

**“A jewel of mine”: The murder of Maple Batalia and Gendered
Violence in the Mainstream News Media**

by

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates the ways in which Intimate Partner Homicide is represented by mainstream news media in Vancouver, British Columbia. By conducting a close reading of articles related to the murder of Maple Batalia between September 2011 to December 31 2012, this thesis examines how ethnicity, citizenship, and immigrant status inform news media coverage of violence, and asks whether these representations challenge or reify the dominant gendered narratives surrounding Intimate Partner Homicide. In particular, the thesis explores how South Asian masculinities are constructed by the mainstream news media via the representations of Batalia's father and her accused killer.

Keywords: Violence Against Women; Intimate Partner Homicide; South Asian; news media; Maple Batalia; Surrey

Dedication

This work is dedicated everyone past and present who have refused to stay silent and worked to challenge violence against women.

This work is done in remembrance of Maple Batalia and Dr. Melanie O'Neill who will continue to live in our memories.

There is no neutral position possible in a society in which discrimination and oppression exist. - Carol Tator

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List of Acronyms

IHIT	Integrated Homicide Investigation Team
IPH	Intimate Partner Homicide
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
GVRD	Greater Vancouver Regional District
SFU	Simon Fraser University
VAW	Violence Against Women

Chapter 1.

Introduction

“So, is VAW a non-problem? Absolutely not. It is a very large problem in a number of Canada’s South Asian communities,” Margaret Wente May 12, 2011

It was in the early morning hours of September 28, 2011 that Simon Fraser University (SFU) student Maple Batalia was shot and killed in the parkade of SFU’s Surrey campus. The news media reported that Batalia, a 19 year-old health sciences student, was a well-respected young woman who was described as “beautiful” by both her family and friends. It was not long before the news of her death became the morning’s headlines. Almost immediately, newspapers implied her murder was an incident of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV); this framework became a central organizing idea in the news media’s portrayal of the murder. Batalia’s relationship with her abusive and reportedly possessive ex-boyfriend, Gurjinder Gary Dhaliwal, was inserted in the case coverage early on. Though Dhaliwal is never named as an official suspect or a person of interest by the police he is a central part of the narrative that surrounds Batalia’s murder. Newspaper articles alluded to him even if he remained un-named. For example, in a report from the online news the day after Batalia’s murder, Batalia’s father states that he believes her death was “a case of unrequited love.” (Ip, S & Mui, M; September 29, 2011) Two weeks later on October 11, 2011, Jenifer Saltman for *The Province* writes, “Batalia’s father, Harkirat, said the couple broke up after she found out something bad about the boyfriend” and that “he suspected that rage or jealousy was the cause of his daughter’s death.” (2011). These reports contradict statements given by her brother who, when “asked if his sister had been experiencing problems with anyone said “No, never. She was friendly with everyone.” (Zytaruk, September 29, 2011). Thus, from the first reports of the murder through to the investigation and arrest of the alleged perpetrators, the case has touched on a number of important and intersecting

issues; domestic violence, youth dating relationships, the “safety” of the university space and the geographic space of Surrey, and South Asian masculinities, racism, and notions of violence. This thesis will explore and contextualize these issues while placing the murder of Maple Batalia firmly in the context of gendered violence against women.

I have framed this work around the premise that IPV was the ultimate cause of Maple Batalia's murder. The purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which IPV is represented through mainstream news media coverage; specifically, how discourses of ethnicity and citizenship shape perceptions and constructions of violence. This thesis also investigates the manner in which Batalia's ex-boyfriend Gurjinder Gary Dhaliwal has been implicated as a violent offender by both the local news media and Batalia's family since her murder, placing representations of Dhaliwal in the context of critical race literature on racialized masculinities.

I have decided to use IPV as the framework for discussing and analyzing Batalia's murder after assessing the literature on gendered violence and analyzing the news reports that have surrounded the Batalia case. While the media never directly named or identified the relationship as violent, reporters and columnists have used interviews with Batalia's family and friends to allude to a relationship based in male control and jealousy. Furthermore, news media coverage of Batalia's murder has increasingly included references to other women whose death were a result of IPV/H, most frequently women from the South Asian community. This trend has occurred outside of the news media as well, notably in the candlelight vigil that was held by Batalia's family in her honour in September 2013, where two women who were murdered by intimate partners, Poonam Randhawa and Manjit Panghali, were also honoured and remembered (Diakiw, September 24, 2013).¹ It is not the intended purpose of this

¹ Poonam Randhawa was killed by her ex- boyfriend Ninderjit Singh in 1999. Manjit Panghali was murdered by her husband, Mukhitar Pagnhali in 2006. I do not find the grouping of Batalia Randhawa and Panghali to be problematic in and of itself as all three women were killed by intimate partners. However it is misleading to group the women together without discussing why their murders are similar. Moreover when the press only links the three women and fails to acknowledge or not include white women who have been killed by their intimate partners a

research to determine the causes of IPV, to suggest specific policy or legal changes regarding the prevention or prosecution of intimate partner violence, or to speculate about the intimate details of the relationship between Maple Batalia and Gurjinder Gary Dhaliwal.²

