherent in his act. Euphemisms like “violent confrontation” perpetuate ignorance of who has committed the violence, that Iles was the aggressor and that it was he who controlled May through violence.

The frequent inclusion of gender-neutral language when applied to acts of femicide or male abuse against women generates messages that do not acknowledge that the violence is gendered. Therefore, when the newspapers use such language in the coverage of femicides, it obscures the sexism and misogyny inherent in the politics of women killing and in turn condones male violence by not naming it according to its relationship to systemic inequality.

Problematic wording

I begin with the caption below the picture that showed a police constable walking away from May’s home, where Iles killed May, located on A10 of the *Star*’s March 10th 1996 coverage. It read, “House of Horror: Meaford OPP Constable Stacey Whaley leaves Craigleith house where domestic hostage-taking incident ended in the discovery of the bodies of Arlene May and her former boyfriend, just released from jail.” In describing the femicidal suicide, the *Star*’s caption included the wording, “domestic hostage-taking incident,” which was not gender specific and does not explain that it was Iles who was fatally violent. The caption conceals that it was Iles who chose to take both May’s life and his own. An alternative framing would indicate that Iles violently held May and her children against their will, in an attempt to control her and her family and to

commit femicide. The “house of horror” caption directs attention away from the reality of his violence being a femicide and focuses, instead, on the police.

The *Star*'s March 10th 1996 article began by describing the scene of May's victimization at the hands of Randy Iles. It includes sensationalistic writing of May's victimization, for example describing her as: “hand bloodied, tears running down her face.” The *Star* article continued by including the statement, “She was scared and shaking that day, early last November, but the worst was yet to come” (*Star*, Mar. 10, 1996, A1). References such as this do not explain Iles's violence, instead this explanation refers to a sensationalist description, one that provides a titillating introduction to Iles violence against May without explaining the threats of violence he made against her as troubling or indicative of the fear/violence many women experience as part of their every day lives.

Problematic wording is frequently included in descriptions of Iles's violence against May. The *Star* article's description of the events of the day May was killed include wording like, “when Iles came calling at the two-storey split-level house for the last time”(Star, Mar. 10, 1996, A1), “came calling” denotes that Iles was simply stopping by to visit, when in fact, he went to the house to kill May. The article stated, “They (May's children) managed to escape the violent confrontation...” (*Star*, Mar. 10, 1996, A1). Euphemisms such as these, “violent confrontation,” perpetuate ignorance and obscures Iles's violent intentions when he went to May's house (to kill her).

The crime perpetrated against May and her children in the *Star*'s A1 article was referred to as a “hostage taking,” “When the first Ontario Provincial Police officers on the scene confirmed that a hostage taking was in progress” (Mar. 10, 1996, A1). I believe

the events leading up to the femicidal suicide were considered a “hostage taking” by the *Star* because there were children involved, however, when a woman is held prisoner because of abuse (and threats of abuse) by a violent husband she is rarely considered a hostage. It is odd terminology to use in this case as hostage taking situations usually involve the perpetrator requiring that demands be met, and these demands are usually monetary. Iles did not communicate any demands to any one outside of the May home. I find the newspaper coverage about May’s femicide included language, like “hostage-taking” to avoid directing attention to the gendered, sexist nature of Iles’ act. Iles went to May’s home to kill her.

Coverage in the *Star* did not focus on the femicidal suicide again until July 11th 1996. It included an article entitled “Inquest to probe murder, suicide” on page A8 referring to the upcoming inquest that would be held about the violence May endured at the hands of Iles. The article displayed two pictures of Arlene May and Randy Iles, the caption read, “Victims: Arlene May was shot by Randy Iles, who then turned the gun on himself” (11 July 1996, A8). This is a direct statement, specific to the fact that Iles killed May; however, the use of the word “victims,” is problematic as it assumes both were equally at risk. In reality, the femicidal suicide of March 8th (1996) was the result of Iles’s choosing when May would die. She did not choose to be a victim that day, he chose to victimize her.

The *Globe*’s coverage regularly referred to the violence men commit against women in intimate situations as “domestic violence,” as well as describing the femicide of May as a “murder-suicide.” This terminology does not place blame on the men who commit the violence, and it does not problematize the patriarchal culture that condones

such sexist and misogynist behaviour. The terminology, 'murder-suicide,' describes the shooting of May by Iles in language typical to legal references of this sort of crime. I believe this language to be problematic, however, because in a feminist critical analysis it is a non-gendered term and is not specific in explaining that Iles killed May. The inclusion of the terminology femicidal suicide would allow for a clearer description. It also describes the politics of the deaths of the two people: he chose when they would die, why she would die, and he was in control of the violence.

Ambiguous Terminology and Iles as "Abusive Lover"

The *Globe's* July 3rd 1996 article began explaining the inquest into May's femicide with the troubling statement: "More than two years after Arlene May was killed by her abusive lover, a coroner's jury warned that Canada must treat domestic violence with "zero tolerance"" (A1). The phrase "abusive lover" is problematic because it denotes Iles, the perpetrator, acted out of love when he abused and murdered May. This is problematic because it focuses on Iles' love for May, while suggesting that abuse can be a normal part of loving relationships. Love does not and should not include abuse. Including language like "abusive lover" perpetuates the idea that such references are acceptable to describe violence perpetrated by a man against his female partner. I believe the news media should not describe a violent man as an "abusive lover." Love and abuse should not be combined to explain the relation between an abusive man and the victimization he inflicts on his female partner. The problematic wording "domestic

violence” was also included in the first paragraph of the *Globe*’s July 3rd 1996 article. It denies the specificity of male violence against females and its gendered qualities.

The *Gazette*’s July 3rd 1998 A8 coverage included language in its description of Arlene May’s femicide that was overly detailed and sensationalistic. The opening paragraph stated, “When Randy Iles fired a shotgun into the chest of Arlene May in 1996, he triggered a chain of anger in Ontario that has resulted, two years later, in formal demands for new laws to protect victims... all to combat the continuing tragedy of domestic violence.” The language used to describe the femicidal violence is problematic. Iles’s femicide of May did not result in a “chain of anger,” it did however, result in an inquest being called into the femicidal suicide. The reporters’ use of “chain of anger” is troubling because it is vague and sensationalistic. I do not understand what the reporter means by “chain of anger.” The reporter’s phrasing assumes that people in Ontario were angry about Iles’s violence. This reporter from the *Gazette* chose to include language that did not describe the events following the femicidal suicide accurately. No reference to angry activists was made in the national coverage of the May case, thus to include such language seems to be reactionary and only included to draw attention to the article on the part of Richard Foot. Other problematic statements chosen to describe the case, such as “to combat the continuing tragedy of domestic violence,” offer troubling references to what should be described as the continuing epidemic of male violence against women. The use of “tragedy” and “domestic violence” are also problematic as they are gender neutral terms which do not blame the male perpetrator for victimizing his female partner. The overriding trend coming out of the coverage is the use of gender neutral terms instead of terminology that is gender specific, such as femicide.

Problematic language appears to be standard in the *Gazette*'s minimal representation of the May femicide and Iles's suicide. The article incorporated troubling references in its representation of the femicidal violence. Under the heading, "Shot Dead on Women's Day 1996," the article read: "She was shot dead by Iles, her lover, on International Women's Day in March 1996, in her home west of Collingwood. Iles then turned the gun on himself" (*Gazette*, July 3, 1998, A8). The articles' references about Iles as May's lover instead of her partner suggest he acted out of love and that love is part of abusive relationships. Characterizing Iles in this way minimizes his violence and appears to be included to be provocative and titillating.

The article in the *Gazette* included multiple references to "victims of domestic violence," as well as "domestic violence cases" and "spousal abuse," all of which neglect to acknowledge the sexism and misogyny in acts of femicide. Russell (2001) explains that various researchers make ardent efforts, and in this analysis they are made in news coverage, to obscure the relevance of gender in cases of violence against women. Russell explains this is damaging because gender-neutral terminology included in discussions of women's murders is misleading as it does not recognize that the vast majority of murders of women are by men (4, 5). Explaining the violence Iles committed against May in a way that described his actions as sexist and perpetuating male dominance and oppression over women would assist in recognizing the violence as gendered and as integral to the imbalance of power between men and women. Using gendered language, language that specifies that men are regularly and repeatedly committing sexist violence, would allow people to better understand how to recognize and change the dynamic of power between men and women, as violence is a physical manifestation of power over another.

Problematic Language of the Inquest into May's Femicide

The *Star's* July 11th 1996 coverage included an article that explained that there would be a coroner's inquest held to question and analyze the femicidal suicide of May and Iles. The article describes May as a mother of five, and also stated that: "A lawyer with the Ontario coroner's office said the inquest will examine the events that led to the tragedy" (A8). This statement is problematic in that it again includes language that is non-gendered in relation to a violently gendered act. As it has been explained, "tragedy" neglects to explain the violence of femicidal acts. In describing the necessity of an inquest into May's femicide, the language of the *Star's* July 11th 1996 article again included gender-neutral terminology in its descriptions. The article stated, "The inquest will also look at what other jurisdictions across Canada and the United States are doing to respond to crimes of domestic violence" (A8). This statement does not explain the disproportionate number of men who abuse and kill women. In order to respond to the crimes of male violence against women, institutional responses and inquests must first acknowledge the gendered characteristics of acts of femicide. The patriarchal oppression of women, the misogyny and sexism perpetuated through false and problematic representations of such violent crimes must be acknowledged in order to successfully confront and deal with femicide and how it must be understood as a political act against women.

The *Globe's* February 16th 1998 article as well as the July 3rd 1998 article both referred to "homicide" as the result of "domestic violence" in the coverage of the inquest into May's femicide. The July 3rd 1998 *Globe* article explained the killing of women in this way: "chief coroner's office decided to conduct the inquest after a spate of homicides

related to domestic violence” (A8). “Homicide” and “domestic violence” are both examples of terminology that is problematic in terms of a feminist critical analysis. “Domestic violence” does not provide a gendered analysis of the events that took place on March 8th 1996. The terminology does not account for the disproportionate number of women who are victimized or killed by men. “Homicide” may be the legal terminology; however it too is problematic as it is a male generic. Diana Russell (2001) explains in her chapter, “Defining Femicide and Related Concepts” that “homicide” functions as a generic for all murders. “The term *homicide* is derived from the Latin *hom*, meaning ‘man.’ Like the words mankind and the generic use of *man*, *homicide* applies to women, too” (12, emphasis in original). She continues to explain: “there are no comparable criminological terms for murder of females and the murder of males. The lack of such terms reveals the paucity of attention to gender analyses in the male-dominated field of criminology” (12). If one were to include the term femicide and the discourse of femicide in cases where women are killed by men this would recognize the politics of women’s deaths when killed by male intimates or strangers because they are women. “Femicide” understands that women are killed because of male control and power issues, that females are killed by males because of the subordinate status the female inhabits in patriarchal cultures and the power dynamics forcibly demonstrated through male violence.

The *Globe*’s July 3rd 1998 article included a paragraph that explained the increase in “homicides” due to “domestic violence:” “Regional coroners selected the May-Iles case because they felt it was representative of families who live with violence” (A8). This statement offers a similar interpretation to male violence against women in the home

as the other articles associated with May's case. The problem with such a statement is that it is non-specific non-gendered as 'families who live with violence,' does not explain who is violent, nor is it specific enough to say male violence which is the purpose of the article.

Representations of the Female Victims

The representation of the female victims put forth by news articles in the coverage of (intimate) femicides frequently rely on troubling and limited explanations of feminine subjectivity. They posit the female victim through narrowly defined subject positions/identities: as passive, vulnerable and dependent on men, and particularly through images of women that represent them exclusively in roles/behaviours defined as appropriate and "natural" in patriarchal societies, such as in the role of mother. Kristeva (1974) explains "mother" in Humm's (1995) *Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, as a maternal body which is "a site of subjugated socialized feminine" (178). The use of "mother" as a term that represents a subordinate role for women in society is included in my critical analysis because the coverage about May rarely described her apart from her motherhood. This approach to women's subjectivity limits how women can be/are understood as independent from men and children.

I have observed that May, as a victim of intimate femicide, is persistently and almost exclusively portrayed/represented through her role/status of mother. I believe that the newspaper coverage of femicide relies on this limited description of women because it upholds traditional and patriarchal standards of the feminine subject. May's subjectivity is repeatedly described according to identity traits resembling those consistent with patriarchal definitions of the "good mother," as gentle, caring, nurturing,

and sympathetic, etc. I argue that May is routinely described in the traditional role of mother because it reinforces patriarchal ideas/understandings of women's subjective, and subordinate, status. I am critical of limited definitions of the feminine subject because viewing women solely as mother empties women, the female victim of intimate femicide, of other identities/characteristics they may very well fulfill, such as, women as independent, intelligent, resourceful, and powerful. I criticize patriarchal discourses that strategically construct May's femicide as devastating only because she was a mother, not because a woman had been killed. Representing women only in their status as mother perpetuates the view that women are only worthy of the news media's attention and only worthy of being mourned if they fulfill the status of mother.

Examples of the limited representations of May in the newspaper coverage of her victimization by Iles are found in the *Star*'s March 10th 1996 article located on page A10. The article simply posited May as a mother. The article described May only in this way, "May was devoted to the three children at home with her. 'She didn't work,' said a neighbour. 'The kids kept her that busy. They meant everything to her.'" Through such descriptions, May is continually forced into the status of mother, and never as an independent individual. The newspaper discourses about May restrict how she is understood and remembered by the reading public. Representing May solely in her role as mother demonstrates the acceptable, proper, role for women to play in patriarchal societies.

The same March 10th 1996 *Star* article ended with the small headline stating: "She was a homebody." "'She was more of a homebody,' said Bowden. "She spent a lot of time with the kids in the house. She just devoted her time to the kids. She was a good

mother”” (A10). The frequent inclusion of the conceptualization of May as a good mother allows her to be considered a proper, acceptable woman. The newspaper’s representation of May, as a good mother, works to fix her identity within the acceptable and accepted feminine subject. Similar to Weedon’s theoretical approach to femininity, I am critical of this limited view of women and therefore apply a feminist poststructuralist approach to these patriarchal constructions of women. Weedon (1997) explains, “Feminist poststructuralism refuses to fall back on general theories of the feminine psyche or biologically based definition of femininity which locate its essence in processes such as motherhood and female sexuality” (162). May is never seen as an individual and thus relegated to a space that defines women consistent with patriarchal constructions (and demands) of women.

Limited portrayals of women are challenged by including and incorporating alternative understandings of women’s capabilities. This feminist analysis understands Arlene May as an individual, as a woman with dreams and goals, and as a woman who attempted to free herself from Iles’s violent subordination by ending the relationship. Regrettably, the female victim as Clark (1992) explains is labeled and not individualized; she is always reported in connection to her male abuser or killer and thus, is always subjected to men (210). Clark argues that the ways in which female victims are named in news media coverage of violence against women reflects patriarchal viewpoints and traditional standards of women that they must follow and use myths that are fraught with anti-woman attitudes which maintain and perpetuate the subordination of women by men (223).

The limited view of May, as mother, and the constant use of gender neutral terminology perpetuates a denial of the politics of women's deaths at the hands of men and assumes women's status as subordinate. May is simply posited as mother or as fearful, never as a strong self-determining individual. The March 10th 1996 article in the *Star* directed attention toward May's friend, Steve Bowden's conceptualizations of May. The article read,

Bowden, who lived just a few doors away, looked drained yesterday, as he recalled that day last November when May told him of the abuse she'd been suffering. "She was scared and crying," he said. "I told her to phone the police, and advised her to talk to the women's crisis centre. I think she went in there once" (A10).

The way this article is written is interesting, because the focus is on Bowden, instead of May and what happened to her and her family. He is positioned as having all the answers, and she is the one who did not take any action. I find this troubling because it posits her as inactive and complicit in her victimization or as "scared and crying," passive and weak.

The *Globe's* February 16th 1998 A8 article described May as a "39 year old mother of five." The status of "mother" is thus a consistent description ascribed to May. May's past was also described in this article, when it explained that May came from an abusive home. May was also represented in terms of her relationship with Iles, as the article explained the two met and began an affair while Iles's was living with his wife and after May's own divorce from her husband. This representation is interesting as it constructs May specifically in relation to how she and Iles met but neglects specifics when referring to the violence he committed against her. Unfortunately, May was painted in a negative light, first as an adulterer, getting involved with a married man, and

then as a weak and vulnerable woman who did not leave her abusive male partner. The article described the violence Iles had committed: “He was charged with assault, threatening, and forcible confinement” (*Globe*, Feb. 16, 1998, A8), but then explained May problematically, subtly blaming her for Iles’s violence. “Ms. May fled briefly to a shelter, but the next month she was seen with Mr. Iles and asked for a variance to his bail order, allowing the two to have contact” (*Globe*, Feb. 16, 1998, A8). Illustrations of May such as this one, problematically posit her as blame-worthy, for she continued to stay with an abusive partner.

The *Globe* problematically posited May as weak. The article of July 3rd 1998 explained, “In the case of Randy Iles and Arlene May, despite an increasingly violent relationship, Ms. May continued to see Mr. Iles who had initiated the relationship in 1994” (A1). Statements such as this subtly blame the victim of male violence, as she continued to see Iles and therefore she must have been at fault. The article offered an explanation of Iles’ violence against May, and the reporter described the many court appearances Iles made because of violence he committed against May. However, Iles’s numerous court appearances between November (when he was first charged with assaulting May) and March of 1996 did not affect his violent behaviour toward May; as the article explained that was when he shot her. This article, thus, acknowledges the violence yet offers mixed messages because it positions May in a way that allows her to be blamed.