1.1. Relationships of violence: Media and the murder

1.1.1. The Relationship

Based on accounts given by Batalia's family and close friend Michelle Cyr (CTV December 13, 2012) Batalia and Dhaliwal had been in a dating relationship. It is not noted in any of the interviews how long the relationship lasted or when it began, and despite the family's unwavering position that Dhaliwal was involved in the murder; they had little information to share about the duration of the relationship. On September 29, 2011 in an interview with *The Vancouver Sun*, Harkirat Batalia told reporter Mike Raptis that while he was certain that Maple's former boyfriend was involved in the murder he was "unsure how long Maple and the young man were together and couldn't confirm if she had a restraining order against him." (Raptis, 2011) While little has been disclosed about the nature of the relationship between the two, it is possible to claim that their relationship was violent based on the small amount of information that has been delivered by family and friends in interviews. According to the timeline that can be established across the news media sources, Batalia had ended the relationship in the week prior to her murder.³ Four days before her murder Dhaliwal harassed and

space is created that reifies discourses that assert VAW and IPV are only concerns in South Asian communities in Canada, specifically Surrey.

² It is important to note, however, that while Dhaliwal has been arrested and is set to stand trial for her murder, he has yet to be convicted of the crime. Dhaliwal was arrested in December of 2012. A preliminary trial was held in February of 2012, where the case was sent to the BC Supreme Court. The first court date was set for April 17, 2014 (Reynolds, February 19, 2014).

³ See appendix A

assaulted Batalia and a male friend at a King George Tim Horton's.⁴ Additionally, Harkirat Batalia told Raptis that Dhaliwal had been following Batalia and her mother the day prior to her murder while they went for a walk at Holland Park in Surrey (Raptis, September 29, 2011). According to Harkirat Batalia, the relationship ended because Maple found out "bad things" about Dhaliwal (Raptis, September 29, 2011). In an interview with CTV news on December 2, 2012, Batalia's close friend Michelle Cyr told reporter Julia Foy that Dhaliwal was a jealous and controlling boyfriend who would get upset if Batalia looked at or talked to other men. She also noted that he would frequently become upset with her. Cyr stated that as young women she and Batalia had little frame of reference for what a relationship was supposed to look like and thought the behavior was normal, telling Foy: "I guess as kids, and as the only relationship that you know, you can't really know how severe it is because you can't compare it with anything else" (2012).

Given that Dhaliwal was reportedly controlling and violent in his relationship with Batalia, it is possible to see that her murder is not an anomaly when placed in the context of other cases of Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH). As research on IPV and IPH has shown, the two months following the ending of a violent relationship are the most dangerous for a woman (Stark, 2007; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Monckton-Smith 2010 & 2012; DeKeseredy, 2011). However this case also differs from so-called typical cases of IPH in that Dhaliwal did not act alone.⁵ While his role and participation in the murder of Maple Batalia remains unclear, Gursimar Bedi has been charged with manslaughter and as an accessory after the fact (Ip, Dec 2, 2012). Additionally the link between the two men has yet to be established. Dhaliwal's attorney, David Albert, stated to reporters that he was unaware of how the two men knew each other (CTVNews.ca, 2012). This thesis

⁴ Dhaliwal was arrested and charged with this assault in the days after Batalia's murder. The charges against him were stayed.

⁵ While there are arguably certain parameters and similarities that occur across cases of IPH the actual murders and their specific details are as individual as the people that commit them.

will not attempt to speculate on the relationship between Bedi and Dhaliwal, since so little information has been released.

1.1.2. Intimate Partner Violence

In communities across BC and Canada, violence against women (VAW) is occurring in numbers far greater than we see or are aware of. According to Statistics Canada's 2012 report *Family violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2010*, there were 16, 259 reported cases of IPV in British Columbia alone. According to the report, one in four violent crimes reported to the police were the result of IPV (whether in spousal or dating relationship) (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643_eng.pdf) and 778 women were killed by intimate partners.⁶ These violent and lethal crimes are rarely talked about within mainstream news media settings, let alone examined in the context of the structural factors that work to create, recreate, and sustain them (Jiwani, 2014). Occasionally the media will publically note a death or a jail sentence. However the allocation of blame is most frequently placed on individual men, constructing them as lone agents who are operating of their own volition or because of mental illness (Mahanti; Gill, 2007; Dasgupta, 1998; Stark, 2007; Kelly, 1988; DeKeseredy, 2011; Jiwani 2014) thus relieving societal responsibility by ignoring the manner in which we all engage in a culture that is based in violence. If the perpetrator in question comes from a non-white or Muslim community, however, then the discussion becomes centered on addressing the societal and cultural causes of the violence (Dasgupta, 1998). In her study of Canadian news media reporting on honour killings in

6 Statistics Canada included legally married spouses, common law partners, separated, divorced and dating relationships. Statistics have been used in sections to help make connections between ideologies and everyday practices. However as many scholars note, statistics on VAW are far from being representative of the lived realities that confront women within our society. This is due to the fact that domestic and sexual VAW are frequently underreported crimes (JI report). Moreover many crime statistics only reflect cases where charges have been brought. As many cases of VAW have low rates of criminal charges (Brownmiller, 1975; Dobash & Dobash, 1979 & 1992; Kelly, 1989; Stark, 2007) relying on statistics to tell the story in Westernized North American settings is problematic. However there is space for these statistics and reporting structures to help piece together the larger whole.

Canada, Yasmin Jiwani (2014) looks at how the media allocates VAW as a unique problem for South Asian and Muslim communities, arguing that in Canadian newspaper reports on IPH, "the overall impression that one garners [...] is that gendered violence culminating in femicide is a problem particular to specific communities." (p. 123) According to Jiwani's research, Statistics Canada reports that an average of 58 women a year are killed, averaging 362 women across Canada over the seven year span of her project. Yet when looking to the reporting on IPH in *The Globe and Mail* between 2005 and 2012, Jiwani found thirty-two articles documenting a case where a woman was killed by a partner. Of that sample base, twenty-two were reports about violence in non-white communities, seventeen of which were identified specifically as South Asian (p. 123). Jiwani argues that markers such as names, places, or the background of the killer are used as a means of communicating which communities are supposedly violent. This "serves to contain the violence to a particular individual (e.g., the pathological serial killer), a place, or to a particular cultural/racial group." (p. 123) Jiwani makes clear that there is an overrepresentation of South Asian women as victims of IPH in *The Globe and Mail*, and arguably a sanitization of the murders of other women in Canada at the hands of their intimate partners.

This thesis incorporates the argument that gendered violence has often been framed as an issue intrinsically located within specific racialized communities within the Canadian Nation-state.⁷ In looking at depictions of IPV and IPH in the mainstream news media it is crucial to acknowledge the multiple intersecting identities that survivors and victims of these violences inhabit. How are affluence, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality,

⁷ This project is an extension of a paper that I began researching and writing two years ago and presented at the Gender and Violence conference hosted by the Izmir University of Economics in April of 2012. I had just begun my MA and had recently finished helping to organize Slutwalk Vancouver. As a result of my interaction with Slutwalk I became aware of how VAW in Canada and the United States was being portrayed in the media as an 'us' vs. 'them' problem. With 'us' being defined as white Canadian communities and 'them' as immigrant and communities of colour, I felt compelled to look at how VAW was being constructed and portrayed in Canadian mainstream news media. The original paper and what became this thesis were inspired by the murders of Dr. Melanie O'Neill and Maple Batalia.

ability and gender framed and represented by these media outlets? What aspect of the crime is being documented and how do misogyny, heterosexism, victim-blaming, xenophobia, and racism come to frame how the media choose which stories to tell (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2007; Bograd, 2010; Volpp, 2010; Dasgupta, 1998)? Further we need to pay attention to how the choices in representation may, intentionally or not, lose, ignore or write out important parts of the narrative. In the news media reporting of IPH/V in non-white communities within Westernized North America this can be a difficult task, as it requires that reporters stop documenting the violence in a way that locates the complex intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and culture without essentializing any particular one of these factors. Current scholars of IPV have argued that it is important to be particularly attentive to the problematic ways in which violence is often assumed to be a "normal" part of ethno and religious cultures that fall outside of what is considered the normative Western standard. In "Strengthening domestic violence theories" (2010) Michele Bograd writes that

Defining domestic violence as "culturally relative" minimizes the extent of domestic violence in white families; ignores the complexity of other cultures' values concerning respectful intimate relationships and conflict resolution (Fry and Bjorkqist, 1997); trivializes the ongoing evolution of other cultures; may confuse cultural expectations with other social, psychological, or relational factors; and diverts attention from how oppressive cultural practices may rigidify in dangerous forms in a context of discrimination by our dominant culture (Cervantes and Cervantes, 1993; R. Almeida personal communication). (p. 30-1)

When frameworks that rely on culturally essentialist and relativist ways of knowing are utilized by the mainstream news media, the result rigidifies "the idea that VAW is a product of a marginalized community's culture because the belief that "non-white Others" are said to engage in "primitive" and "misogynistic" cultural practices" (Pratt and Sokoloff, 2010). As scholars such as Bograd (2010) and Volpp (2010) argue, these media representations of non-white men and women reassert the idea that largely white racialized, women in the Western North American world are liberated and free from violence. Framing the narrative this way is problematic for multiple reasons. First, Bograd writes that this narrative minimizes the violence that occurs in white families. Second, it simultaneously reasserts that 'other' cultures and communities, non-western

and non-white, are the source of VAW. Lastly, it locates non-white women's bodies as natural or inherent sites of violence.