The *Globe*’s July 3rd 1998 coverage continued on A8 under the headline: “Jury urges review of abuse programs” (A8). The headline itself is problematic as “abuse programs” does not describe the realities of male violence/abuse against women and is

highly ambiguous. The article, however, perpetuated problematic messages about May as well. The reporter wrote, “Pauline May [daughter of Arlene May] said Mr. Iles showed her mother both an FAC [firearms acquisition certificate] and a gun in the months before her death, but her mother didn’t know what the certificate was for and didn’t believe the gun belonged to Mr. Iles” (A8). Characterizations such as these posit Arlene May as oblivious and worthy of blame for staying with such a man. It suggests May is someone who would continue with the violent relationship regardless of Iles’ violent behaviours. This situates May as weak and unaware of Iles’ aggressive actions. Framing May through the image that she was naïve to Iles’ violent behaviour does not blame Iles for the violence he committed, but instead singles out May as ignorant and to blame for not ending the relationship. It is a very limited view of how May reacted and does not begin to describe Iles control and violence in their relationship.

The *Globe*’s descriptions of women are extremely limited. It constructs feminine subjectivity according to a very restricted understanding whereby women are described only as mothers. Pauline, Arlene May’s daughter, is also represented solely as mother in the *Globe*’s coverage. The article stated that “Pauline May, who is expecting the birth of her second child August 5th, is looking after her youngest sister, Amber, who was four at the time of their mother’s death. She said the thought of giving birth without her mother present is too much to bear” (*Globe*, July 3, 1998, A8). The *Gazette*’s July 3rd 1998 article also described May as a “mother of five.” Women are not represented as actively resisting violence; May is posited as passive and weak and simply constructed as mother and not an individual who tried to escape Iles’s violence. The representations of May in the newspaper coverage of her femicide reinforce patriarchal, traditional, standards of

feminine subjectivity, such that May is posited as subordinate, passive and blame-worthy. Unfortunately, this limited representation of women perpetuates patriarchal discourses about how women are to behave and what roles women are to fulfill.

The Perpetrator

The representations of Iles in the news coverage disseminated problematic explanations of his actions, his guilt, and violent behaviour. They repeatedly positioned him as a victim and not a perpetrator. Some newspaper reporters recognized Iles as violent, however, the language chosen to describe the violence that ended May's life on March 8th 1996, such as "domestic violence situation," or "violent confrontation," frequently portrayed Iles as a victim, denying how he planned to kill May and the violent confrontation which then resulted in the end of May's life. These problematic representations of the perpetrator suggest Iles was an equivalent victim to May, but most importantly, the articles about Iles deny the sexism and misogyny inherent in his violent acts. Iles' actions represented as they were by the newspapers, neglect to explain his violence as part of the systemic inequality of women.

In the *Star's* March 10th 1996 article, Steve Bowden, May's neighbour, is reported as describing Iles as clever. He stated that "He was very clever. He didn't beat her with people around. He knew it was her word against his" (A1). This is problematic because Iles is described according to a positive explanation, as intelligent, while concurrently, we are to consider Iles a "monster." His actions are not problematized; his violence against May is not recognized in terms of understanding the actions he committed as sexist, violent, acts against his female partner, May. His violence is considered clever, instead of being considered acts that maintain and perpetuate the physical subordination

of women. Naming Iles “clever” directs attention on to him and not the violence he committed, violence that killed May.

Iles, according to Bowden, “manipulated and threatened women” (*Star*, 10 Mar. 1996, A10). He is thus acknowledged in the article as violent and his behaviour could then be understood as demonstrative of sexism and as misogynistic; yet he was frequently considered a victim, as in the *Star*’s July 11th 1996 article where he and May were both described as victims. He also was repeatedly released from jail and granted bail, demonstrating the lack of attention on abusive men in the justice system. Why did the justice system allow such violence to continue? The denial of the court system and judges who dealt with Iles’s violent behaviour represents the systemic inequalities of patriarchal societies when dealing with cases of male abuse against women and femicide.

While May is described in the *Star*’s June 11th 1996 article according to her status as mother, or simply as fearful, Iles is not presented solely as the perpetrator. The limited explanations of Iles’s actions presented by the newspaper articles are more likely to consider him as a victim, that he died like May, than as the violent perpetrator of sexist violence. The *Globe*’s articles, the February 16th 1998 article and the July 3rd 1998 article both offered problematic representations of Iles’s violence against May by using ambiguous, problematic and gender-neutral language to describe the femicide of May. Non-gendered, ambiguous language perpetuates discourses that assume gender neutrality of the violence that regularly affects women in the home. In the February 16th 1998 article references such as “The violent deaths of Ms. May and Mr. Iles” (A8), are found. Representing the deaths of May and Iles together denies Iles’ femicidal act and the politics of gendered violence. The *Globe*’s February 16th 1998 article perpetuated

discourses that see both May and Iles as involved in committing the violence, when it was Iles who was the perpetrator of the violence toward May, the victim. The language included references like “couple’s violent life and death” (*Globe*, Feb. 16, 1998, A8), and the messages in the article coverage denied the gendered characteristics of Iles’s violence against May. This encourages denial of his femicidal act and patriarchal ignorance toward male violence against females through including euphemisms such as “domestic violence.” It was Iles who was jealous, controlling and violent and thus must be considered the perpetrator of a femicide, a femicidal suicide.

Patriarchal Discourses and Mixed Messages

The coverage of the femicide of Arlene May by Randy Iles disseminated subtle and problematic discourses that perpetuate patriarchal ignorance about male violence perpetrated against women. The discourses put forth in these articles rarely, if ever, disseminate messages that explain Iles’ violence as gendered, and as representative of systemic misogyny. This is troubling in my evaluation, because it promotes tolerance of violence against women and femicide by denying that it is women who are the victims of (sexist) violence. Patriarchal discourses circulated in news coverage of cases of femicide do not acknowledge this violence as a political manifestation of these men’s need to dominate and control women. Until male violence against women and femicide is acknowledged as a prevalent form of systemic injustice and inequality between men and women, women will continue to be subordinated and objectified. Anne Edwards (1987) explains that physical violence perpetrated by men against women in society is fueled by misogyny, that “patriarchy or the sex/gender order as a social system concerned with the

control of women has at its disposal a whole range of technique and mechanisms of control. Among these are force and physical violence” (24).

Iles’s repeated releases from jail after having been arrested for assaulting May demonstrate patriarchal tolerance of violence against women at work. The news articles that explained the events of March 8th 1996 communicate how women are controlled by patriarchal power which continues to deny femicidal, misogynist manifestations of men’s dominance and oppression of women.

Challenging Patriarchal Ignorance

The *Star*’s March 10th 1996 article went into great detail in the description of the day Iles killed May. The article described the police actions prior to Iles’ shooting of May. It also described the reactions of May’s children. Iles had locked May’s children in a closet, they escaped however, and ran to a local store before Iles shot May. The article also included detailed accounts of the reactions of the people in May’s neighbourhood, although the *Star* neglected to offer a detailed account of Iles’ femicide of May. The article read: “When they stormed inside they found two bodies. News that May and Iles were both dead made it back to the general store, where the staff had been caring for the children, about half an hour later” (A10). The way the crime is described does not specify how May was killed and how Iles died. Statements such as these mask the gendered nature of the crime and use language that does not direct attention to Iles as the person who committed the anti-woman violence. The lack of specificity allows the newspaper to explain the violent event without being specific to the fact that it was Iles who had been violent, who was in control, and who chose to kill May. May did not choose to die that day. Statements that do not specify the man as the

perpetrator/aggressor leaves the culpability of the perpetrator marginal to what occurred that day. By including language that says that both were dead without explaining who killed whom, in omitting this information, the newspaper article concealed the femicidal qualities of the crime and ignored the misogyny inherent in Iles's actions. This language perpetuates messages of patriarchal ignorance toward femicidal suicides and male violence against women in general.

The last article in the *Star* was an editorial written by Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party of Ontario at the time. It appeared on page A31 of the October 16th 1998 *Star*. The editorial focused on the lack of attention and lack of action taken by the provincial conservative government to deal with systemic problems of male abuse and assault of females. Hampton is critical of the Harris government and the neglect it showed toward female victims of male violence. He criticized "the government's failure to implement any of the 213 recommendations from the inquest jury that studied the case of Arlene May" (*Star*, 16 Oct. 1998, A31). The article was critical of the governments' lack of support for women who suffer from abuse at the hands of their male partners.

This editorial is a worthy example of a counter-discourse, one that is critical of the (male dominated) justice system that allows abusive men out on bail just to be violent toward their female partners again. It also acknowledged the number of women who had been victims of femicide, killed by their male partners, between the time of May's femicide and the inquest. However, Hampton employed language that perpetuated the problem by not recognizing male violence as sexist. He does not use gender specific terminology to describe the violence men committed against women in Ontario at the

time of the inquest. Hampton included language like, “spousal violence” and “domestic assault” to describe the violence of femicide. An example of his problematic assessment read: “cracks in the judicial system...Cracks that are not evident until you face the system as a victim of domestic assault” (*Star*, 16 Oct. 1998, A31). He also included “victims of domestic abuse” a number of times, when he could have alternatively written victims of wife or woman abuse.

Hampton could have easily included gender specific language in his assessment, such as “victim of male violence,” or “victim of assault by male partners.” Hampton, however, did not do this and instead his assessment lends itself to masking the gendered nature of acts of femicide and male violence against women. This article communicated mixed messages in its subtleties. It is critical of the conservative government and judicial system yet he too was active in perpetuating the use of problematic, gender-neutral, language which ignores the violence men commit against women while also denying the misogyny within acts of femicide.

The *Globe*'s July 3rd 1998 article's coverage of the inquest into May's femicide explained that the inquest resulted in over 200 recommendations for dealing with “domestic violence” in the province, yet the language chosen to describe the recommendations in the *Globe* article neglected to explain who killed Arlene May. Arlene's May's daughter, Pauline, is interviewed saying the recommendations that came from the inquest are “the only good thing that has come out of my mother's death” (A1). This quote demonstrates the lack of specific details, the lack of acknowledgment, of Iles's femicide of May. The article rarely referred to Iles being the perpetrator of the femicidal suicide; he is left out of the coverage and therefore this encourages ignorance,

as it denies Iles was at fault for the femicide of May. Instead, the coverage relied on euphemisms such as “domestic abuse,” “approaches to abuse” and “domestic violence programs in the province” (*Globe*, July 3, 1998, A1). The newspaper article never refers to the violence Iles committed against May as “male violence against a woman” nor do the newspaper articles use gender specific language to describe the violence that was deemed an “epidemic” in the province. Acknowledgement of the politics implicit in acts of intimate femicide is necessary in order to confront and deal with the problem of male violence against women. Including terminology like femicide allows for accurate acknowledgement to happen.

The *Globe*'s July 3rd 1998 article also offered mixed messages in its coverage. The jury recommended “zero tolerance” in dealing with “domestic violence” perpetrators. The jury was also responsible for examining “domestic violence and how society deals with it, and said that the criminal-justice system must be changed to reflect the personal nature of these crimes” (*Globe*, July 3, 1998, A1). Thus, solutions are provided within the newspaper coverage, however, the coverage of acts of femicide and femicidal suicides rarely reflect, as the jury explained, the “personal nature of the crime.” The newspaper articles relied on euphemisms and language that did not acknowledge the violence as male acts of power against a female partner. The newspaper reports offered in the news article to explain crimes against women by male intimates such as that of Randy Iles's violence against Arlene May; do not explain that it is the man who is violent. The language is ambiguous and offensive, as in the case of “abusive lover.” The first statements included in the July 3rd 1998 article do not explain that it was Randy Iles

who was abusive toward May and did not examine the sexism in his actions, therefore not reflecting the gendered and personal nature of the crime.

The *Globe's* July 3rd 1998 article addressed the recommendations put forth by the inquest jury. The article explained that the province's Crown prosecutors required changes to how the law dealt with cases of male violence against women in the courts and the lack of time lawyers had to deal with the perpetrator or to interview the victim. Therefore, explanations were provided for the changes that were to be made to the justice system based on the recommendations of the inquest jury. This is important information provided in the article as it is confronting some of the problems inherent in the legal system when dealing with violence against women cases. Unfortunately, according to the Hampton's October 16th 1998 editorial in the *Star*, the changes were not being implemented by the government and the justice system continued to release male abusers such as Iles who in turn committed his final act of control over May by killing her.

The *Star's* July 11th 1996 coverage is of particular interest to my feminist critical discourse analysis because it disseminated mixed messages while also including feminist language. I isolate this article at this point of this section because it included both non-specific and gender-neutral terminology, language that saw Iles and May as equally violent (when May was not violent toward Iles) while also including gender specific language. The *Star's* July 11th 1996 article was the only article in my analysis of newspaper coverage about femicide that included the phrase "intimate femicide." It read: "Anybody who has been a citizen of Ontario for a period of time knows that we have had a number of intimate femicides" (A8). Yet the article also included language like "domestic violence" or "intimate relationship domestic assaults and... murder-suicides"

(A8). The coverage definitely could have included a feminist interpretation of male violence in intimate relationships and of Iles' violence against May by including the language of "intimate femicide" to describe Iles's actions and thus could have explained the importance of including the terminology in news coverage of this sexist violence.

I did not expect to find "intimate femicide" included in the newspaper coverage I set out to analyze, however, the fact that the article included this language to describe the prevalence of women killed by male intimates demonstrates that the newspaper media, the *Star* specifically, is aware of such gender specific language used to describe lethal male violence against their female partners. The instances where the news media use gender-neutral language over that of "intimate femicide" which focuses on the gendered nature of male violence against women, demonstrates the reluctance of the newspaper media, the reluctance of the *Star* which we know is familiar with the terminology, to describe gendered/sexist violence using gendered language. Including mixed messages in the articles' discourses thus undermines the attempt made to declare and name women-killing as femicide. By not using "intimate femicide," not letting it stand alone throughout the *Star*'s articles, demonstrates the newspapers' adherence to using gender-neutral language which maintains and perpetuates willful ignorance of male power displayed and perpetuated in acts of femicide.

I applaud Bill Wolski, counsel for Ontario's chief coroner, for including the terminology "intimate femicide" in his description of the multiple deaths of women in the province at the hands of their abusive male partners. However, the article also included and disseminated mixed and problematic messages, patriarchal discourses that allow ignorance and complacency toward male violence against women to continue.

In the *Star*'s July 11th 1996 article, the reporter described May and Iles' relationship as follows: "May and Iles crossed paths with a number of provincial institutions in their violent two-year relationship, particularly in the final months of their lives" (A8). Statements such as these consider May and Iles as equally violent. "Their violent two-year relationship," suggests that both May and Iles were violent toward each other when it was Iles who was violent toward May. Statements and language that attempt to suggest May was also violent communicate patriarchal assumptions about male violence against women in that they are not specific that it was Iles who was violent toward May.

The article also disseminated mixed messages when it described Iles as violent: "Even though he had once held a gun to a former girlfriend's head, he was able to obtain a firearms certificate that allowed him to purchase the gun he used to kill May" (*Star*, July 11, 1996, A8). This description explained that Iles was violent towards women, yet statements like "their violent relationship," and language like "domestic violence" and even "murder-suicide" are far from specific in describing Iles as the perpetrator. They do not denote the sexist nature of the crime, nor the misogyny inherent in acts of femicide and thus neglect to specify May as the victim of a femicide. The statements made by Wolski, for instance: "These particular deaths (May and Iles) gives us an opportunity to examine the issue" (*Star*, July 11, 1996, A8) do not name the specifically gendered act nor does it direct and specify that the deaths were examples of a femicidal suicide. We are aware that Wolski is familiar with the terminology of "femicide," it is unfortunate he continues to describe the femicide of May in a vague manner and in an apolitical way by saying "the issue." This happens again when Wolski was quoted as saying, "We hope the

circumstances of the deaths of Arlene and Randy provide us with a microcosm or gives vent to all the province-wide issues” (*Star*, July 11, 1996, A8). The narrative in this article does not condemn Iles’ actions. Instead the two, May and Iles, are grouped together as victims according to the *Star* article that explained the femicidal suicide as “these particular deaths,” positing the two deaths equivalently when it was Iles who committed the violence. Patriarchal discourses are disseminated through deliberate ignorance on the part of the newspaper. The denial of Iles’s violence towards May perpetuates patriarchal complacency toward anti-woman violence (in these news articles). Instead the article communicated messages and included language which did not specify that it was an act of intimate femicide.

Concluding Remarks

The coverage pertaining to the femicide of Arlene May demonstrates the heightened social awareness of “domestic violence,” but the messages in the representations of Iles’s killing of May are problematic in their subtlety and inclusion of mixed messages, especially through how they represented the victim of the femicide - how the woman is portrayed. The narratives included in the *Star*, *Globe* and *Gazette*’s coverage disseminated problematic information about the violence Iles committed against May through the statement included about the anti-woman violence that tended to remove the gender specificities of who did what to whom, and also through how solutions are provided but blame is placed on the system (or the victim) and not on the man who committed the violence. Ignorance is perpetuated in the lack of acknowledgement of the misogynist culture that exists and inspires such injustices.

When dealing with the inquest into May's femicide and the suicide of Iles, the news articles explained the recommendations for change in dealing with cases of "domestic violence," yet attention is not on the need for a gendered analysis, there is no question of the sexism involved in femicide. The representations of the inquest into the femicide of Arlene May is limited as it does not question Iles's actions against May as representative of inequality between males and females, his crime against her is isolated. The representations of the violence also does not question the misogyny that is implicit in intimate femicide and especially when women are killed by their male intimate partners.