1.1.3. Recurrent Actors in the coverage

In looking to the narratives built around the Batalia case in the mainstream news media sources there are certain people who are recurrent actors. Batalia's family and friends play a large part in how the narrative of her life and murder unfold. Her father Harkirat, mother Sarbjit, sister Roseleen, brother Kulmeet, and close friend Michelle Cyr are interviewed and quoted multiple times over the two years of focus for this work. The centering of Batalia's family in the narrative is an important piece of this story and is built on their ability to place themselves within a "model minority" or "good" immigrant framework. As Mahtani reminds us, "Racial minorities, and new immigrants to Canada from minority racialized groups in particular, are often presented as threats to the nation-state, and non-White groups are portrayed consistently as mysterious or inscrutable, or linked invariably to crime and deviant patterns of behaviour" (2008, p. 640). By using the language of familial love and affection, emphasizing the close relationship between father and daughter, and celebrating the integration of the family into models of achievement and success, they are distanced from dominant narratives surrounding VAW in the South Asian community. Margaret Abraham (2005) contends that in South Asian communities in the United States until the 1990's, families and communities actively put forth an image of the "model minority" to distance themselves from seemingly less desirable immigrants and non-white communities (p. 429). She argues that the desire to maintain the image of a 'model minority' is also a practice based in the desire for upward mobility because they have adhered "to the valued principle of economic success in the public sphere, while retaining strong cultural values such as family harmony and solidarity in the private sphere." (p. 429) We can find Harkirat Batalia actively trying to construct his family as worthy citizens in Canada by talking of his belief that Canada offered them many opportunities, but also by celebrating his close relationship with his family, particularly his daughter Maple. This repeated bond works to challenge the construction that South Asian men are violent and misogynistic. Barinda Rasode also works to reify the notion that Harkirat Batalia is a "good immigrant" and man when she asserts to reporters that the Batalia family was non-violent when talking

about IPV in the South Asian community by stating that the Batalia family was non-violent (CBC, December 5 2012). This is different from how the news media covers VAW in Canada's South Asian communities where racist writing can be found in national dailies from noted columnists such as Margaret Wenthe, who in a 2011 piece posited: "So, is VAW a non-problem? Absolutely not. It is a very large problem in a number of Canada's South Asian communities."⁸ Wenthe contends that the university presents a safe haven of sorts for young women of immigrant and South Asian communities to be protected from their domestic life. With this comment Wenthe draws on the conception that Universities are safe spaces, but also that Canadian universities and South Asian communities are incongruent.

While the newspapers and the news programs frame the coverage and shape the finished product that viewers end up consuming, it would be inaccurate to say that the media is solely in control of the narrative that is being constructed. As Jane Monckton-Smith argues, there are different legal, forensic, and personal factors that shape and inform the information that the media shares with the public. As such it is important to keep in mind that the stories we hear from the central actors in this case do not only reflect the way the media intends to frame the Batalia case. The manner in which these actors present themselves and their stories may also reflect their individual agency, beliefs, and motivations. In addition to the way in which the Batalia family shapes the narrative of Maple's life and death, the police narrative builds on the narratives presented by the Batalia family and ultimately places Dhaliwal as a central figure in her murder. Through the family's interaction with the media and the media's coverage of the police investigation, we come to hold an opinion about the details of the case and of Batalia as a person. As consumers of the media narrative, the institutional

⁸ Margaret Wenthe has written multiple columns over the last decade that single out South Asian and Muslim communities as sources of violence. See (2006, November 2). "Culture of fear's toll is silence," *The Globe and Mail*. p A25. (2010, June 17). A debate we haven't had, but need. *The Globe and Mail*. p A23. ;(2011, May 12). Embrace your inner slut? Um, maybe not. *The Globe and Mail*. p A; (2012, January 31). The culture of honour crime. *The Globe and Mail*. p A13. (2014, September 4). The unspeakable truth about Rotherham. *The Globe and Mail*. p A 4

narratives, and the personal narratives that document the case of Maple Batalia's life and death, we need to be aware of the multiple reasons that inform why the narrative constructions appear as they do. It is in part the job of the news media to present and make cohesive what may be conflicting narratives from all of these different actors. However, this does not mean that the reporters and the companies that they work for are not without their own agency in shaping and creating the narrative with which we are presented.

This thesis makes an original contribution to scholarly discussions of the relationship between the news media and its coverage of violence against women. In particular, I argue that how the murder of Maple Batalia is constructed within the Vancouver mainstream news shapes the way that Canadian citizens come to know and consume IPV. The coverage of Batalia's murder allowed for certain disruptions in normative discourses that surround IPV. In particular, as I argue in Chapter 3, the prominence of her family's discourse of her youth, studious character, and "innocence," paired with the blame they placed on the jealous and angry character of Dhaliwal, prevented the media from drawing on the myths that surround VAW and labeling Maple as somehow responsible for the violence enacted upon her. I contend that this allowed her to be upheld as a respectable young woman "worthy" of empathy. At the same time, I also argue in Chapter 3 that the emphasis placed on her beauty and youth, in both text and photographs, acts to rearticulate discourses of normative heterosexual femininity. On the one hand, Batalia's respectability is a challenge to dominant and normative discourses, which is important given the history of constructing non-white women's bodies outside the boundaries of respectability. But on the other, this narrative is problematic since the racist and sexist standards of worth used to designate respectability and worth have not been dismantled. Similarly, as I argue in Chapters 3 and 4, her worth is also in part determined by the public role undertaken by her father, whose status as the grieving father and head of the patriarchal family both partly subverts narratives of violent South Asian masculinity and partly maintains dominant discourses of patriarchy and respectability.