The *Gazette's* July 3rd 1998 article considered the solutions provided by the inquest jury and stated that training and education was necessary for people involved in work with issues and cases of "domestic violence." The solutions provided for dealing with violence also should consider the language we use to refer to male violence and I will suggest that using gender-specific language will help people to acknowledge who is committing the violence, as it will help people to understand how male violence against females is representative of sexism and cultural misogyny. Hopefully including gender specific language in descriptions and news articles about male violence against women, such as articles about rape, assault, abuse and threats will assist in recognizing warning signs to hopefully end male violence against women before it results in femicide.

The coverage about the femicidal suicide of Arlene May and Randy Iles, did not acknowledge the culture of misogyny that is implicit in the patriarchal systems that dominate Western society, including the justice system that repeatedly released Iles on bail. If the blame is continually placed on the system, as it was in the May femicide, and not on the perpetrator who committed the femicidal act, the system must also be

recognized as patriarchal and thus unjust when dealing with women who have been the victims of male violence. The sexism and misogyny of male violence against females must also be confronted in public media. This can be done through representing women-killing through gendered language which recognizes the male as perpetrator and the female as victim which an alternative framing of the violence, using a discourse of femicide, makes possible.

CHAPTER SIX: THE COVERAGE OF THE FEMICIDES OF GILLIAN HADLEY AND ROSELLA CENTIS

On June 20th 2000 Ralph Hadley shot and killed his estranged wife Gillian Hadley in Pickering Ontario. Gillian was preparing for her day when her estranged husband Ralph broke into her home and began harassing her. Ralph was under court order to stay away from Gillian and her children after being arrested for assault, threats and abuse against her and her son. Gillian attempted to free herself and their one year old son from Ralph by running out onto the front lawn, looking for help on the street. Ralph chased after Gillian, grabbed her, and pulled her back inside the house. After Gillian's panicked screams were heard, neighbours confronted Ralph at the front door of the house and asked what the problem was and if they could assist in any way. At this time, Gillian picked up her son, Chase, and attempted to escape Ralph's violence. Gillian became part of a tugging match between neighbours trying to rescue her and Ralph, as she told the men trying to save her that Ralph was there to kill her. Ralph then showed the handgun he had tucked in his pocket to the neighbours who were attempting to free Gillian from his grip. The neighbours let go of Gillian. Ralph closed the door. Later two gun shots were heard. Ralph had killed Gillian, shooting her point blank with his handgun, and then killed himself.¹⁸

On September 2nd 2002 Joseph Centis shot his estranged wife Rosella Centis from behind. Rosella Centis drove into a gas station near her Nanaimo British Columbia home, her 13 year old daughter was in the passenger seat. She stepped out of her van to

¹⁸ Please refer to the note 11 on the first page of Chapter Four: The Coverage of the "Montreal Massacre"

fill it with gas. A car pulled up to hers, shots rang out and the car sped away. Rosella's daughter watched as her mother, having been shot in the head, fell to the ground. The gas attendant called police. On September 4th 2002, Joseph Centis was charged with second degree murder.¹⁸

Introduction

The femicides of Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis were perpetrated by their estranged husbands during separation and divorce proceedings. There was very little coverage about the case of Joseph Centis's femicide of Rosella, which only appeared in the *Globe*. Therefore, the majority of the critical analysis in this chapter will concentrate on the femicide of Gillian Hadley and when it is applicable I will include the few references to Rosella Centis's femicide. I believe that greater focus was paid to the femicide of Gillian Hadley because the events leading up to her death were witnessed by a number of the Hadley's neighbours. The dramatic and exposed circumstances of the last moments of Gillian Hadley's life were detailed in many newspaper articles that covered the femicidal crime.

In her attempt to escape Ralph's violence, Gillian ran screaming from her home, clutching her baby to her naked body, which was described over and over again in the newspaper coverage. Ralph killed Gillian as his last attempt to control her and their son's future; his violence was a physical manifestation of sexism and control. Ralph's actions were also caused by extreme jealousy, for he had learned Gillian was seeing another man while she was separated from him. His violent act expressed his desire to control and exert power over the woman he could not tolerate seeing move on in life without him. I have chosen to critically analyze the coverage of Gillian Hadley's femicide because this

case received a great deal of media coverage in Ontario, (I believe) because of the sensational aspects of Gillian's last effort to free herself from her vicious husband. Her fear of dying was exposed to the public.

This chapter examines the coverage of the intimate femicides of Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis through a feminist critical discourse analysis. As I have done in the two previous chapters I will continue my critical analysis by problematizing what language was used to describe the violence, and the ambiguous and troubling narratives included in the articles' descriptions that perpetuate sexist understandings of male lethal violence against females. Central to my analyses of the news coverage of these particular intimate femicides, will be my critiques of the problematic representations of the victims and the perpetrator, which perpetuate patriarchal understandings of appropriate feminine, and at times masculine, behaviour. Subtle messages that contribute viewing the victim as solely subordinate and vulnerable will be challenged. Further, this feminist analysis will be critical of how representations of the women killed by their estranged husbands rely exclusively on their status as mother, which was seen in the coverage of Arlene May, but again in the articles about Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis. These women are rarely represented as individuals. Instead women are structured and explained through their subordinate status to their husbands as newspaper coverage maintains patriarchal constructions of women in the descriptions of female victims of femicide. The descriptions of Gillian Hadley are constructed through patriarchal formulations of proper feminine qualities and in turn disseminate limited and sexist representations of women who are victims of femicide.

Feminist Critical Analysis of the Coverage of the Femicide of Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis

The news coverage of Gillian Hadley's death consisted of a greater number of articles than of those written about Arlene May and Rosella Centis, however, none of this coverage compares to the amount of coverage of the "Montreal massacre." The *Star's* coverage of Gillian Hadley's femicide was the most extensive. The *Star* covered the femicidal suicide the days following the violent event with a number of articles and a year after Gillian's death, the *Star* included a six-part series entitled "Deadly Vows" that documented Gillian and Ralph's youth, relationship and his violence that ended their lives. The *Gazette* did not cover this case and minimal coverage was included in the *Globe* and the *Post*. The *Globe* provided a small section of the newspaper to feminist explanations of the Hadley femicidal suicide, and thus offered a counter-discourse in the representations of male lethal violence against women. However, the *Globe* articles explaining the events that lead to Gillian's femicide, as well as the act itself, included problematic representations which denied the gender specificity of the violence. The *Globe* was the only newspaper that covered the femicide of Rosella Centis. This demonstrates to me that more attention is paid to femicides when the male perpetrator also kills himself.

It is essential to this thesis that women who are attempting to free themselves of abusive men, but who are killed in intimate femicides are recognized as victims of a common form of male violence against women, more common than attacks by strangers. Representations of these women must be put forth without sexist and limiting or narrow descriptions of the female victims, and the violence must be acknowledged as a political

act that subordinates women. As Weedon (1997) states, “the important point is to recognize the political implications of particular ways of fixing identity and meaning” (168).

The lack of coverage of women’s subordination through male violence demonstrates and encourages social/patriarchal ignorance and tolerance of this lethal inequality of men over women. Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis’s femicides are examples of the continued sexism and misogyny which is in part, not exclusively, perpetuated by ambiguous language and problematic discourses disseminated by newspaper coverage which refuses to see male violence as central to the systemic inequality of women in society.

The Coverage in the Headlines and in Pictures

Headlines

The first coverage of the femicide of Gillian Hadley appeared the day following her death. The *Star*’s first headline read, “Mother of three shot dead” (June 21, 2000, A1). The headline, as in the femicide of Arlene May, referred to Hadley’s status as mother. An alternative framing of the event could have read: woman shot dead by husband. However, the coverage portrayed Gillian Hadley in her role of mother, a proper role for a woman to fulfill in our patriarchal society. The sub-headlines of the same article stated, “Husband defied orders by court to stay away” and “Neighbours grab baby as pair die in Pickering bungalow” (A1). The first of the two recognized Gillian’s husband had defied his court order to stay away (from her), explaining that Ralph had chosen to break the law in order to get to Gillian. The second headline is troubling, as it posits the couple as having died at the same time, assuming the same cause/motive, and it

does not specify who killed whom. The problem lies in conceptualizing this femicidal suicide in terms of viewing Gillian and Ralph as equivalent victims of violence. Gillian did not choose to die that day; Ralph made that decision for her as he controlled her.

The *Star*'s June 22nd 2000 coverage of Gillian Hadley's femicide, located on page A1 of the newspaper, included pictures of both Ralph and Gillian smiling (which I will discuss later in this section.) The most central picture of the day's coverage was of Nowell Gordon and his younger sister laying flowers in honour of Gillian. Gordon was the neighbour who attempted to help Gillian escape from Ralph's violent grip the day Ralph pulled Gillian back into their home and killed her. The caption under the photograph, as well as for the article's sub-headline, clearly explained Gillian had been killed by her husband, "Restraining order had no impact as husband killed Gillian Hadley." This is an example of language that communicates the specificities of the gendered violence.

The first and most prominent headline of the day, however, was "The judicial system let wife down" (*Star*, June 22, 2000, A1). This headline places blame on the judicial system without stating that it was Ralph who killed Gillian. The judicial system is a product of a patriarchal society, and while I do not expect a newspaper headline to acknowledge this, the headline should explain that Gillian could have been saved had the justice system, acted in women's best interest by protecting the woman who was repeatedly the victim of male violence. The justice system is also implicated in Gillian Hadley's death. The headline posits Gillian only through her connection to men, by calling her "wife," thereby situating her in the subordinate roles of wife or mother. As Weedon (1997) explains, "under patriarchy, women have differential access to the

discursive field which constitutes gender, gendered experience and gender relations of power in society” (162). Understanding how women are narrowly defined in news coverage of intimate femicides is important to understand as newspapers generally rely on patriarchal definitions of femininity. Language and discourses which define women as independent and separate from men is limited/non-existent in the news coverage about Gillian’s subjectivity. This demonstrates the type of problematic references frequently included in news articles about women victims which perpetuate problematic and sexist views of women.

The *Star* examined the Hadley case thoroughly on June 22nd 2000; multiple articles about the femicidal suicide were included in the newspaper. In the *Star*’s A28 coverage the headline read: “Little has changed for victims of abuse” and the sub-headline stated, “All the warning signs were present before Gillian Hadley’s tragic death.” Both headlines explained the problems “victims of abuse” face, that little had been done to change the system in order to protect victims and that warning signs, as direct as Ralph’s were, do not keep “victims” safe. The problematic aspects of these headlines result from their ambiguity and lack of a gendered analysis. The “victims of abuse” that are being written about in the newspaper are *female victims of male abuse*. This type reference, however, does not receive the necessary space in headlines and helps to maintain ignorance of the reality that it is men who disproportionately abuse women. Including language that masks the gendered nature of women’s deaths perpetuates and maintains the patriarchal status quo, whereby men repeatedly subordinate women through violence. It also perpetuates a misunderstanding of the violence that men carry out on women’s bodies, by denying the sexism and misogyny of these acts. A word like

femicide would better inform the reader that what they are reading about are acts of anti-woman violence, and would acknowledge that sexist (male) violence contributes to and maintains patriarchal power and the oppression of women.

The *Star* continued its coverage of the Hadley case on June 30th 2000, on page A3; describing the inquest called into the femicidal suicide of Gillian Hadley and of her killer Ralph Hadley. The headlines read “Inquest called in Hadley case” and “It may be used to stem rising tide of domestic violence.” Here, again, is an example of the use of language that does not draw attention to the fact that women are more greatly affected by “domestic violence.”

The *Globe*'s coverage began with the headline, “Woman dragged into house and shot to death,” and the sub-headline read, “Husband commits murder-suicide, neighbours save baby” (*Globe*, June 21, 2000, A1). These headlines offer a more direct explanation of the crime perpetrated against Gillian, however, they still include problematic wording. The first headline, the more prominent headline of the two, does not state who dragged the woman into the house and who shot her, though the smaller headline below it does, utilizing non gendered terminology. Placing the guilt of the crime to the husband, Ralph, is an indication that the *Globe* is more specific in its headlines, yet still denies/ignores the gendered nature of the crime and in turn posits the crime as gender neutral.

The Star's June 16th 2001 to June 21st 2001 Series: “Deadly Vows”

During the month of June 2001, Michelle Shephard wrote a six part series entitled “Deadly Vows” for the *Star*. This series is critically analyzed in this chapter as it represented Gillian's subjectivity and Ralph's violence in problematic ways which ignored the gendered nature of Ralph's crimes against her and instead refer to his

violence using gender neutral terminology, such as “domestic violence” or “spousal homicide.” The *Star* covered this case more than any other newspaper I am including in my analysis, but used sensationalist detail and did not offer a feminist interpretation of the events. A feminist analysis was rarely included, if ever, in any of the three cases of intimate femicide considered in this study.

The series is a collection of articles detailing Ralph and Gillian’s relationship, his violence, and her fear. The series began on June 16th 2001 with the headline: “Jill was from a fairy tale, Ralph was more a loner” (A1). This constructs Gillian within a specific vision of feminine behaviour, as a princess, perhaps, from a fairy tale, while Ralph is constructed as isolated, strange, lonely young man. From the first headline, the reporter appears to be constructing both Ralph and Gillian within stereotypical and generalized representations of perpetrator and victim.

The *Star*’s six part series included numerous problematic headlines and sub-headlines that rarely specified Ralph’s violence. Instead the headlines offered sensationalistic language and focused on Gillian’s vulnerability. Examples of this are found in the fourth and fifth installments of the six part series. The article headlines read, “A quiet morning shattered by Gillian’s frantic screams” and “Cheap U.S. pistol brings fateful end to Gillian’s struggle” (June 19, 2001, B1, June 20, 2001, B1). These headlines neglect to state that it was Ralph’s violence against which Gillian was screaming and/or struggling. Gillian’s fear, the violence she endured, and the femicide itself are referred to simply as a “struggle” and instead attention is placed on the location, time, and weapon used in the crime against her. The sub-headline in the June 19th 2001 article stated: “Neighbours try to drag his naked wife from Ralph’s grip” (B1). The focus

of this headline is on Ralph, positing Gillian both as vulnerable and as his property. This is problematic because, while it specifies Ralph's involvement, it also contributes to viewing Gillian as an object. Gillian is constructed as defenseless and exposed as she was dragged between two people, two men.

The headlines attributed to the few articles about the femicide of Rosella Centis constructed her exclusively through her role as a mother. The articles which appeared in a small corner of the newspaper, included the headlines, "Daughter present as mother of five shot dead in B.C." and "Suspect sought in shooting of mother" (*Globe*, Sep. 3, 2002, A1+). These two headlines appeared in the *Globe* the day following Rosella's violent death. The following day's coverage included the headline "Police charge B.C. plumber in shooting death of wife" (*Globe*, Sep. 4, 2002, A3). All three headlines posit Rosella solely through her status as wife and mother, representing the victim of male violence only through the (appropriate) roles ascribed to women by patriarchal society, relying on an essentialist understanding of female subjectivity. Weedon (1997) explains that in texts and representations of women, "feminine potential is repressed in favour of a patriarchal version of femininity in which males desire and male interests define and control female sexuality and feminine subjecthood" (144).

Pictures

Many pictures of both Ralph and Gillian were included in the newspaper coverage of her femicide. The troubling aspect, in my critical evaluation, is that the pictures were always of Gillian and Ralph smiling, often located beside one another in the newspaper layout, or of the two together in wedded bliss in the *Star*'s three pictures of Ralph and Gillian together at their wedding. This is troubling because the pictures offer a cheerful

view of the man that killed Gillian. The pictures of Ralph, photographed smiling, allows the newspaper to posit him as good, and caring, making it more difficult to view Ralph as a sexist murderer and highlighting the positive aspects of the relationship.

The pictures included in the coverage of Rosella's femicide appearing beside the *Globe's* September 4th 2002 article, is of Rosella, Joseph and their five children; a family portrait. Each member of the family is smiling and Rosella sits holding her baby with Joseph standing over them. This picture may represent the family at a happier time, but it also conveys the image of the nuclear family, man, woman and children; an institution which is rooted in paternal power and traditional gender roles. This picture gives the impression of a happy family, though the violence many women experience is masked in order to maintain the image of the perfect family, one of the patriarchal institutions within which many women are violated and abused.

The Journalists, Witnesses and "Experts"

The journalists whose articles about Gillian's violent death at the hands of Ralph were included in the newspapers analyzed in this thesis were both male and female journalists. I have found that regardless of gender the language the reporters used to describe the violence, the victim and the perpetrator, and the narratives disseminated use problematic and gender neutral language which perpetuates the misinformation about femicide. The witnesses chosen to provide testimony about what happened to Gillian were also both male and female. However, the female testimony relied more on descriptions of Gillian as a good mother, a good woman, and of Ralph as the man in love with her, while the men interviewed in the coverage offered problematic explanations of Ralph's violence, positing it in gender neutral terms.

The Journalists

The *Star*'s reporter of the first coverage of Gillian Hadley's femicide and Ralph Hadley's suicide was male, Stan Josey. Josey was the primary reporter covering this case, while further coverage included reports from Hamida Ghafour, Jennifer Quinn, Rita Daly, Michelle Shephard, and a column written by Jim Coyle. The *Globe*'s articles were written by Timothy Appleby, Margaret Philips as well as a column by Margaret Wentz. The *Post*'s coverage consisted of an article by Christie Blatchford. Regardless of the reporter's gender, the articles included in all three newspapers perpetuated non-gendered understandings of Ralph violence. The few articles about Rosella Centis's femicide were written by reporter Brent Jang who also problematically described Rosella, the victim, in limited ways, (in Rosella's case solely as mother.)

The Witnesses and "Experts" – Justice and Government Officials

The people interviewed in the articles about Gillian Hadley's femicide ranged from her friends and family, to the men who attempted to rescue her, to lawyers and police officers who were questioned about the violence and failure of the justice system to keep Ralph in custody. The women who were interviewed were Gillian's friends. "Experts" and justice officials included police officers and the (province's) Attorney General, and Ralph's lawyer. Mr. Wallace, the neighbour who intervened to try to help Gillian, was also interviewed as a witness to the violent crime.