Drawing on scholarship of masculinity and anti-racist feminist theory, Chapter 4 clearly lays out the ways in which competing discourses of South Asian masculinity appear throughout the news coverage. Against a dominant narrative of South Asian men

as more violent than their white contemporaries, combined with a belief that IPV is condoned as a normative practice in the community, her father's active engagement with the media challenges the conception that IPV is normal and/or accepted in all South Asian communities. Similarly, the way that the news media covers Dhaliwal, even with limited information, suggests a dichotomous understanding of South Asian masculinity, with Batalia's father occupying the category of 'good father' and 'good immigrant' while Dhaliwal occupies the space of racialized masculine violence.

Space and location also plays an important role in the stories surrounding Batalia's murder. In Chapter 2 I situate her murder in the City of Surrey. Here I look to address the construction of Surrey as a violent space and how this may inform the manner in which the reporting takes place. I further look at the construction of the University as an institution and as a supposed space of safety as a means of understanding how and why Batalia's status as a student was used to claim worthy victimhood.

Finally, I argue at several points throughout this thesis that the coverage of Batalia's murder never clearly examines the issue of gendered violence. While allusions are made to "other" cases of IPV, to Dhaliwal's jealousy and anger, and to his violent character, the media never adequately places her murder within a larger discussion of systemic gender inequality. Furthermore, the relationship between Batalia and Dhaliwal is never clearly named as abusive or violent. As a result, the coverage of the murder tends to treat this case as a kind of extreme or spectacular kind of violence, and never clearly situates it within a larger narrative of IPV.

While this work focuses on the case of Maple Batalia, a young woman of Indian birth (Bolan, Sept 29 2011) who lived in Surrey, British Columbia at the time of her murder, it is not intended to re-inscribe the conception that VAW is more prevalent within non-white or immigrant communities. Instead, I have applied feminist critical race discourse analysis in order to unpack how gendered violence can become framed as an

issue that is intrinsically or inherently located within specific racialized communities within the Canadian Nation-state.⁹ While the mainstream news media coverage of Maple Batalia's murder is in many respects a clear representation of IPV, specifically the case of a young woman who was allegedly murdered by her ex-boyfriend in the days after their break-up, upon a closer reading of the case it is possible to see that competing narratives are present. How are narrative constructions of worthy victimhood, respectability, and VAW in Canadian South Asian communities being conveyed in these representations? It also becomes crucial to question if, where, and what shifts are occurring in the construction of these narratives. Essential to these readings is whether or not the spaces of respectability and worthy victimhood that are granted to Batalia are signs of a more progressive discourse that challenges the assumption that non-white women and their bodies are inherently sites of violence or if these shifts are reinstating the same tropes in a slightly different way.

1.2. Methodology and Theoretical Frameworks

This research was conducted by using a mixed methods approach that is grounded in feminist discourse analysis (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2005; Lazar, 2007), critical race theory (Bannerji, 2000; Razack, Smith, & Thobani, 2010), and feminist theories on violence against women. This research is focused on an analysis of mainstream news media coverage surrounding the murder of Maple Batalia and the arrest of the men charged with killing her, Gurjinder 'Gary' Dhaliwal and Gursimar Singh Bedi.¹⁰ In this

⁹ This is not a new theme in the narrative history of VAW in the Canadian Nation-state; all we need to do is look at the manners in which Chinese men were addressed at the turn of the 20th century. Laws like the white women's labour law represented xenophobic fears, but also located VAW as being an intrinsic quality of Chinese masculinity. As Karen Dubinsky (1993) writes, the fear of the immigrant man was well established in discourses surrounding VAW during this era.

¹⁰ This project is primarily focused on the relationship between Batalia and Dhaliwal, which is constructed as being the central motivation for her murder from the first bits of mainstream news media coverage on September 28, 2011. A second man, Bedi, has been charged

section the methodological frameworks which have guided the research are detailed; this is followed by a literature review in the next section. The literature review examines the relevant critical race theory and feminist theories on violence against women in more detail.

Feminist discourse analysis provides the main framework for analyzing the primary dates for this project, which is grounded in an analysis of newspaper articles and archived TV news clips from September 28, 2011 until January 1, 2013. This time frame was chosen because it allows me to follow the Batalia case from the time of her murder until Dhaliwal and Bedi were arrested and arraigned.¹¹ Dhaliwal was charged with first-degree murder and Bedi was charged with manslaughter, using a firearm, and being an accessory after the fact. These sources were chosen from a thorough search of *The Vancouver Sun*, *Vancouver Province*, *Georgia Straight*, *Surrey News leader*, *Surrey Now*, *SFU Peak*, CKNW, CTV, CBC and Global archives. These sources, most of which are dominant mainstream news sources (primarily print), have been chosen based on proximity to the location of the murder in the greater Vancouver area. Since Batalia's death occurred on the SFU-Surrey campus, the representation of her murder in the student newspaper *SFU Peak* is also relevant and important to this project. In the articles taken from these sources I examine the manner in which Batalia is portrayed, paying close attention to the language used to describe her murder as well as the language used to describe Batalia herself. I look at where in the paper the articles are located as well as the amount of space dedicated to them. In sources taken from online newspaper archives, attention has been given to the links to other articles that accompany them. I am interested here in how the media works to group the stories they are presenting and what we as readers are meant to infer, understand, and retain from

alongside Dhaliwal in the murder, and is however frequently regulated to the sidelines of the coverage. Unless otherwise specified I will only be addressing Dhaliwal in the context of the case.

¹¹ With Batalia's case still to go before the courts there is a possibility of continued coverage. However as the primary focus of this project are mainstream news media representations of the murder I feel it is beyond the scope of this research to look to publications past January 2013.

these spatial arrangements. This thesis further examines how Dhaliwal is mentioned in articles both prior to and after his arrest, paying particular attention to how representations of him change over time. How is he portrayed as an individual? How is he portrayed alongside Batalia?

To deepen this discourse analysis I draw on the on the work of Roland Barthes' notion of myth making, which argues that myth as a semiological system is an active process whereby a depoliticization occurs, and history becomes transformed to nature (Barthes, 2009 Gill, 2007; Monckton-Smith, 2010). In the case of Maple Batalia this suggests that the political and cultural meaning being communicated through the articles becomes constructed as normative and thus divorced from other cultural markers that would relate her murder of to other cases of IPH. Furthermore, the use of text and pictures that focus on Batalia's beauty subtly reinforce the myth that gendered violence is inherently linked to beauty. In the process of myth-making it becomes more difficult (though not impossible) to decode and read the sign that is being presented. A fluency with cultural codes is required in order to engage in the reading. Barthes argues that myth must be broken down into three components that work together in order to create meaning: the sign, the signifier and the signified. Together, the three operate to convey a meaning that can be decoded and understood within a societal context. Working within these parameters we can argue that in both the news articles and the accompanying photographs, Batalia becomes the sign, youth and beauty the signifiers, and worthy womanhood is what is being signified. When photos of Batalia are used in the coverage, therefore, we need to read them within this context and question what their significance is.

The newspaper articles which I have drawn on for this work were gathered through a keyword search in the Simon Fraser University (SFU) online library database.¹² The original search was based in the key words, "Maple Batalia" between

¹² The SFU database contains articles from news media sources across Canada that cover Batalia's murder: *La Presse Canadienne*; *The Leader*; *The Province*; *The Vancouver Sun*; *Globe and Mail*; *Postmedia News*; *The Canadian Press*; *Daily Gleaner*; *The Windsor Star*;

the dates of September 28, 2011 and January 1, 2013. This resulted in between 208 and 216 articles showing up in the newspaper archival database. Articles from other newspapers were removed from the sample base. Next a search was done for “Gurjinder Dhaliwal” for the same time period, which resulted in 14 articles. I then cross referenced the articles and removed any articles that overlapped between the two lists. I ended up with 83 articles as a sample base for this work. Once the articles were collected they were sorted into lists based on their newspaper or news broadcast of origin. I then examined the original articles by locating them on microfilm. This was an important step because the online archives do not contain the photographs that accompany the articles. This methodological process allowed me to do a close reading of the newspaper, and to pay attention to where the article was located in the paper, the size of the photos used, and the font size of the headline. All of these factors are important in determining the intended significance of the articles in question.

The critical race framework I employ in this thesis has shaped both the research questions and the terminology. I have chosen to use the term non-white women and non-white communities instead of ‘women of colour’, ‘people of colour’ or ‘communities of colour’ when it is not possible to use terminology or wording that accurately locates the individual(s) in a manner which they have previously chosen or self-identified. I have done so after struggling with the latter terms, which – while dominant in the Canadian academic and anti-racist activist community – I find to be problematic. I have chosen to use non-white in agreement with the writings of Himani Bannerji, who argues that the designation of a non-white body is the “basis that she is being oppressed or discriminated against, and others, white women, comparatively privileged.” (Bannerji, 2000). By using terms such as ‘women of colour’ the privilege of whiteness in a white supremacist society is erased and therefore left untroubled.

Times-Colonist; Daily Townsman; Prince George Citizen; National Post; Now; Nanaimo Daily New; Edmonton Journal; Kamloops Daily News; Alaska Highway News; Alberni Valley Times; Toronto Star; Whitehorse Star; Calgary Herald; Ottawa Citizen; Daily Bulletin; The Leader Post; The Peace Arch News; The Interior News; Penticton Western News; Similkameen Spotlight.