In the June 21st 2000 coverage of the *Star*, Gillian's friend and neighbour, Kim Nicely is frequently consulted regarding Gillian's life with Ralph. She is quoted saying "I can't believe it, I can't believe it," when she found out the woman [Gillian] was dead" (A24). Nicely and Gillian Hadley are both characterized through their role as mother in

the article, Nicely explained she and Gillian “did everything together. We did the baby thing...we talked about the kids... now she’s gone” (A24). The article included references of the surprise people close to Gillian expressed after learning about her violent femicide.

Sexist violence such as Ralph’s must be acknowledged as controlling and threatening, we must also see that assault, threats and verbal abuse are all indicators of male violence that could potentially become femicidal. Acknowledging Ralph’s violence against Gillian as consistent with other acts of male violence against women allows one to view the violence as part of the systemic inequality between men and women that exists in patriarchal societies, and that this inequality becomes violent when men feel their control or power slipping away. Gartner et al. (1998) explain that separation appears to be one of the most significant risk factors for intimate femicide and that “the male’s inability to accept termination of the relationship and obsessional desires to maintain control over his sexual partner” are associated with higher risks of women becoming victims of femicide (159). This appears to have occurred in Ralph and Gillian’s relationship, as it seems Ralph had a deep desire to control Gillian.

The June 22nd 2000 article in the *Star*, located on page A29, detailed previous charges that had been laid against Ralph due to the threats and violence he had committed against Gillian. It explained that he had been released on bail multiple times, the last time being under the strict condition that his parents would supervise him. The police officer interviewed, Sergeant Sal Naccarato, explained that Ralph had broken his terms of release. Naccarato did not specify however, that it was Gillian the police should have been protecting. He is quoted as having said, “They are rules and unfortunately people

break the rules. You can't keep a watch on these people 24 hours a day." Statements such as these demonstrate that the police are ill equipped to deal with cases of male violence against women, because it is at this point in a violent relationship between an estranged wife and husband that women are at the greatest risk of being killed.

The "experts" who were interviewed in the A29 *Star* article were Ontario's Attorney General, Jim Flaherty and the province's Premier, Mike Harris. Both men responded that the Hadley femicidal suicide was "shocking," while promising tougher penalties. The male politicians and justice officials received greater focus and were provided more space in the article to offer their opinions than any other person interviewed in the article. The reporter, Rita Daly, did however consult Vivien Green, coordinator of the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, who stated "We have seen absolutely no change within the criminal justice system. That to me is the most telling thing." Green is critical of the justice system that repeatedly released Ralph Hadley and others like him on bail. She is critical of the justice system and by including such statements the reporter did attempt to balance the views of male officials, with Green's account of the state of the justice system. Neither of these accounts, however, recognized male oppression of women and did not include a feminist account of how male violence keeps women subordinate to men and that male violence is perpetuated through patriarchal ignorance of male violence against women.

The third installment of the *Star*'s six part "Deadly Vows" series, which appeared in the newspaper's June 18th 2001 coverage, included a troubling quote made by Ralph Hadley's lawyer, Graham Wakefield. After having established that Ralph would be released in his parents' custody following the multiple assault charges and threats, the

lawyer is quoted as saying, “In most cases you’re not going to see warning signs or truly obvious triggers. People don’t just come into a courtroom frothing at the mouth, saying they’re going to do something horrible” (A16). The inclusion of this statement perpetuates denial of the frequent threats and violence Ralph committed against Gillian. It also denies that acts of abuse and assault are precursors to femicide. Including this quote encourages the reader to doubt and question the seriousness of Ralph’s abuse and threats against Gillian. It demonstrates the lack of awareness of the lawyer, the criminal justice system and the media system have about cases of violence against women.

The *Globe*’s June 21st 2000 (on A1 and A15), highlighted the actions neighbours took to help Gillian escape from Ralph’s violence. Although there was a struggle to free Gillian from Ralph, after he produced a hand-gun the actions the neighbours took to help Gillian proved to be futile. Mr. Wallace, one of the neighbours who confronted Ralph after hearing Gillian’s screams, stated: “I looked in the guy’s eyes and I always thought I’d see an angry person acting in rage, [but] this guy was on autopilot” It continued by explaining Mr. Wallace’s confusion concerning Ralph’s actions. “I don’t think he was drugged. Something happened to him and he was on a mission” (A1). These references explain Wallace’s impressions of Ralph’s actions as though Ralph was committed to kill Gillian. But in describing him as “on a mission” and on “autopilot” he also dismissed Ralph’s agency in this violent act of femicide. Ralph’s actions are communicated in this article as beyond rational thought. Ralph is described as acting without emotion, on “autopilot,” which describes the act as if it was an isolated, sudden “mission.”

Regrettably, the *Globe* neglects to explain Ralph’s actions as linked to his previous

abuses against Gillian, and his violence is not seen as part of a larger cycle of misogynist violence, that attempting to kill Gillian also meant attempting to control her one last time.

The *Globe* articles related to the femicide of Rosella Centis focused on interviews with Constable Jack Eubank. The police official told the *Globe* in the first coverage of the event that “Joseph Centis [was] not a suspect” (Sep. 3, 2002, A1). However, in the following coverage of September 4th 2002, Eubank states that Joseph Centis was charged with second degree murder for the killing of his estranged wife Rosella (A1). This demonstrates the risk of femicide for women newly estranged from their husbands as Rosella was from Joseph and again shows the police do not understand that this is a period of great risk for women. In the *Globe* articles, Joseph Centis’s mother, Fulvia Centis was interviewed. She was quoted saying “I love Rosella just like the same I would my daughter. But what can I do now? It’s a big shock to me” (*Globe*, Sep. 3, 2002, A4). Regrettably, the killing of women by estranged husbands is not covered in the news media so as to explain the frequency of intimate femicides, as they are explained as isolated acts of violence. The gendered (and political) characteristics of Rosella’s death, and the violence Joseph perpetrated against his estranged wife, is evidence of the all too common occurrence of intimate femicide.

The Use of Problematic Language and of Sensationalist Rhetoric

The newspaper coverage of Gillian Hadley’s intimate femicide offered troubling, ambiguous and problematic language which neglected to specify, in most instances, that a man perpetrated the violence Gillian endured. Ralph’s violence is repeatedly described in terminology that masks its gendered nature. The coverage detailing Gillian’s death also included reports that described the event using sensationalist rhetoric. This too

masks the sexism inherent in Ralph's anti-woman violence, as it relies more heavily on the sensational and dramatic events than the injustices and unequal treatment inherent in acts of femicide.

Sensationalist Rhetoric

The opening paragraphs of the *Star's* June 21st 2000 coverage of Gillian's femicide and Ralph's suicide are interesting and troubling because they explained the events in a very sensationalistic and dramatic fashion. The article introduces Gillian's death in this way: "Gillian Hadley ran naked into the street looking for help, her baby in her arms, her killer close behind. She knew the man chasing her with a gun in his hand" (A1). Following this description of the events, the article (finally) named Ralph as the man who was chasing Gillian. Ralph though "had been told by the courts to stay far away from the 35-year-old woman" (A1). I believe the opening statements of the article are examples of sensationalism because they focus on the vulnerability of Gillian and on the chaos of the events leading up to her death rather than the seriousness of the crime. Ralph was there to kill his wife. After five paragraphs, the article finally explained that Gillian's husband had shot and killed his wife before he killed himself. The coverage focused heavily on the unfortunate and fearful moments prior to Gillian's death, drawing focus to the more sensational aspects of Gillian's femicide such as her being chased, naked, from her home by the man who was there to kill her.

Problematic Wording

The police officer interviewed in the *Star's* first article about the Hadley femicidal suicide, appearing on page A1 of the June 21st 2000 issue, referred to Ralph's violence by stating, "What we have here is a murder-suicide we believe resulted from a domestic

situation.” Including language such as this to describe the femicidal violence eludes the gendered qualities of the violence committed by Ralph and includes a common euphemism associated with wife abuse/assault: “domestic situation.” The newspaper’s representation of the police officer’s impression of the femicide, by including statements such as “domestic situation” or “spousal violence,” suggests Ralph and Gillian were equally victimized and including non-specific language denies the male violence in their relationship prior to Gillian’s death. Forsyth-Smith (1995) explains that this terminology, “spousal abuse” for instance, misnames the problem, “making it seem as if either spouse is equally at risk or at fault” (60). “Domestic violence,” Forsyth-Smith maintains, “has come to identify family violence in general but fails to specify the gendered and intimate character of the problem” (60).

The *Globe*’s June 21st 2000 news coverage explained the events of the Hadley femicidal suicide as a “drama” that was the result of “domestic violence” (A1). Including this terminology that masks the gendered nature of the violence against Gillian denies the sexism of Ralph’s act and encourages readers to see the event as isolated because it does not relate Ralph’s violence to the systemic inequality between men and women. This language does not benefit women who have been victims of male violence, because it hides the gendered nature of the crime, and does not blame Ralph, and other male perpetrators, for his predatory actions.

The *Globe*’s June 22nd 2000 article described women killed by their husbands or former male partners as “spousal homicide victims” and “victims of domestic violence” (A1). These terms do not describe acts of male violence as femicides, nor do they specify that the “spousal violence” at issue is male violence. While homicide may be the legal

term for murder, it remains problematic in my analysis because it functions as a male generic. The use of the term homicide truly exposes the way in which language, especially language that concerns female crime victims, is rooted in the masculine form and structures as the standard, as generic. The word femicide, however, allows one to understand the murder victim as female, also it allows the politics of her death to be seen: that she died because of her subordinate status to her male partner and how the act of femicide itself is an act of subordination of women.

The *Star*'s June 21st 2000 coverage included problematic language that ignored Ralph's violence against Gillian, "Grimley [police sergeant at the scene] said police have been called to the address for domestic situations in the past, and noted there were three families affected by yesterday's tragedy" (A1). This statement is another example of the use of language that masks the gendered nature of male violence against women.

"Domestic situations" does not explain that Ralph was violent toward Gillian, and it does not explain how male violence can turn lethal after a series of incidences of abuse and assault. As in the cases of the 14 women killed by Marc Lépine and the femicide of Arlene May, the *Star*, and other newspapers as well, tend to represent such acts as "tragedies." This is problematic because it neglects to view the male perpetrator as having committed a lethal act against his wife, ignores that it was he who was choosing who would die, and it also denies and ignores the sexism implicit in such actions.

"Tragedy," used in this sense, is too general a term. Femicide assumes a specific kind of tragedy rooted in women's inequality.

Meyers (1997) explains that references like "tragedy" and "murder suicide that resulted from a domestic situation" deny the female victims' importance. Representing

the femicide and suicide as equivalent deaths, as equal tragedies, posits Gillian as “symbolically unimportant” (47). This denies Gillian’s importance and suffering, and equalizes Ralph’s actions and victimization. Meyers explains, this type of reference conceptualizes his crime as, “he did to her what he did to himself. [That] she suffered no more than he” (47). By including such statements, like “tragedy,” the newspaper article denies Gillian as the subject of the violence and equalizes her and Ralph’s deaths, suggesting that they both suffered, when Ralph actually chose who would suffer that day.

These terms are much more common than gender specific explanations or language. They do not describe who is at fault, and encourage ignorance and perpetuate patriarchal resistance to acknowledging that male violence is a gendered act which functions within a patriarchal system of control over women who are subordinated through sexist and misogynist violence.

The June 22nd 2000 A29 *Star* article included problematic language in the descriptions of the violence Ralph committed against Gillian. Language that does not describe the events of a controlling and abusive man, such as “Gillian’s tragic death” and “investigate domestic assault” are included. Neither of these references explain the sexism inherent in men who victimize women and the misogyny implicit in their actions, which is frequently ignored. Using femicide as an alternative framing of the end of Gillian’s life would explain the gendered, sexist nature of her death and would relate to the reader the power dynamics involved in violent acts perpetrated by men against women.

The *Star*’s June 22nd 2000 coverage includes a column by Jim Coyle, a weekly columnist. His article, “Paper shield no defence against rage and a gun” (A28),

regrettably does not recognize the overwhelming rage and the gun violence exhibited by Ralph's violence. He described, "The slaughters of women by former mates" which does not specify male partners, and repeatedly refers to the femicidal crime using language that is not gendered. "The murder Tuesday of Gillian Hadley is a horror made all the more obscene by the terror and degradation of her final moments, and by the fact it seems to have been less a crime of passion than an execution" (A28). Describing Ralph's shooting of Gillian as a "crime of passion" maintains and perpetuates the idea that femicide is an act of emotion that cannot be controlled, that men naturally react violently. This denies that Ralph had continually been violent against Gillian. "Execution" is no better as it is also non-gendered term used to describe that Ralph chose when Gillian's life would end. Coyle repeatedly refers to Gillian's femicide as a murder without detailing who committed the sexist violence.

In the *Star's* final day of coverage of the Hadley femicidal suicide, problematic wording and references obscured how one should remember the femicidal event. Explaining that an inquest would be held to "get some answers" (B7), the *Star's* June 21st 2001 article problematically included wording that denied Ralph's violence and that it was his choice for Gillian to die. The article phrases the violence Ralph committed using nonspecific language that ignores and obscures that it was Ralph who killed Gillian. References such as "Friends and family hope it [the inquest] may prevent another crime but know nothing will help them with their loss" (B7), specifically the wording "the crime," neglects to mention the "crime" is male violence against a woman and obscures that Ralph's act is a sexist and misogynistic act. Ralph used violence to try and control his estranged wife. The end of the article also refers to Gillian's femicide and Ralph's as

equivalent, “it’s important to tell the story of Ralph and Gillian” (*Star*, June 21, 2001, B7). This denies the violence Ralph’s chose to commit and disregards Gillian as his victim, as a victim of femicide, that there are two stories.

The *Post*’s single article about the inquest into the Hadley femicidal suicide that appeared in the newspaper’s October 23rd 2001 coverage on pages A1 and A8, included the headline “No simple answers to complex murder” (A1). This headline paid no attention to the gendered nature of Ralph’s crimes against his estranged wife. Another problematic in the article was the reporter’s use of troubling language when referring to Ralph’s violent and misogynist crime. She described Gillian as Ralph’s beloved at the same time as she explained his violent intentions. This posits Ralph as loving Gillian: “his beloved,” that this is primary in the *Post*’s representation of Ralph, rather than his desire to control her and focuses on Ralph’s love instead of his sexism and violent act against Gillian.

The language included in the coverage of husband’s lethal violence against their estranged wives frequently relies on language that masks the gendered nature of the man’s violence against the woman who is being abused, threatened and then killed. It is necessary to point out and reprimand men who kill their wives and to acknowledge their violence as politically motivated, driven by sexism and misogyny. Women are doubly victimized, at first through the man’s lethal violence and then again in the masking of the gendered and political nature of the killing of women which help to maintain women’s subordination to men.

The problematic language included in the minimal coverage of the shooting of Rosella Centis by her husband Joseph included the use of “homicide” to describe the

crime against her. An alternative framing of Rosella's sexist murder would have described her death as a femicide for she was shot and killed by her estranged husband during the time they were completing divorce proceedings. Naming her death a femicide would allow the reader to understand that women who are affected by male violence are often killed during separation, when they are attempting to leave their partners, and when it is felt that there is a lack of control over the woman (and their children) on the man's part.

Representations of the Female Victim

The coverage of the Hadley femicidal suicide offers problematic, limiting explanations of Gillian and her feminine subjectivity. The newspaper analyzed in this thesis, particularly the representations put forth by the *Star*, describe Gillian according to feminine behaviour deemed appropriate by patriarchal conventions. At times, however, Gillian is represented as stepping beyond the boundaries of appropriate feminine behaviour, for example, when she began seeing another man while still legally married to Ralph. It was at this point that Ralph confronted Gillian and killed her. In what follows, I examine how limited representations of the female victims of male lethal violence are posited almost exclusively through their status as mother, a status deemed appropriate for women in Western patriarchal societies or through qualities regularly ascribed to proper feminine behaviour, such as passivity, weakness, vulnerability, and subordination to men. This limits the ways women, especially women who are the victims of femicide, are viewed and understood, structured through narrow and patriarchal versions of acceptable behaviours/roles for women.

Problematizing how women are portrayed in the newspaper coverage of intimate femicides is essential to demonstrate how patriarchal discourses inform the representations of the female victims. Weedon (1997) explains “dominant discourses of female sexuality, which define it as naturally passive, together with dominant social definitions of women’s place as first and foremost in the home can be found in social policy, medicine, the media, the church and elsewhere” (36). The coverage of Gillian’s life (before she was married to Ralph and while she was married to him) represents patriarchal and dominant conventions/regulations which define and govern the boundaries of appropriate feminine behaviour. I maintain that as soon as Ralph believed Gillian had gone beyond these boundaries, when she left him for another man, he believed he had the right to kill her and the newspaper’s patriarchal discourses about women supports this.

The June 21st 2000 *Star* coverage of the female victim, Gillian, positions her in her role as mother, while also speaking of her inability to remain in her marriage. This negatively portrays Gillian: “Gillian Hadley is the mother of two other children from her previous marriage; an 8 year old girl who was at school when the shootings took place, and a 7 year old boy who lives with Hadley’s ex-husband.” “A third man, who was Gillian Hadley’s boyfriend, anxiously awaited news of what happened in the house” (*Star*, June 21, 2000, A24). This information, as detailed as it is, represents the lack of the nuclear family, which is upheld as a valued institution in patriarchal societies. The lack of such a family structure causes Gillian and her children to be seen as deviant, as deviating from the accepted norm. Gillian is also posited exclusively as mother and wife/girlfriend, but never as an individual. Weedon (1997) explains that the current

social structures which dictate our lives, that offer subject positions to their subjects, are “a site of political struggle waged mainly, though not exclusively, in language” (37). She maintains that “where women are concerned this can be seen very clearly in conflicting definitions of the true or desirable nature and function of the family and more specifically what it means to be a wife and mother.” “To be a wife and mother is seen as women’s primary role and the source of full self-realization” (37). Gillian is constructed in this way as it maintains traditionally held conceptions of women. The *Star* assumes motherhood is one of the only subject positions for women, like Gillian, to fulfill in its coverage of femicides. In maintaining a limited view of women, the *Star*’s coverage also appears to have no problem defining Gillian as not only a mother, but a “bad” mother, one who could not remain involved with only one man.

Gillian is constructed solely through her connections with men and children. It is interesting that the information about Gillian’s love life is as detailed as it is when explanations of Ralph’s violence are merely explained as “domestic situations.” Contradictions such as these demonstrate the newspaper’s lack of acknowledgement of male violence and their overemphasis of particular details that fit into the mould they construct for women.

The *Star*’s June 22nd 2000 article again posited Gillian through her role and status as mother. An unnamed male source described Gillian in this way, “Gillian was a wonderful person. She was an excellent mother. She loved her children to death...” (A1). Gillian is rarely described separately from her connection to a man or to children, and she is viewed in her status as mother, she is never individualized. Benedict (1992) explains that the media pushes women into subordinate roles, and that there is little

opportunity for women to be seen as self-determining individuals (23). The *Star* maintained its limited view of Gillian's feminine subjectivity by describing her again and again as mother, "the slightly built mother of three – 5 foot 7 and about 106 pounds – ran naked from the house, her 11-month old son in her arms" (A1). At that moment Ralph was chasing Gillian, trying to get her back to the house where he could kill her. The article included detailed accounts of Gillian's exposed and vulnerable last moments of her life, yet failed to describe Ralph's misogynist actions in terms of his violence, which would might help the reader acknowledge the connection between male violence, control, and sexism. The June 22nd 2000 *Star* article referred to Gillian again through her status as mother, she is described "by friends as a loving mother who doted on her dogs" (A29).

The *Globe's* June 21st 2000 article on A1 described the femicide that ended Gillian's life. The *Globe* article, similar to that of the *Star* and the *Post*, paid special attention to Gillian's vulnerability as she ran, naked and scared, from her abuser:

A naked woman ran screaming onto a suburban street yesterday clutching her year-old son before being dragged back into her home to die in what police said was a murder-suicide committed by her estranged husband, who was under a court order to stay away from her (A1).

This introductory paragraph described Ralph as the perpetrator of the crime, specifying it was he who was threatening Gillian; however the paragraph also objectified Gillian, foregrounds her vulnerability without explaining the gendered nature of the violence. The lack of attention paid to Ralph's sexist attack and motivation is blatant as this article ignores the sexist motivation behind male violence against women. Because the newspaper uses the common term "murder-suicide," the act is seen as gender-neutral and denying the misogyny and control Ralph exhibited through his violence.

The June 22nd 2000 *Globe* article also described Gillian based on her vulnerable, exposed state: “Ms. Hadley was naked as she fled outside with the baby Christopher, whom she was able to hand to a neighbour before being dragged back in the house and killed” (A7). Gillian’s last moments in this world are conceptualized through her exposed and degraded state, but also her ability to save her child. The newspapers that covered Gillian’s last moments before being killed never left out the detail that she was naked and vulnerable when Ralph attacked her in her home. This sensationalizes the story without presenting her as actively trying to escape from her killer.

The *Globe*’s June 22nd 2000 article focused on an interview with Gillian’s friend, Kim Nicely, and described Gillian through a limited construction according to her ascribed femininity and role as mother: “Gillian Hadley was a loving and protective mother hoping to escape a second failed marriage [...],” “...Jill was a great mother,” and “Petite and attractive with curly blond hair, Ms. Hadley began to date her new boyfriend as her marriage to Ralph Hadley fell apart” (A7). References to Gillian’s role as a good mother provide a limited view of who she was and could have been, it also ignores the other facets of her being, her inner light, her hope and dreams for it continually posits Gillian as attached to a man, to the father(s) of her children, and thus in a subordinate role. The descriptions of Gillian included in this article go somewhat further than solely describing her as a mother, but only in that they describe her connections to multiple men, her failed marriages and her affair with another man while still married to Ralph. She is rarely described as an individual, as a separate entity from the men and children in her life. Gillian is either described as a mother or described by her dependent need to be loved. She is also repeatedly objectified through frequent references to her attractiveness

and small physique. Gillian is represented solely through her connections with men, demonstrating how women are continually subordinated through the representations of women as dependent and not as self-determined individuals.

The coverage of Rosella Centis's femicide also posited Rosella exclusively as a mother. In the *Globe's* September 3rd 2002 article, one of only two articles about this femicide, Rosella is described as "an exemplary mother" and "just a wonderful mother and a great lady" (A4). These descriptions of Rosella, while positive and caring, demonstrate how women are represented in newspaper articles about lethal male violence exclusively through their role as mother and their connection to their male partners and children. Rosella represented as mother limits how she is understood and implies how "good" women are suppose to act and do with their lives.

In the *Star's* June 16th 2001 installment of the profile of Gillian and Ralph Hadley's relationship, the first of the six part "Deadly Vows" series entitled "Boy meets girl." This article described Gillian's childhood and personality. Descriptions of Gillian's behaviour(s) included multiple references to patriarchy's established and appropriate feminine qualities: "Gillian was an energetic child, with the personality given to little girls in fairy tales. With bouncy curls and a penchant for bows, the colour pink and pretty things, the wiry youngster was gentle" (A1). This article establishes what is "acceptable," what has been deemed appropriate behaviour for young girls within our patriarchal society, and shows that Gillian fulfilled these requirements. She is portrayed as a "good little girl" who did everything expected of her. The reporter also sets up Gillian's vulnerability to men, "She was loving but also needed to be loved" (A1). This representation of Gillian posits her through her need for reciprocated love, and suggests

that she was not strong enough to be alone. This reference to Gillian “needing to be loved” is explained in later coverage through the specific descriptions of her multiple relationships and marriages. The review of Gillian and Ralph’s childhoods and teenage years explains that their families knew each other and that both Gillian and Ralph had similar upbringings. The article continues, however, to represent Gillian in problematic ways. The reporter included references to Gillian’s various male companions: “Gillian also stayed at home while she worked... She dated various men. [Then] she enrolled in George Brown College for a hair dressing course and met Michael Ferraz. She fell in love. Plans soon blossomed for a wedding filled with flower girls and bridesmaids in pink” (A1). Gillian is continually associated with men and through descriptions of her that rely on essentialist and patriarchal descriptions of her overt femininity, as in the case of the descriptions of her appropriate feminine penchants for getting married and the colour pink.

In the *Star*’s June 17th 2001 articles about Gillian and Ralph Hadley’s relationship, the second segment of the six part series entitled “Ralph finds love,” references to Gillian’s feminine subjectivity construct her in a limited and essentialist manner. “Exuding maternal instincts since her teenage years...Gillian started trying to have children soon after her 1987 marriage to Michael Ferraz” (A1). The article represents Gillian through references to her “maternal instincts,” thereby limiting how the reading public is to understand and view Gillian’s relationship to the world. The constructions of Gillian solely through her role as a mother, or as motherly, serve to establish, remind and maintain the boundaries of proper feminine behaviour. The article continues to posit Gillian in subordinate roles. The June 17th 2001 article describes

Gillian's relationship with her first husband and their children. It explains how their second child, Michael, was born with severe disabilities that led to the couple's break up. Focusing on Gillian's need to "fill the void" after her divorce from Michael Ferraz, the article explained how Ralph and Gillian were brought together, after Gillian, the article explains, called Ralph to help her with one of her children's toys. "With one telephone call, Gillian brought Ralph into her life. He came to her aid" (A1). This statement is problematic as it posits Gillian as responsible for bringing her abuser into her life, while also positing her as in need of male support. The article represents Gillian as needy through references such as, "After a brief courtship, they were soon engaged. Gillian saw no need to find out more about the man she'd known for years" (A1). References such as this rely on the reporter's assumptions about Gillian's decision-making and represent Gillian as unable to live life without a man. She is represented as behaving in an unwise fashion, for it is her fault, she is presented as not learning more about the man who would later kill her. Constructions of Gillian through subtle references of blame and naivety do not present Gillian in a positive or objective way and they remove at least part of the blame from her abuser because she sought him out, she should have looked deeper into the man she was going to marry.

The *Star's* June 17th 2001 article presented Gillian as "the romantic mother [who] embraced suburban life, moving into a quaint two-story house on Hillcrest Rd. in Pickering" (A1). The frequent references to Gillian as behaving and living within established, appropriate, feminine roles allows the reader to view Gillian as a proper and traditional woman. However, after the news coverage detailed the problems Ralph and Gillian had, the child abuse charge laid against Ralph for hurting Gillian's son Michael,

the newspaper explained: “Gillian met another man and they began to secretly date” (A1). The article suggest that by engaging in a relationship with another man while still married to Ralph, her femicide demonstrates that once she behaved inappropriately Gillian was at risk of anti-woman, misogynist, violence for stepping outside the prescribed role of proper female behaviour. Meyers (1997) explains that news coverage such as the articles about Gillian and the violence she endured because of Ralph’s need for control, divide “female victims of male violence into innocent victims or women who are guilty of causing or provoking their own suffering” (53). Meyers also maintains that news coverage of violence against women “serves as a warning to women by defining the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and the punishment for transgression” (53).

The *Star*’s June 18th 2001 article from the “Deadly Vows” series, entitled “A Day in Court,” relayed information about the assault charges laid against Ralph. After multiple instances of violence against Gillian, Ralph was “accused and charged of crimes against his estranged wife Gillian Hadley” (A1, A16). The article paid little attention to the violences Ralph committed against Gillian and focused instead on the court proceedings which granted Ralph his freedom, as long as he remained under the supervision of his parents. Gillian was described according to her vulnerability. She was posited as reluctant to see Ralph’s violence as detrimental and was presented as typically feminine, meaning that she put her needs and cares aside in order to preserve her family. “...although the harassment was constant, Gillian was more frustrated than scared. She worried constantly about her children, but little about herself” (A1, A16). Subtle assumptions appear in this statement. This representation of Gillian appears to explain her as lax with her own self-care, that she ended up dead at the hands of her abusive

estranged husband because she did not take care of herself. The article suggests Gillian did not take precautions against Ralph's violence and also that she did not see the abuse as escalating and was therefore the victim of something she could not have taken control of. This is problematic for it places responsibility for protection against male violence solely on the female who has been victimized.

The *Star*'s fourth part of its six part series, located on page B1 of the newspaper, detailed the horrifying events that led to Gillian's femicide. The article explained: "Through the doorway and out in to the sunshine Gillian Hadley ran. She was naked. She was wild with fear, her screams loud and panicked. Behind her ran Ralph Hadley" (19 June 2001). Gillian's vulnerability to Ralph's violence was not only described by the fact that she ran, naked, from her home in an attempt to escape Ralph's violence, but it was also demonstrated in the repeated references to her naked body. Gillian is constructed through her fear and defenselessness, and she is strangely sexualized, rarely is she seen through the actions she had taken previously to end Ralph's violence.

The news coverage in the *Star* detailed Gillian's fear and desperation in its descriptions of her attempt to escape Ralph's violence. Unfortunately the newspaper did not problematize Ralph's actions or provide readers with ways of understanding and acting against such violence. Instead the newspaper series sensationalized and objectified Gillian and the violence committed against her. The B1 article read: "They [neighbours] watched Ralph take Gillian from the property's edge and drag her back into the house. They would later remark that in contrast to Gillian's hysteria, Ralph was eerily calm, moving like a world-weary parent having to retrieve a toddler having a tantrum" (B1). Gillian is posited as an infant, "a toddler," who had to be controlled and calmed by a

parental figure, Ralph. This is problematic for it positions Gillian as a subordinate to Ralph's authority, as property to be roped in or as something to be controlled.

The June 19th 2001 article illustrated Gillian's vulnerability and fear by frequently relating information about her smaller size, her lack of understanding of what Ralph could do, and how she was pulled back and forth between two men in attempts to release her from Ralph. The article, which continued on B4, presented Gillian as unaware and fragile. The article read: "Gillian knew he was angry about her decision, but she had no idea what he was capable of doing." It continued to posit Gillian as vulnerable through references such as, "The men pulled. Gillian's small 106-pound frame teetered, unbalanced, tossed between them." Her vulnerability is, sadly, shown again through her calls for help, the way she begged the men trying to rescue her not to let her go, "Please don't let me go" she begged (B1). In the fifth part of the six-part article series, found on B5 of the June 20th 2001 coverage, Gillian is again described as physically and mentally vulnerable and weak, "[Ralph] was engaged in a tug-of-war with two neighbours over his estranged wife Gillian. She was pleading, crying, naked." Gillian had little control over her safety at this moment in the violent altercation. Unfortunately, however, Gillian's attempts to free herself from Ralph's abuse prior to the day she was killed by him were overlooked in the articles that comprised of the femicidal suicide. Instead, the attention remained on her subordinate status, her fear, and vulnerability to Ralph's misogynist jealousy and violence.

The final article of the six part series, "Deadly Vows," included very little detail about Gillian. Unfortunately Ralph, the perpetrator of her femicide, was the focus of the article. Gillian was simply explained as she had been so many times before, as naked and

scared: “He confronted her as she undressed. Naked she ran from the house. But Ralph caught her and brought her back inside” (*Star*, June 21, 2001, B7). Gillian’s victimization at Ralph’s hands was ignored and I believe her dreams and goals were taken away from her through Ralph’s lethal violence. Gillian’s mother, Deanna MacLean, was interviewed in the final article, and unfortunately the only quote from Gillian’s mother included in the article was in response to the loss of Ralph not the loss of her daughter, she explained: “Before he changed and then snapped, Ralph was a good man. I try to remember him like that” (B7). The articles ignored Gillian’s pain, her victimization and the life that had been taken away from her by Ralph’s need for power and control. The violence Gillian endured and how she should be understood as a victim of male violence, of femicide, was forgotten in the *Star*’s last day of coverage, the one that would probably remain with people, their last look at the femicidal crime.

The Perpetrator

The representations of Ralph Hadley, the violence he committed and the suicide letter he wrote before he killed Gillian, are critically analyzed in this section. The portrayals of Ralph and his violence are problematic for they posit him through mixed messages, suggesting that he was deranged, filled with rage, but also that he planned to kill Gillian. Ralph was the focus of many of the articles analyzed in this assessment, more so than his female victim. The representations of the male perpetrator of the femicide are important to critically analyze for they expose how impressions of male violence are disseminated in the news and how male violence and the men that perpetrate sexist violence are understood.

The *Star*'s June 21st 2000 article referenced the sentiments of Ralph Hadley's mother. It was reported that she, the woman who answered the door of the Hadley home when reporter's came calling, was not concerned with "how strangers view yesterday's events." She proclaimed, "It doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter" (A24). The inclusion of this quote evades the violence Ralph committed and also removes the blame of who did what to whom. It is unfortunate that Mrs. Hadley, Ralph's mother, had to deal with such a violent end to her son and daughter-in law's lives, however, denial of who chose to end these lives exposes ignorance toward male violence against women and how it is reprehensible in a society that acknowledges individual rights, or at least says it does.

One of the people interviewed about the events that lead to the femicide of Gillian Hadley, was her friend and neighbour Kim Nicely, whose impressions of the violence Ralph inflicted on Gillian were frequently included. Nicely explained, "She [Gillian] had several restraining orders against him" (*Star*, June 21, 2000, A1). In this interview, however, Nicely characterized Ralph Hadley as a "maniac," "that guy was a maniac" (*Star*, June 21, 2000, A1). By choosing to include these quotes about Ralph, naming Ralph in this way, the *Star* perpetuates mixed messages about how the reader is to understand his commitment to his violence, for he was explained as both a maniac, acting crazy, and as coherent for he planned the violent event.

The June 22nd 2000 *Star* article explained Gillian's femicide by illustrating how Ralph had been violent, had been charged and arrested, yet still was able to break into Gillian's home and kill her. The article referenced how Gillian Hadley had done everything possible to keep her family safe, "But in the end, no one – not the courts, not

her friends, not her will to live – could save Gillian Hadley from his rage” (A1). This statement is sensationalistic and posits Ralph Hadley as outside the boundaries of sane and controllable behaviour. Ralph, however, was in control of his actions that day, had multiple opportunities to stop his violence the day of the femicidal suicide and was acting out what he had planned to do to Gillian.

The majority of problematic references about Ralph and his violence are found in the *Star*'s June 2001 six part series by Michelle Shephard. The *Star*'s June 16th 2001 installment of the six part series profile of Gillian and Ralph Hadley's relationship, entitled “Boy meets girl,” described Ralph's childhood and teenage years. The article explained Ralph's behaviours through references to his early development as stubborn, adamant about doing what he wanted to do, and his reluctance to change. The article portrayed Ralph as “The man Gillian would eventually marry [who] sat in a nearby class, one grade lower, and kept mainly to himself. He was a blond bundle of energy with a stubborn will. Unlike Gillian, who blended in, Ralph and his foibles stood out” (A1). Physical descriptions of Ralph were also included, for instance “the husky boy” (A1), disseminating views of his early physical strength and stature, while also explaining his adamant attitude: “His doting parents told neighbours that their only son was so adamant about not changing [referring to how he would wear his pajamas to school] it was sometimes easier to let him go” and “Ralph was strong-willed” (A1).