Finally, the thesis is largely shaped by feminist theories on violence, which identify violence against women as expressions of male power and control. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term IPV when referencing the Batalia case. Statistics Canada defines IPV as “violence committed by legally married, separated, divorced, opposite and same sex common-law, dating partners (current and previous) and other intimate partners” (2013, p. 20). While Batalia and Dhaliwal had broken up at the time of the murder, their previous romantic relationship and the documented abuse in the relationship make this the best language to use when referencing their prior relationship. It is impossible to determine what specific violences may have occurred in the past between them. However, a tally of individual acts of violence committed by Dhaliwal against Batalia is not necessary as I am not attempting to discern the causes of violence within or even the nature of the relationship between the two. Instead, this work interrogates the way that mainstream media portrays and understands IPV/H. Given the murder of Batalia and the statements to the press from her family about the nature of the relationship, it is reasonable to consider that the relationship was violent in nature. Based on the Statistics Canada definition of IPV as including physical and non-physical violence, I will operate from the perspective that the relationship between the two falls into the category of IPV.

1.3. Literature Review: Violence Against Women (VAW)

"In order to understand and explain violence...we must go beyond the interacting couple, the isolated and abstracted social relationship, and place the violent behaviour in its proper historical and contemporary setting." Dobash and Dobash (1979)

VAW has likely existed since prehistoric times and has persisted across time, class, and culture (Brownmiller 1975; Dobash and Dobash, 1979).¹³ Like any social

¹³ I use the term VAW to encompass the multiple violences that women may encounter throughout their lives whether it is physical violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence, emotional or psychological abuses.

problem, such violence is the result of myriad overlapping and interconnected structures (Dobash & Dobash; 1979). As a result, the causal factors, day-to-day lived realities, and supporting societal structures of gendered, domestic and sexual VAW have been interrogated by numerous academic disciplines in North America including sociology, psychology, political science, the health sciences, criminology, communications, law, and history (Herbele & Grace 2009; Soothill and Walby, 1983; DeKeseredy, 2010). Early scholarship in North America and Westernized Europe attempted to discern not only why VAW existed in Westernized societies, but also how it was fostered and understood within the framework of a Western society.¹⁴ It is this scholarship that has been built upon to create what is now a vast wealth of scholarship that addresses VAW in these settings. Feminist scholars and activists have been at the forefront of anti-violence work since the early 1970s, advocating that attention be paid to the women directly impacted by violence on a daily basis, and to the multiple reasons why a spectrum of violence is condoned and pervasive within society. Although the early work in this field has not gone unchallenged, it is important because it began the discussion of how and why VAW has been so deeply entrenched within our societal practice and cultural imaginary.¹⁵

Much of the early writing and activism on violence against women was taken up during and after what become known as the second wave of feminism in North America

¹⁴ There are many works, both academic and popular culture, that address the role and place of VAW in non-Westernized societies that originate in the Western world. For further reading see Barrie Levy, *Women and violence* (2008); Blanchfeild et al. *International violence against women*. (2008); Marianne Hester, *Future trends and developments: Violence against women in Europe and East Asia* (2004); Charlotte Watts & Cathy Zimmerman, *Violence against women: Global scope and magnitude* (2002).

¹⁵ I use the term cultural imaginary in line with scholarship that seeks to understand and define how we as societies come to understand and conceptualize of our societies and our interactions with them. I draw largely on the work of Charles Taylor, who writes "I speak of *imaginary* because I'm talking about the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surrounding, and this often not expressed in theoretical terms; it is carries in images, stories, and legends." (2002, 106). For more work on social and cultural imaginary see Claudia Strauss's *The Imaginary* (2006).

and westernized Europe; it represented a shift in thinking and approach to issue of VAW.¹⁶ Until the rise of the second wave, VAW was frequently considered to be a normalized or routine aspect of women's lives. In fact it would not be radical to state that VAW was routine enough that it often went unmarked and unnoticed. Many considered the violence that men enacted upon women in the home as private and individualized. Feminist scholars have argued that in cases of domestic violence it was not uncommon for the police, *if* they became involved, to believe that the violence was mutual or to simply send the man on a walk around the block in order to calm down. In certain circumstances, rare cases of violence were considered worthy of attention or note by the courts or the media, specifically when a woman was severely injured or killed, or if an otherwise "chaste" woman's virtue was perceived to be damaged (Dubinsky, 1993; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Brownmiller, 1975; Stark, 2007).¹⁷ Yet even in the event of these two factors, VAW has largely been ignored, questioned and justified (Dubinsky, 1993; Brownmiller, 1975; Dobash & Dobash, 1979), partly because the standards that have been used to define women's worth are arbitrary and shifting (Dubinsky, 1993). For example, some historians have argued that prosecution or conviction of violent perpetrators was directly related to the ability of the female victims to "prove" her chastity and virtue to the courts. Similarly, violence perpetrated by husbands against wives inside heterosexual marriage was tolerated by Canadian law, although neighbours might intervene if it was considered "excessively" violent (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Tomes, 1978; Pleck, 1983; Gordon, 1988). Work by activists and academics such as Susan Brownmiller and Russell and Emerson Dobash in the UK attempted to draw attention to and challenge the dominant discourses which normalized violence against women. These works located the large-scale legal and cultural subjugation of women to men and

¹⁶ While some dispute the marking of feminism through analogies of waves, for the purposes of this paper I will address the large scale feminist movement and organizing that took place during the late 1960's and into the 1970's as the second wave.