The article described Ralph, in his teenage years, as “a big teenager and although never popular in high school... [He was] loud, boisterous, and opinionated...” (*Star*, 16 June 2001, A1). These descriptions of Ralph set him up as strong willed and adamant, lending itself to a consideration that Ralph as stubborn and always in control. These

descriptions would rarely be used to describe women; no such attributes were ascribed to Gillian who was more narrowly defined through her feminine qualities and in the *Star* Ralph was described through established masculine qualities. The concluding paragraph explained that after growing up together, though in different crowds, “Ralph was always in love with her [Gillian]” (A1). His jealousy that would later be explained as consuming him is alluded to in this article and later developed in descriptions of his violence toward Gillian.

The June 17th 2001 newspaper coverage, the second of the six part “Deadly Vows” series, describes Ralph’s jealousy and dominant behaviour. In this section of the series, the article chronicles the troubles Gillian and Ralph faced after their sudden marriage. The article described how it was Gillian who brought Ralph into her life, and how he “came to her aid,” and explained that soon after they were married. The *Star*’s June 17th 2001 article establishes Ralph as unbalanced, describing him using mixed messages, suggesting Gillian was aware of his state, in turn positing Ralph’s anger as beyond his control and Gillian as blame-worthy because she knew he had a temper. “The couple seemed happy, but privately doubts were forming. Gillian had known Ralph’s temper and competitive side but those traits now seemed exacerbated” (A16). The article continues with its mixed representations of Ralph, “Yet even with her concerns, she watched Ralph lovingly when he interacted with Faith [Gillian’s oldest daughter] and Michael. For a larger, almost awkward man, he seemed gentle when dealing with the kids” (A16). References such as these position Ralph ambivalently and inspire doubt about his temper and violence. They also establish Gillian as dependent and desperately fighting to hold on to the idea of the happy, nuclear, family. The demands of the

patriarchally defined family limit women's abilities to construct their lives separately from men.

The June 17th 2001 *Star* article detailed the problems in Ralph and Gillian's marriage. It explained how after Gillian's son spent time alone with Ralph, Gillian discovered a bruise on her son's backside. Ralph was charged with assault and the marriage "soon soured" (A16). It is at this point in the couple's life that Ralph's violence began to escalate, was acknowledged in the news articles, and Gillian and Ralph separated. The article relayed the information about Ralph's violence without explaining how such violence might be a warning sign of femicide. Ralph was simply posited as depressed, angry and, "Then he found out about Gillian's boyfriend and he became enraged" (A16). This is problematic because it does not explain that Ralph's reactions were precursors of violence against his wife, nor does it represent Ralph's jealousy and anger as demonstrative of the need for control and power over Gillian. The article, instead, includes sensationalist detail and blames Gillian for her victimization; for she was engaging in an extra-marital affair.

The *Star*'s June 18th 2001 article in the "Deadly Vows" series entitled "A Day in Court," explained the charges laid against Ralph for his violence against Gillian. It described the court proceedings where Ralph was sentenced to \$5000 bail and "ordered to live with his parents in their Scarborough home" (A1, A16). Ralph was forbidden to have contact with Gillian or anyone related in any way to her, including her children, her boyfriend and her family (A1, A16). Ralph's violence, however, was not the focus of the article, instead it focused on how Ralph was released in his parents' custody and portrayed him as a good son, a contributing member of society, as opposed to detailing

his abusive actions and threats against Gillian. The newspaper article described Ralph as follows, “the man now sitting before the court had no criminal record. He had supportive parents and full-time employment. And since what was before the court were allegations, Ralph had the benefit of presumed innocence” (A16).

The *Star*'s June 19th 2001 article, the fourth part of six, which at this point had been moved to the B section of the newspaper implying that the importance of the coverage of the femicidal suicide had decreased, detailed Ralph's large stature, his strength. The article stated: “He [Wallace] focused on the enormous man, almost twice his size, the man whose girth filled half the doorway” (B4), and posited him as in control the day he broke into Gillian's home to kill her, while also seeing him as filled with rage. The June 19th *Star* article explained the perpetrator through sensationalist descriptions and mixed messages, it described Ralph as both out of control and as determined and calm as he kept Gillian from escaping his grasp. References to Ralph read, on the one hand as, “a legal document was no match for Ralph Hadley's wrath,” and then, on the other, Ralph's impending violence was described as “his demeanour was not abrupt or violent; he was quite cordial, almost gentlemanly. He was answering the door because his neighbour had knocked. That was the proper thing to do” (B4). These images of Ralph offer problematic and mixed interpretations of his violent behaviour toward Gillian.

The June 19th 2001 article casts doubt on Ralph's violent jealousy in that the descriptions appear to illustrate him as calm, collected, and proper instead of explaining that he was ready to commit femicide. The violence Ralph was planning to commit should not be shrouded with doubt over his good behaviour when dealing with the

neighbour who attempted to help Gillian. Ralph's actions should have been explained as lethal and as examples of the actions of a man determined to have control over the woman from whom he had been estranged.

The final installment of the six part series found in the June 21st 2001 *Star* on pages B1 and B7, "What Ralph left Behind," detailed the suicide letter Ralph left behind and responses from Gillian and Ralph's family members and friends. The article paid little attention to the violence Ralph had committed against Gillian. It also neglected to focus on what Gillian left behind: her goals for her family, her anticipated freedom from Ralph's threats and violence, and it also did not explain how women, like Gillian, can find help in similarly violent situations. The article, instead, focused on Ralph's suicide note, and on the responses from Ralph's parents and Gillian's mother, Deanna MacLean. The article did not explain the gendered nature of Ralph's violence, nor did it explain how sexism and misogyny encourage femicidal violence. Ralph was the focus of the *Star*'s June 21st 2001 article, not Gillian, the woman who was the victim of femicide.

The article detailed the contents of the suicide letter, allowing Ralph to be mourned, not Gillian. An example of one of the lines from Ralph's suicide note that the *Star*'s coverage detailed stated, "I beg them to try and forget what I have done and embrace my little boy into their hearts" (*Star*, June 21, 2001, B1). The article explained that in Ralph's letter he had said he was trying to "save" his son from Gillian. Including such statements enables the newspaper to convey Ralph as remorseful and apologetic and Gillian as hazardous to her son's safety. The article continued by stating: "Ralph outlined just how we would execute his crime. In the end, everything went according to plan" (B1). The article posits Ralph in a non-offensive, supportive way, and suggests at

the very least that he had completed what he had set out to do, as opposed to showing him as a violent man who killed his wife. This is problematic because it perpetuates ignorance about male violence, femicidal violence, and instead romanticizes Ralph's last days, his letter, and his last act of control by providing space for his words.

The final article in the *Star*, provided ample room for explanation of Ralph's motivation. The article explained, "Hurting their son was never part of the plan, Ralph said in his suicide note. It was Gillian he was after and then he would kill himself" (*Star*, June 21, 2001, B7). Constant references to Ralph's reasons for committing the femicidal suicide are included in the article, illustrating that more attention is paid to the perpetrator of the femicide than to his innocent victim. Rationalizations and excuses are provided in Ralph's defence, while Gillian's dreams as well as suggestions for helping women in similar situations are absent. The June 21st 2001 article provided space for those mourning Ralph: "And to some, Ralph still is a man remembered by more than his last, murderous act" (B7). Ralph's parents both comment how their son was "a good boy" and how he would be missed.

Yet the most problematic reference included in the article is from Gillian's mother, Deanna MacLean, who was interviewed about Ralph. "Even Gillian's mother, who has stayed friends with the Hadleys, wants to remember the Ralph she once knew. 'Before he changed and then snapped, Ralph was a good man. I try to remember him like that,' Deanna MacLean said" (*Star*, June 21, 2001, B7). The inclusion of this quote is problematic as it rationalizes Ralph's act by assuming he "snapped," when in fact it was explained in this article and others that Ralph obviously did not snap if he had been beating Gillian prior to killing her. As Meyers (1997) states, including statements that

explain the perpetrator as having snapped “implies a spontaneous, spur of the moment, uncontrollable response” (44). This was not what happened to Ralph. Ralph had planned to kill Gillian on June 20th 2000. The quote from Gillian’s mother also positions her as sorrowful for the loss of the man who killed his daughter. Quotes such as Deanna MacLean’s, especially because they come from someone related to the victim, posit Ralph within a positive view, that he was a “good man.” The *Star*’s June 21st 2001 article did not include any quotes from Deanna MacLean that pertained to her feelings about the loss of her daughter, instead the article only included Gillian’s mothers’ response to Ralph’s death.

The *Star*’s news coverage of June 21st 2001 relied more heavily on expressions of mourning for Ralph than for Gillian and neglected to clearly state the damage of Ralph’s act in its perpetuation of tolerance of male violence against women. The article rarely referred to Ralph’s crime against Gillian and instead posited their deaths as an equivalent crime, an example being “it’s important to tell the story of Ralph and Gillian” (B7). In this coverage the violence Ralph committed is not problematized, nor are there explanations provided for how to deter such men from violent acts such as the one Ralph perpetrated against his estranged wife Gillian. Explanations of Ralph’s violence are replaced with references of him as a good man, and diminish the gendered, sexist, crime he perpetrated against Gillian by offering excuses and rationales in defence of his actions. Gillian, unfortunately, is not recognized as a victim of male violence in this article; instead, focus remains on how Ralph both snapped and followed through with his plan to control Gillian until death. Ralph’s violence is posited through problematic narratives about his behaviour, his goodness, and his rage against Gillian. Mixed messages such as

these do not explain the jealousy, power and control Ralph wished to hold over Gillian, instead, they perpetuate misinformation about a man who set out to commit femicide.

Joseph Centis who shot and killed his wife Rosella at a gas station while she was pumping gas was described in the minimal coverage of the *Globe's* September 4th 2002 article as only a "B.C. plumber." Joseph Centis was not described in the two articles about his femicide of Rosella as a father of 5 as was Rosella; he is simply described as a plumber. Men are rarely, if ever, described in their status as fathers. This demonstrates the newspapers patriarchal constructions of men according to subjectivities defined as appropriate for men, such as their employment status, not their family status. The description of Joseph as "B.C. plumber" demonstrates the unequal/unbalanced representations of men compared to representations of women, because women are continually described according to their status of mother and thus the institution of the family.

Patriarchal Discourses and Mixed Messages

The patriarchal discourses conveyed in the coverage of the femicide of Gillian Hadley expose the limited definitions and understandings of women and the violence men commit against female intimate partners. The explanations offered for Ralph Hadley's violence neglected to include gendered language that might have explained the inequality and subordination male violence against women perpetuates. The discourses included in the coverage rely on patriarchal formulations of safety, and of violence, by denying that women are the victims of sexist violence in their homes more regularly than they are victims of attacks by a stranger. This chapter challenges how the news articles

rely on traditional conceptualizations of safety and gender-neutral explanations of male violence which perpetuate ignorance about femicide.

The Myth of Women's Safety

The *Star* described the area where the Hadley's lived as a "quiet neighbourhood" (*Star*, June 21, 2000, A1). This draws from the notion that violence does not happen in good, quiet, neighbourhoods. The myth that women are safe in suburban areas is a theme throughout newspaper coverage of cases of violence against women, and was evident in the coverage of the femicide of Gillian Hadley.

The final paragraph of the June 21st 2000 *Star* article references a statement made by a man who lived in the area where the femicide took place. He was quoted saying, "It may sound trite, but you live in quiet community like this, you just don't expect this sort of thing to happen" (A24). This statement disseminates the mythical and patriarchal view that quiet, suburban, neighbourhood homes are safe for women. Including a statement such as this communicates the patriarchal assumption that once outside of the big city people are safe. Women are frequently abused and assaulted in their homes by their male partners, which can result in women being killed. Even in quiet neighbourhoods and communities women are still victimized by sexist violence.

The *Star*'s June 30th 2000 article described the area where Gillian was killed as "The quiet Westshore community of Pickering" (A3). The newspaper repeatedly referred to the community where Gillian was assaulted and then killed by Ralph as "the quiet community," and also because of the type of people who lived there, a homogeneous group of white, most likely Christian, people. The location where Gillian was abused by Ralph on multiple occasions, however, was not quiet for Gillian or her children and thus,

statements such as this assume these communities are not areas where people are victimized, when in fact they are where women like Gillian are abused.

The minimal coverage of Rosella Centis's femicide by her husband Joseph also relied on assumptions that suburban areas are safe places for women. In the *Globe's* September 3rd 2002 article, the first paragraph included the assumption that quiet (upscale) neighbourhoods are safe: "The quiet Vancouver Island community of Nanaimo was shaken yesterday by the death of a mother of five who was shot from behind while pumping gasoline" (*Globe*, Sep. 3, 2002, A1). The last paragraph of the only other article that dealt with Rosella's femicide included a quote from female student, Sarah Zubkowski, who was quoted saying, "I can't believe it because it happened in a nice part of town" (A3). This type of statements reinforces the false assumption that women, and people in general, can not be victimized in upper-class, suburban areas. Rosella was shot to death by her estranged husband in broad daylight in the middle of a prosperous area of Nanaimo. Rosella and her estranged husband were in the final stages of divorce when he killed her, and this sexist violence demonstrates that women can be victims of femicide anywhere.

Denial of Ralph's Control over Gillian's Life

The *Star's* June 21st 2000 coverage explained the actions taken by neighbours and police in dealing with the events of the Hadley femicidal suicide. After illustrating how Noel Gordon and his sister Jackie attempted to assist Gillian in escaping from Ralph, the article explained the actions of the police, "Around 11 a.m., at least five tear gas canisters were shot in to the home, but no one emerged. Just before noon, a member of the tactical unit found the man and woman dead in the main-floor apartment of the backsplit home"

(A24). This reference does not explain that it was Ralph's violence that left both Gillian and Ralph dead. It denies that Ralph had control of the violence and of Gillian's life at the time

The *Star*'s June 22nd 2000 article perpetuates a false understanding of the violence Ralph committed against Gillian that day, as the article repeatedly referenced the violence that had occurred as if Gillian and Ralph were equivalent victims of gun violence. This article included statements such as "Two gunshots were heard... police tactical team stormed the home and found two bodies. Yesterday, police confirmed they had each died from single gunshot wounds to the head" (A1). This statement allows one to ignore who pulled the trigger and who shot whom, as well as disregarding who had the control over the violence that day. Multiple newspaper articles about the violence of femicidal suicides contribute similar explanations of the violence men do.

The *Star*'s June 22nd 2000 coverage on the front page continued on pages A28 and A29 of the newspaper. Examples of specific language are included, descriptions such as "last Jan. 7, Ralph was arrested for assaulting Gillian and breaking a peace bond. He was ordered to stay away from his estranged wife" (A1), which explained the charges laid against Ralph, and specifically, described what Ralph was not to do. However, in the description of the violence Ralph committed against Gillian, language that was gender neutral, that masked the sexism inherent in his actions, was included instead and details were left out. The violence was seen to have been done to both of them equally, that they were each victimized in the same way in the articles' explanation of the police's discovery of the bodies (as explained). This critical analysis demonstrates that specific language is included in certain descriptions of the violence Ralph perpetrated against

Gillian, such as explanations of the charges laid against Ralph. Although language that would properly describe the sexist violence Ralph committed against Gillian was rarely included. The *Star*'s June 22nd article did not employ language that would accurately communicate who was in control of the violence and who it was that chose to commit femicidal suicide, that being Ralph and not Gillian. The newspapers tend to rely more on language that obscures the gendered nature of women's deaths, encouraging patriarchal complacency of the violence men commit against women in instances of anti-woman violence.

Misconceptions of Male Violence Against Women

The article in the *Star*'s June 22nd 2000 coverage explained that Gillian Hadley was the second of two women killed by estranged male partners in Ontario during a two week period. The article presented the (racialized) femicide of Harjaap Bolla, who was killed by her former fiancé Balbir Singh. He had stabbed and burned her in their van, while also killing himself within the burning van. The acknowledgement of these women's femicides is important and crucial, yet the article described the killing problematically stating the "murder-suicide at the hands of a former partner under a restraining order" (A1). This language is far from specific and does not recognize that men are committing these acts of sexist, anti-woman, violence. Gendered language is essential to acknowledge, recognize and challenge male violence against women.

Coyle's June 22nd 2000 column in the *Star* included interviews with multiple experts, professional and academics, including Neil Boyd, a criminologist from Simon Fraser University, and a female representative from the Interval House, a shelter for abused women. They offered insight into why (male) violence has become such an

“epidemic” and provided answers as to how Ralph could have committed the violence he did against Gillian. The woman representative from Interval House provided answers as to what could have been done to create change for women who had lost their lives through male violence. She stated, “Incarceration...for those threatening violence. And education, she said, for all young boys” (*Star*, June 22, 2000, A28). By including such suggestions, Coyle provides a critical assessment in his newspaper column. He also specifically names the objectification of women and the glorification of violence in the media as prevalent factors in the subordination of women. This is a constructive and encouraging statement because systemic inequalities are being linked to instances of violence against women. However, Coyle also perpetuates mixed messages in his column. He refers to Neil Boyd’s assessment of male violence as rooted in “sex differences, testosterone, size, speed and strength, our genes and our evolutionary history [which] have already combined to make men more likely to inflict pain on other human beings” (A28). Boyd maintained that “this violence is endorsed on our playing fields, in our stadiums, and on our television screens” (A28). This statement acknowledges how violence in sport and the media affect how violence is accepted in society, yet it seems to put the blame on things like sports and the media rather than on policy, legislation and systemic oppression rooted in misogyny, as sport and the media do not create these things. Because Coyle included Boyd’s list of reasons for men’s violence, the article appears to offer an essentialist explanation of male violence, explaining it as rooted in an inherent aggression among men because of their biological composition and evolutionary history. This article, therefore, neglects the effect patriarchal social constructions of

masculine and feminine behaviour and subject positions have on men and women and how they relate, how they are different and also unequal.

Coyle completes his column about the Hadley femicidal suicide and systemic violence against women by maintaining “when somebody is willing to spend their life to end yours, and when that somebody can get their hands on a gun, there may be nothing anyone can do to stop them” (*Star*, June 22, 2000, A28). This “somebody” Coyle speaks of in this last paragraph could potentially be female, however, the disproportionate numbers of acts of violence involving men who violate, assault and kill women proves that this somebody should have been named and described as “when a man is willing... and when that man can get their hands on a gun” (A28). It is almost always men who commit the acts of violence Coyle is describing in his column and he should be specific in his language choice in order to accurately portray this violence as largely male.

In challenging male violence against women, we must not draw on essentialist conceptualizations of masculine subjectivity as naturally aggressive and instead explain that it is through patriarchal sexism that male violence is rationalized and perpetuated. We must question how male power and control, sexism and misogyny, has resulted in lethal acts of violence against women.

The *Star*'s coverage of the six-part “Deadly Vows” series neglected to illustrate Ralph's violence against Gillian as fundamentally sexist and misogynist, as a demonstration of a last attempt to hold power and control over Gillian's life. The articles focused more on Gillian's exposed vulnerability and Ralph's large size and stature, his calm way of dealing with the neighbours, than on his anti-woman violence and his attempts to control Gillian.

The fifth article, found in the *Star*'s June 20th 2001 newspaper of the six part series coverage, is an example of the newspaper's neglect in cases of male violence against women because the articles posit both Gillian and Ralph's deaths as equivalent. The article focused more attention on the gun Ralph used than the femicidal violence he committed. Ralph killed Gillian because he wanted to control her. The article, however, explained Gillian's femicide separately from Ralph's act, without naming Ralph as the killer, as it read: "they [police] found Gillian's naked body in the front hall, shot in the head. Ralph lay upstairs in the bedroom with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head" (B5). Ralph's culpability is ignored and instead the article leaves the reader with no interpretation of the crime as an act of male violence and control. The article instead stated, "The grief, the guilt, the anger, the frustration, all consumed those affected by *the crime* in varying degrees. They had one thing in common, though. They all asked why" (B4, my emphasis, for *crime* ignores Ralph's femicidal act). Answering this question is possible if one includes a feminist discourse including the concept of femicide. This would explain that Ralph killed Gillian because she was no longer under his control, and that this is a pattern for many men who kill, not as aberration. It allows one to acknowledge the sexism and misogyny involved in killings such as this one and it would allow the reader to understand the killing of Gillian and the suicide of Ralph as separate and politically differentiated acts. Gillian did not choose to die on June 20th 2000; Ralph made that decision for her and thus their deaths should not be described as equivalent nor should they be described by the gender neutral term of "domestic violence." "Femicide" allows one to acknowledge that Gillian's death was a political act of male control and

male violence, sexism and misogyny. It was his violence, his anger and jealousy that lead to the extreme act of sexism over the woman he craved to control.

The *Globe*'s second article related to the killing of Gillian Hadley described Ralph and Gillian's relationship, the violence and threats Ralph committed against Gillian, and the inability of the court system to sentence and jail Ralph. The June 22nd 2000 article, appearing on pages A1 and A7, made Ralph's act its primary focus. The article described Ralph's violence and that of others like his as "domestic violence," ignoring the man who committed the violence and masking the gendered nature of the crime. Women, Gillian and another woman who was killed by her estranged male partner, are regrettably described as "targets," causing them to be objectified.

The *Globe*'s June 22nd 2000 coverage, like that of other newspaper coverage of the case, repeatedly situated Gillian and Ralph's deaths as equivalent, as the same act. "Autopsies yesterday showed that both she and Mr. Hadley died as the result of single gunshot wounds to the head" (A7). The *Post*'s single article on the femicidal suicide described the violence in the same way, positing Gillian and Ralph's deaths as equivalent. The reporter for the *Post*, Christie Blatchford, stated, "Mrs. Hadley was shot once in the head just inside the bungalow where she lived... Moments later, Mr. Hadley took his own life, in the same way, in the bedroom the two had once shared" (*Post*, 23 Oct. 2001, A1). Describing Gillian's death in this way assumes her death was similar to Ralph's, that their deaths were the result of the same act. This, however, is not the case, as Gillian's life was taken from her through Ralph's decision to commit misogynist and sexist murder.

Problematic Language and the Calling of a Coroner's Inquest

The *Star*'s June 30th 2000 article focused on the Ontario Chief Coroner's call for an "inquest into the murder-suicide of Gillian and Ralph Hadley of Pickering to take another look at the rising tide of domestic violence in the province" (A3). The inclusion of statements such as these in articles about femicide neglect to acknowledge women disproportionately experience violence from their male intimates. Male violence, Ralph's violence against Gillian, is the reason why they were proposing the inquest. I am critical of the language being used in the article, especially in regard to the inquest into Gillian Hadley's death, because the inquest is supposed to address problems of violence in the home. Without stating who is, and would be, most affected by changes to the judicial system that oversees cases of violence against women, the chief coroner perpetuates viewing and understanding this (femicide) violence as gender-neutral, which it is not. Terms like "domestic violence" is non-gendered and thus denies who it is that is dying, that it is women dying at higher rates in the province because of male violence, more men may die, but not in this way, not because of these systemic abuses. Patriarchal violence is perpetuated by ignoring and diminishing that it is male violence against females that are causing these inquests to be called.

The article about the inquest into Gillian Hadley's death addressed that the inquest into May's femicide, and Iles' suicide, recommended better community-based supports among other changes. The inquest findings also explained that 550 women had been killed by their male intimate partners between the years of 1982 and 1997 in Ontario, an average of 34 per year (which works out to approximately 3 femicides per month). This information is necessary to demonstrate the severity of male violence

against women and the femicides that result from such violence. This article disseminated mixed messages, however, for it was specific in listing women who had been killed by male intimate partner violence, yet did not acknowledge that inquests into this type of gendered violence must deal with violent men who abuse and kill their female partners. When the newspaper articles about femicidal violence leave out the specificities of those women who are affected by the violence, and the men that commit it, the newspaper allows for the perpetuation of patriarchal complacency by not acknowledging the violence as gendered.

Counter-Discourses and Concluding Remarks

A counter-discourse was included in the *Globe's* coverage of the femicide of Gillian Hadley. This counter-discourse consisted of a feminist interpretation of lethal male violence against women and was set against the general and more prominent patriarchal discourses regularly disseminated by the news articles written about the Hadley femicide. This feminist explanation offered in the *Globe's* coverage of June 22 2000 consisted of an interview with Maria Crawford, a Toronto-based researcher of violence against women. The article quoted Crawford as saying “women are killed like this all the time” (A7) as she related Ralph’s femicidal violence to violence experienced by many women in the province and the country. This article in the *Globe* was one of two articles that detailed the frightening regularity with which intimate femicides occur in Canada. This functions as a counter-discourse to the patriarchal discourses which regularly represent the femicides of women like Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis as gender neutral and as unusual events. While the article still included problematic language such as “spousal homicides” and “spousal abuse” which obscures

the male as perpetrator and female as the victim, the article did confront the lack of attention both the government and the news media paid toward women killed by husbands or ex male partners.

This article was a surprise and a welcomed critique of the news narratives which frequently and incessantly posited Ralph's killing of Gillian as if she were to blame, as if she should not have been in the house, and his act lacked rational thought. The language that continually referred to Ralph's violence as "domestic violence" or his act as a "spousal homicide" denies the subordination of women through male violence in patriarchal societies. These problematic representations of Ralph's violence against Gillian neglect to explain the violence as demonstrative of the unequal power relations between men and women in patriarchal societies and the power men have in subordinating women through the use and threat of violence, and thus help to maintain the status quo/hegemony of the system.

The limited, sexist, constructions of the women victims of male violence exclusively represented as mothers, as in the news articles about Gillian Hadley, is problematic because it reinforces viewing women as subordinate and dependent. The subordination of women through the fixing of feminine subjectivity according to definitions deemed appropriate in patriarchal societies function to limit what is seen as acceptable for women to do and to be. Gillian was represented in the news coverage according to the appropriateness of feminine behaviours ascribed to her and once she stepped beyond the boundary of acceptable feminine conduct she paid the price with her life.

The representations of femicides in newspaper coverage has been critically analyzed through a feminist lens to show how women are unequally presented, ignored and violated through violence and through sexist language. Femicide must be acknowledged in order to question the gender politics and power dynamics at play, the misogyny and sexism functioning within acts of male violence, in order to challenge patriarchal violence and change the unequal status of women, as I believe this begins with language.

CONCLUSION

Violence against women in any form is a mental and physical manifestation of patriarchal oppression. Therefore, when newspaper coverage of femicide assumes and generates information that denies, ignores and hides its gendered qualities, it ensures that the sexism and misogyny inherent in femicidal acts is ignored and is thus tolerated. When newspaper articles include gender-neutral language to describe femicides they perpetuate patriarchal discourses. Non specific, gender neutral, language masks the oppressive, subordinating force male violence against women symbolizes. Implicit and explicit patriarchal discourses found in Canadian newspaper coverage disseminate limited understandings of the victims of femicide and perpetuate traditional gender roles in which women are subordinate to men. The subordination of women demonstrated and enacted through male violence positions women as voiceless objects and therefore as expendable and incapable of action.

The news coverage of cases of femicide affirm, reinforce and perpetuate sexist and patriarchal discourses about women, men and the violence men commit against women. Analyzing the representations of femicides, of the female victims and the male perpetrators, found in *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, and when applicable, *The Montreal Gazette* and *The National Post*, through a feminist poststructuralist framework enabled me to show how these representations reinforce problematic, sexist messages that deny violence as a form of male power. These representations reiterate patriarchal definitions and understandings of feminine and masculine subjecthood while also defining the boundaries of appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour. Abiding by the rules of socially appropriate or “proper” feminine subjectivities, however, does not

keep women from being abused, threatened, or killed. Patriarchal social regulations normalize how women (and men) should behave; defining gender roles and behaviours, materialized through the body and through actions of traditional, patriarchal, standards of masculinity and femininity that keep women unequal to men.

It is important for me to explain that the theoretical basis of this thesis required a bridging of modernist feminist understandings of femicide, women, and men, with a critical analysis based in feminist poststructuralism. The feminist poststructuralist framework that is the guiding lens of my work analytically, however, does not sit well with the more modernist/feminist understanding of violence and gender/sex that are also central to my work. This is a contradiction, but one that I feel is worth allowing to let stand because of the way gender is categorized and explained in the newspaper articles of femicide cases. The concept of femicide developed from the radical feminist movement whose projects vis-à-vis gender are rooted in modernism, whereby the categories of men and women, and the structures of patriarchy and thus the patriarchal oppression of women in society, are clearly understood and necessary categories/relations to hold on to in order to deal with the violence men commit against women.

The newspaper media's use of gender, their explanations of the male perpetrator and the female victims, is rooted in a language that developed from a liberal humanist intellectual project which disseminates essentialist understandings of men and women. Therefore, the language used to explain, describe, and represent men and women in newspaper articles and within our social institutions is based in patriarchal assumptions about gender and power which are also prioritized and circulated in the news media as common sense. Central to my thesis is the feminist poststructuralist argument that men

and women are constituted differently through discursive and social constructions. Men and women have different access to these discourses that constitute gender subjectivity. Thus, in my analysis of the language used in the newspaper representations of the male perpetrators and the female victims, I interrogated how the newspapers positioned women and men against each other, how the chosen language/discourses obscured the guilt of the perpetrators and emphasized the passivity of the victims, and the way the use of patriarchal discourses constructed women's experiences and subjectivity in unequal and problematic ways.

The feminist poststructuralism that was applied to my analysis of the newspaper's language choice and discourses allowed me to question how understandings of men, women, and power are currently circulated and how they constitute the male perpetrators and female victims in problematic, limited and false ways. News reiterates myths about women and the violence men commit against women and these myths have become central to the way that people talk about these gendered categories. There is no external "truth" that we can refer to when trying to understand the representations of acts of lethal male violence against women. Within feminist poststructuralism, however, we are given the tools to explain that there are multiple truths circulating within social, political, and cultural discourses. My analysis showed that among the multiple truths circulating throughout the news media it is the patriarchal versions of truth that are prioritized and circulated more frequently than those that offer a feminist or women-centered explanation of femicidal violence. I challenged the reliance on (and the trust in) overt patriarchal discourses and thus offered an alternative reading, a feminist reading, of the coverage related to femicides. Readings that question, challenge, or criticize the

dominant discourses the news media disseminate is possible as I have shown in my critical analysis of the news coverage of the four femicide cases studied in my thesis. Therefore, there is always ambiguity in the knowledge the news media generates and reflects and in what the audience understands. The media, as a patriarchal social system, however, has vested interest in the versions of truth that prioritizes male impressions, attitudes, and experiences which still hold men as dominant, powerful and the norm, over women who are constructed as subordinate, passive and marginal.

Holding on to the modernist gender categories within my critical analysis of newspaper representations of femicide demonstrates that I could not totally abandon how we currently understand, describe and talk about men, women, and the violence men commit against women because these categories are used to explain those men who are violent and the women who are victimized. Because of the way our social relations and gendered categories are currently organized and understood, and coming from a local/social context that continues to witness male violence against women, I chose to use the categories the news media used to explain the gendered violence in order to access and then deconstruct the news media's constructions of men and women, feminine and masculine subjectivities. The limitation of letting the tension between my modernist and postmodernist approach remain throughout my thesis is that such an approach preserves limited understandings of men and women; however, I felt that this was necessary because this is how the newspapers approached these subjects. To fully bring the poststructuralist position on gender (gender as fluid, ambiguous, and always relative) into play with a project centered on acts of male violence against women is almost impossible. This is because in order to access representations of gendered violence there

must also be a common understanding of who is violent toward whom. The tension is found within not being able to totally abandon understandings/categorizations of men, who are the perpetrators of femicide, as aggressive and violent, and women, who are the disproportionate victims of these misogynist acts of violence, as subordinated by this violence. The contradiction that exists between lived reality and theoretical complexity is a continuing point of analytical struggle for feminists who can not abandon modernist conceptualization of women and men when dealing with the phenomenon of male violence against women and yet have not found a truly valid way of integrating both modernist and poststructuralist positions. It is important to understand that I approached the concepts of men and women by analyzing how they are discursively constructed, in limited ways, by the interpretive processes of news reporting.

I made use of the media's modernist gender categories, and the limited language that defines these categories, in order to critically analyze, break down and question the view the media takes on gender and male violence against women. I believe that the media's views are mythical as they offer only one way of explaining femicide while delegitimizing other views, such as the marginalization of feminist accounts of misogynist violence or the lack of representations of women that explain their attempts to flee violent relationships. The language the journalists include in their representations of femicide cases informs the way we understand gender as they are discursively constructed through patriarchal definitions of appropriate femininity and masculinity. Therefore, new language is necessary and new ways to explain feminine and masculine subjectivity is possible. Using the concept of femicide to acknowledge violence as an indication of unequal power relations offers a critical interpretation of the news media's

views on male violence against women although, again, I recognize that the term itself has deeply modernist roots. Adding a feminist poststructuralist framework to such understandings enabled me to critically analyze media/newspaper representations of femicidal violence as it offered a method to approach and, thus, deconstruct the media representations of femicide that are based in patriarchal explanations of men, women, and male violence. Locating my criticism in feminist poststructuralism provided me the tools to critically deconstruct the patriarchal discourses and problematic representations of women and men used by the Canadian news media.

Feminist poststructuralism was applied to my analysis of media representations of femicide because it deals with textual and discursive practices. It enabled me to problematize how media representations are structured, what power relations they produce and reproduce, where there are resistances and where we might look for areas of inquiry where we can open up the texts, unpack the representations, and offer challenges and transformations. I chose feminist poststructuralism because it helped me understand that gender is socially constituted within discourse and that individuals are capable of resistance, able to choose potentially contradictory subject positions from discursive options which are hierarchically organized (Weedon 1997). Feminist poststructuralism helped me to understand that certain discourses are prioritized within our social institutions, relations and discourses. It also helped me to problematize the way male and female subjectivity are framed within certain patriarchal discourses; I argue that these must be critically analyzed in order to expose mechanisms of power in our society. Feminist poststructuralism allowed me to question how the media constructs masculine and feminine subjectivity in troubling and problematic ways. It enabled me to interrogate

the supposed truth in explanations of gendered subjectivity and of the language used to explain them.

Because I positioned myself politically as a feminist, I maintained that resistance to dominant, patriarchal discourses and messages was possible, and that resistance could come from interrogating the media's representations through a feminist poststructuralist approach. It was necessary for me to show that new language, new meanings, and change are possible acts of resistance to the patriarchal, dominant, discourses that circulate within media coverage of femicides. However, with this approach comes the understanding that all language, definitions/concepts, are ambiguous and always changing, and thus I approached the subject of media representations of femicide knowing that my approach and the discourses of resistance I offered against those patriarchal discourses used in the newspaper articles about each case of femicide are themselves limited. This is where the tension between my modernist, feminist, approach and my feminist poststructuralist approach becomes apparent. Women, patriarchy, and femicide are all concepts I used within my thesis to demonstrate where we are currently positioned within our social institutions and relations. I realize that a tension exists in holding on to these modernist concepts while engaging in a poststructuralist critique, however, I believe that this tension must remain because there is no language outside that language we do have access to, even with new and feminist concepts like femicide which assumes modernist approaches to gender/sex. Using these concepts provides an accessible understanding to male violence against women without slipping into overly relativistic explanations of men and women, as femicides can be understood as an

example of present day acts of women's inequality perpetrated by members of a group named men.

I understand that femicide, as a way to acknowledge sexist and misogynist violence, is only one way of explaining lethal male violence against women, and that I use feminist concepts like femicide to privilege women's interests and to transform patriarchal discourses on male violence against women currently used in the media that obscure women's experiences and prioritize patriarchal discourses as truth. Bringing a concept like femicide - one based in a modernist framework - into dialogue with feminist poststructuralism presented a challenge, in that my work is neither wholly postmodernist nor wholly modernist. However, reconciling radical feminist assumptions about violence against women with a feminist poststructuralist approach to media representation was necessary to show the dominance of patriarchal discourses and to show how other discourses, feminist or counter-discourses, are necessary within media representations of violence against women. Problematizing and deconstructing the discourses currently used in the news media allowed me to recommend and advocate for employing the concept of femicide which offers women centered explanations of the violence men commit in acts of femicide, therefore offering a new version of how this violence could/can be understood within media representations. My work therefore, benefits from a blending of modernist and postmodernist/poststructuralist theoretical frameworks.

The feminist critical discourse analysis applied to the newspaper coverage of femicide analyzed in this thesis demonstrate how gender neutral language and patriarchal news discourses obscure the sexism and misogyny implicit in acts of male violence against women. Including a discourse that understands these lethal crimes against

women as femicides is thus essential to exposing and acknowledging the politics of woman-killing by men. According to Meyers (1997), male violence is rooted in men's belief that "they (men) have a right to dominate and control women, whom they view as inferior because of their gender" (27). Meyers maintains that the "result of this systemic misogyny is that the brutalization of women by men is neither accidental nor random but intentional, goal oriented, and calculated" (27). The term "femicide" acknowledges the misogyny inherent in most act of lethal male violence against women and understands these acts as political, as contributing to the patriarchal status quo; men/the male as dominant and women/the female as subordinate. Violence against women is an indication of the continued systemic inequality of women.

Understanding and defining lethal male violence against women as femicide allowed me to problematize Canadian newspaper coverage about violence against women in ways that construct the violence as gender neutral. "Femicide" offers an alternative explanation, a woman-centered definition of the violent circumstances in which women are often killed. Acts of femicide are highly gendered, men kill women because women have been constructed and treated as subordinate and woman-killing is thus demonstrative of a final act of male power and control over women which in turn maintains patriarchal power. Using the term femicide in my analysis of the news coverage of the mass femicide of the 14 women killed by Marc Lépine, and the intimate femicides of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis, allows me to explain and acknowledge these women's deaths through a feminist lens, understanding that women are routinely killed by men in acts of oppression and dominance. The inclusion of femicide in social discourse, and as I argued in the previous chapters when used in

newspaper discourses, can provide an alternative framework for understanding the politics of women's deaths. This gendered terminology centralizes female experience with male lethal violence: the language is specific to women, compared to the male generic that is most commonly used to describe women's deaths at the hands of men like "homicide" or "manslaughter." The term femicide constructs an understanding of the way male oppression is materialized in and through acts of violence enacted on women's bodies.

Actively including the term femicide throughout my analyses has shown me how difficult redefining understandings of male violence can be, because letting femicide stand alone, letting the term remain independent, free of details that explain it as an act of lethal male violence against women has been difficult. Including the term "femicide" has been a challenging process because including and using feminist language, like femicide, questions the powerful and influential patriarchal constructions of language and knowledge which are thus no longer understood as true. Because we have been disciplined to think of feminist terms and definitions as radical or extreme, patriarchal understandings of violence, for instance the use of euphemisms like "domestic violence" have instead become the norm. Feminists and social activists committed to the equality of women in society must resist being silenced by what has been constructed as normal or common sense, because often patriarchal discourse excludes women's realities. Instead, we must define male violence according to its political intent, to keep women subordinate to men through violence and to perpetuate a culture of sexism and misogyny that denies women the ability to be free of violence. The term femicide exposes the misogynist violence men commit against female intimates and non-intimates. When we talk about

this violence in non gendered terms we perpetuate the pathologizing of the male aggressor when we excuse his violence by using wording that denies and/or obscures the violence as committed by a man. Not naming the violence as male violence ignores the way femicide contributes to the systemic inequality of women.

This thesis focused on the newspaper articles written about the femicides of the 14 women killed on December 6th 1989 in Montreal, as well as those of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis between 1989 and 2001. My critical feminist analysis demonstrates how the newspaper's organization, the reporter's sources, the people interviewed in the coverage of each femicide, and the language chosen to explain the violence, deny and ignore the sexism inherent in the acts of Marc Lépine, Randy Iles, Ralph Hadley and Joseph Centis. Using gender-neutral terminology to describe what these men did to women, estranged female partners or strangers, obscures the gendered nature of these women's deaths. Using ambiguous language facilitates the perpetuation of tolerance for male violence against women through the denial/avoidance of seeing these acts as specifically male acts of violence. The news articles about the femicides of 14 women at the École Polytechnique, of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis are presented within a context that explains these acts as isolated rather than linked to systemic misogyny. News coverage of femicide cases must not perpetuate myths about male violence, for example, that women should be more fearful of attacks by strangers than intimates. Perpetuating these myths works against women's interests; women are more likely to be harmed, assaulted or killed by a man they know well or intimately. News articles must also avoid including stereotypes about female victims and male perpetrators, the female victims are frequently represented as merely vulnerable, weak,

and to blame for their victimization and the male perpetrators are represented as reasonably dominant, powerful and as aggressive.

Because the news coverage of violence against women has increased since 1989, when “violence against women” became a category in the Canadian News Index, the increase in recognition may be perceived that the news media would be more intolerant of male violence against women. This was not found to be the case in my analysis of the news articles that presented the violence Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis endured at the hands of their male partners. My critical analyses of the newspaper articles about these four cases of femicide demonstrate that this media recognition of the realities of violence against women in Canada has not resulted in a greater understanding of acts of violence against women as sexist forms of oppression. Because of this newspaper articles about femicide remain and continue to be problematic. Newspaper explanations of violence against women found between the years of 1989 and 2002 remain troubling because of their reliance on patriarchal definitions of feminine and masculine behaviours and patriarchal understandings of male violence against women which do not link the violence to systemic inequality. Patriarchal understandings of male violence against women are still present in newspaper coverage, although they are presented through more subtle means and messages as opposed to detailed accounts of explicit anti-feminist interpretations and sentiments found in the newspaper coverage of the “Montreal massacre.” The newspaper coverage of the three instances of intimate femicide examined in this thesis involved much more subtle and problematic references than the more blatant messages of anti-feminism or reluctance of acknowledging the violence as sexist found in the coverage of the “Montreal massacre.” The subtleties of

the newspapers' patriarchal discourses found in the coverage of the three intimate femicides analyzed raise similar problems in that patriarchal subordination of women is still largely ignored and hidden by euphemisms like "domestic situations" or "spousal/family violence."

The subordination of women by/through femicide is maintained by presenting the violence men like Lépine, Randy Iles, Ralph Hadley and Joseph Centis perpetrated against women in the latter three cases of their estranged female partners, as unrelated to sexism. Instead, the male perpetrators' acts are seen as acts of individual pathology, insecurity and as isolated acts of violence. The femicidal intimate violence of Randy Iles, Ralph Hadley, and Joseph Centis examined in this thesis were not as blatantly misogynist as Lépine's were, for they did not scream out that they wanted to kill feminists. However, their anti-woman violence must be understood as representative of the same sexism and misogyny as Lépine's, manifested through lethal violence in order to maintain power and control.

The language included in the newspaper articles written about the femicides of the 14 women killed by Lépine, and the femicides of Arlene May, Gillian Hadley and Rosella Centis relied on language that erased, denied, and ignored the gendered qualities of the violence Lépine, Randy Iles, Ralph Hadley, and Joseph Centis committed. Russell (2001) explains that gender-erasing language "seems to co-occur with the denial that the murders are a manifestation of lethal misogyny" (6). It is my position that this denial of the murders as misogynist is produced by and reinforced by the inclusion of gender-neutral language. I criticized problematic wording, like "domestic violence," "spousal homicide," "family violence" and "domestic situations," because it perpetuates ignorance

of male acts of violence against women and obscure the imbalance of male culpability and female victimization. These ambiguous terms do not explain (proclaim) the violence men commit against women as political acts, as examples of the sexist manipulation of power and control; these acts of anti-women violence maintain and contribute to systemic inequality of women.

Understanding the cases of woman-killing analyzed in this work as femicides is important because this understanding re-defines women's experiences with violence in feminist terms. Cameron (1998) explains that the work done by feminists to "name and define" experiences specific to women, or specifically done to women, is central to feminist theorizing and feminist resistance to patriarchal power that benefits from women's subordination. Feminist resistance in the form of linguistic challenges to the male norm or generic is necessary in order to remain critical of male dominated social structures and male-centered language and definitions established within patriarchal cultures. Cameron (1998) explains that "since our lives and relationships are carried on to a large extent through language, since our knowledge of the world is mediated through language, the power to name and define is an important arena for reproducing and challenging oppressive social relations" (148). Redefining language and recreating language in feminist terms, therefore, is not only a form of resistance but it also allows feminists to create and take part in new political spaces of power. Feminist language, such as femicide, allows for "certain questions to be addressed more explicitly" (148), as language can be used "as a form of power" (149) to create and redefine spaces within social discourse dedicated to women's experiences/realities. I believe redefining language in feminist terms, as I have argued in this thesis, to be a powerful as well as

political act. Including feminist language like femicide in social discourse and in newspaper discourses about cases of femicide is necessary to change how the news media linguistically misinform the reader about cases of femicide and using the term femicide is central to challenging patriarchal/traditional language used in news coverage of cases of femicide that deny systemic sexism.

Redefining how femicides and femicidal suicides are understood and defined in newspaper coverage is crucial to affect change. The necessary change in how acts of lethal male violence against women should be understood is found in terminology that acknowledges that women are subordinated by men through violence. Changing how we as a society acknowledge acts of lethal male violence against women to understanding them as femicide is the beginning of a challenge to patriarchal definitions and representations of violence which deny men as the predominant perpetrators and women as the disproportionate victims of such violence. The news coverage analyzed in these chapters reinforced and reaffirmed patriarchal complacency.

The language used by journalists and editors in newspaper articles about femicide reiterate patriarchal understandings of the masculine and feminine subject from liberal-humanist constructions of language which are assumed to be fixed. This fixing of language enables proponents of patriarchal/traditional constructions of men, women and violence to communicate information as if it were based in one “truth” or definition which has been constructed by and through patriarchal interests. The fixing of language allows messages and information to be disseminated in patriarchally based definitions and constructions, and is done in patriarchal cultures that rely on the male form as central and general, for example, the masculine as dominant over the feminine. Resistance to a

male centered view of the world and how it materializes through language is possible. Creating new contexts for understanding relations between men and women is possible through naming. Liz Kelly and Catherine Humphreys (2000) explain in “Stalking and Paedophilia: Ironies and Contradictions in the Politics of Naming and Legal Reform” how using language to expose the importance of gendered crimes is necessary to create change in the political and legal sense. Kelly and Humphreys refer to the importance of naming because analyzing language exposes the inaccuracies (and benefits) embedded in how one understands certain types of violence, in their case naming the regular occurrence of stalking. Naming the act “stalking,” instead of naming it “harassment,” they explain, was necessary as “harassment” did not adequately explain the gendered nature of the act of stalking where men more often than women stalk women as an act of power and control (10, 13). Kelly and Humphreys (2000) explain naming as a central element in feminist activism because it defines instances of violence in “ways which more accurately reflect women’s experience” (15). I find the same to be true in the necessity of naming lethal male violence against women femicide. I take from Kelly and Humphreys (2000) the idea that “language and naming play a key role in the construction of ideas and understandings” (21). Therefore, I see it as my responsibility to name lethal male violence against women as femicide as it more accurately explains the gendered relationship being performed and the power dynamics inherent in acts of male violence against women.

By naming the lethal violence men commit against female intimate partners or female strangers as femicide the news coverage of such violence would acknowledge the power dynamics implicit in the violent actions of men against women. These acts of

femicide, according to Gartner et al. (1992), are killings that “reflect important dimensions of gender stratification, such as power differences in intimate relations and the construction of women as sexual objects generally and as sexual property in particular contexts” (166). The inclusion of the term femicide in newspaper coverage makes it possible to understand the woman as the specific “target” of male aggression, of male power and control and makes clear that it was because she was a woman that she was killed.

Challenging how female victims of femicide are portrayed in news coverage is also necessary because women are generally described in newspaper coverage of femicides by using patriarchal constructions of the feminine. The representations of the 14 female victims of Marc Lépine’s shooting on December 6th 1989 exclusively as innocent victims, void of agency and action, is problematic because it is a limited, narrow and disabling representation of female victims of male violence. The news articles constructed the women through restricted representations of the feminine and in turn maintained their focus on Lépine’s violence, his personality, taking the attention away from how these women are affected by violent misogyny and how women in society can be affected by male violence and the sexism inherent in such acts. The newspaper representations of the female victims described in the coverage of the intimate femicides analyzed in this thesis were also limiting, as these women were described solely through definitions of feminine behaviours deemed appropriate in patriarchal society. By this I mean the female victims were represented exclusively through their subordinate status to men and defined exclusively through roles ascribed to women as appropriate forms of feminine subjectivity.

Arlene May, Gillian Hadley, and Rosella Centis were each described in the news coverage of their violent deaths by their male partners through their status as mothers. Each of these victims of intimate femicide was presented according to a patriarchal standard of feminine behaviour, for motherhood is traditionally an appropriate subject position for women to fulfill. Motherhood has been constructed by patriarchy as the natural and normal role for women. Humm (1995) explains how the role of mother has been relegated to a subordinate position in society. Motherhood has been “institutionalized by patriarchy into a form of women’s oppression” (180) because it keeps “the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children [...] under male control” (180). Where the *experience* (my emphasis) of motherhood could fulfill the empowering potential of the relationship between a woman and her power of reproduction and to children, it is patriarchy’s institutionalizing of this experience that is subordinating and oppressive. Therefore, when victims of intimate femicide are cast primarily as mothers the news coverage acts in the interests of patriarchal institutions, positing these women solely through their connection to the institution of the family, and reiterating what roles are appropriate for women to fulfill: that of mother and relegated to the private sphere of the home.

The term “family violence” used to describe woman abuse and male acts of violence against women is problematic for similar reasons, because it relies on the institution of the family and the belief that the family that includes a husband or a father that is violent toward a woman and their children should remain a family. DeKeseredy and MacLeod (1997) explain the term “family violence” is problematic because it “reveals the importance that this viewpoint attaches to keeping the family together” and

that “family violence” functions within already established intuitions of patriarchal power (17). Using and including terms like femicide that do not explain acts of male violence against women as “family violence” instead recognize women as “members of the community and society at large, not only as wives and family members” (20). Changing how we refer to and describe acts of male violence by using feminist terms, like femicide, offers a way of redefining how women are understood in society and thus redefine women’s subjecthood as not exclusively attached to the (expected and constructed as normal) role of mother.

I believe this thesis is a worthy contribution to a discourse of feminist resistance to patriarchal constructions of female and male subjectivity, resistance of gender-neutral language that obscures the gendered nature of acts of femicide, and resistance to the way newspaper articles’ conceive of, communicate, and thus perpetuate instances of femicide as non gendered, ignoring the sexism and misogyny inherent in femicidal violence. Because the news media produces information about cases of male violence as objective, not as an act of interpretation on the part of the reporter and newspaper editor, the information presented in newspaper articles of cases of femicide is presented as “true.” Criticizing and questioning what the news media offers as the “truth” must continue to occur. The representations of women, men, and gendered violence in newspaper coverage of femicides, however, include language and disseminate/perpetuate discourses that are constructed through patriarchal definitions of violence, of men and women. The violence is structured through patriarchal language that obscures the sexism of male violence, ignores and denies the culpability of the male perpetrator by portraying the

violence as gender-neutral and positions the female victim as subordinate which reaffirms male oppression of women.

Femicide is the physical manifestation of male power and control of women in patriarchal societies and therefore reinforces the systemic inequality of women. I believe one of the greatest contributions of including feminist language when discussing acts of lethal male violence against women, acknowledging the violence as femicide, is that it can inspire change. The term femicide changes how women's experiences with violence are understood and acknowledged as it may cause its proponents to centralize women's experiences of male violence and challenges patriarchal definitions of the feminine. The word femicide encourages us to ask how male violence and oppression coexist/co-occur, and contributes to the understanding of the gendered reality of women's lives in relation to male violence. Femicide acknowledges the politics of women's deaths at the hands of male intimates or male strangers and challenges the deliberate ignorance patriarchal institutions like the news media disseminate and perpetuate by obscuring and/or denying the sexist and misogynist violence men perpetrate against women in cases of femicide. News coverage about acts of femicide includes language and disseminates discourses constructed in the interests of patriarchy, not in the interests of the female victims of femicide.

I maintain within this thesis that we must question and critically analyze how newspaper coverage, and the news media more generally, describe acts of femicide, we must strip away the patriarchal constructs of language, of feminine and masculine subjectivity and of violence itself in order to challenge the inherent, gendered inequalities manifested in acts of male violence against women. I aim to inspire others to use the

term femicide when they hear or read about instances of violence where a man has killed a woman in an attempt to control her, when a woman has been killed by a male intimate partner after years of abuse, and hopefully to explain femicide to others as a final physical act of male power over a woman. It has been my goal throughout this thesis to critically read the news articles about cases of lethal male violence against women and acknowledge them as femicides, to use the term and engage in the politics of acknowledging the sexism and misogyny explicitly acted out on women's bodies in Canada (as elsewhere) every day.

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