¹⁷ Brownmiller argues that even in cases of murder, a woman's virtue was subjective qualifier. Women's sexual and personal histories were scrutinized and any act of perceived impropriety was seen as justification for her attack (1975).

the devaluation of the feminine as the result of a patriarchal societal structure, which was tied to the perpetuation and continuation of violence against women. As Dubinsky argues, “It is this pervasive, random, and ordinary quality of male sexual violence which has led contemporary feminist theorists to posit a direct relationship between rape and the maintenance of patriarchal power.” (1997, p. 172)

There is much truth to the argument that violence against women became acknowledged as a systemic problem rooted in patriarchal control with the rise of second wave feminism. Yet Dubinsky challenges the ‘common sense’ belief that before the second wave VAW was not a concern, writing: “It is common sense among contemporary feminists that our generation has helped politicize sexual violence by talking about it, after previous decades of silence.” (1993, p. 90) Dobash and Dobash argue that there have been two organized pushes to address VAW in westernized North American and European settings before the second wave; one in the latter part of the 19th century and another in the early part of the 20th century (1979, p. 3). There were also various individual attempts and campaigns to raise awareness and try to end violence against women. These movements grew out of what we would consider feminist organizing, and were often part of larger movements that sought social, political and moral reform, such as the suffrage and temperance movements (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dubinsky; 1993; Pleck, 1983; Tomes, 1978; Mitchinson, 1979).¹⁸ The perception of what constituted VAW was framed through the beliefs of the era, as it is today. As such, the women who were classified as needing to be saved or worthy of intervention were limited by their racial and class status.¹⁹ While VAW was acknowledged in lower,

¹⁸ Not all of the organizing that happened around IPV was feminist identified. Crenshaw (1991), Stark (2007) and Kelly (1988) discuss why specific groups chose not to identify as feminist in their activism around IPV.

¹⁹ Class has been a central organizing factor in how we know VAW. Phipps documents how working class populations have been constructed as inherently violent, which has lead men from these communities to be charged and imprisoned more as a result and working-class women have become constructed as natural recipients of violent actions (2009). Further while

working class, as well as non white communities, it was considered to be a natural extension of the deviance and vice that was thought to exist within these communities. Moreover there was an assumption that poor, working-class, and non-white women were as sexual and violent as the men in their communities. This in turn meant that they were considered to be less deserving of intervention when violence was committed against them.²⁰ The women who were seen as worthy of intervention by reformers were located within the middle and upper class home. Yet even then intervention was limited to when extreme acts of violence were used by a husband against a wife over an extended period of time. Even the abuse of daughters, physical and sexual, was deemed as less worthy or problematic than that of their mothers²¹.

Thus, it is also important to question why the second wave becomes constructed as central in the framing of domestic and gendered violence, especially if VAW was not a new phenomenon. Perhaps it is because “in 1971, almost no one had heard of battered women, except of course the legions of women who were being battered and the relatives, friends, ministers, social workers, doctors and lawyers in whom some of them confided.” (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p.2) While first-wave feminists who took up the cause of domestic violence believed that achieving formal political equality, suffrage,

more working-class men may be charged with VAW this does not mean that their violence or the women they committed them against were always deemed worthy of aid.

²⁰ For case studies and examples of how this manifested in Canada see the case of Angelina Napolitano (p 106-107) in Karen Dubinsky's, *Improper Advances*, or Jean Barman, *Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power and Race in British Columbia, 1900-1950*.

²¹ In historical and current contexts, the visibility and extreme nature of VAW becomes a central organizing factor in women's believability and the justification for intervention. This can be witnessed in the treatment of Annie Robinson and her daughters during the early part of the 20th century. Robinson was brought to trial for killing her daughter's infants at birth. Both of which were the result of incest. For more on the Robinson case see *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario 1880-1929*. While there was a following of support for Robinson amongst feminist organizers of the day the support was not accorded to her daughters who were perceived as being irresponsible (110; 1993). Arguably cases such as Robinson's have worked over time to effectively define, re-enforce and establish a hierarchy of women in discourses surrounding VAW. For further reading see, “The nuclear family and the chastisement of wives,” in the Dobash's *Violence Against Wives*.

would rectify the power imbalance between men and women, it is important to note that the suffragette and temperance movements were not looking to solve or understand VAW as a societal practice, but rather to help and rescue certain subsets of women from what they viewed as subjugated or immoral positions. For the women who made up temperance organizations such as the WTCU the primary focus was violence committed against women as a result of intemperance (Mitchinson, 1979). As such violence against women, including much of the sexual violence that Dubinsky discusses, was not addressed. Arguably much of it was not even considered to be 'real' violence, particularly if the violence was enacted on a non-white, impoverished body.²² This disjuncture between what had been constructed as singular, individual, and private problems within the family and the actual consequences of a society based in the structural and systemic abuse of women would only taken up as a societal issue with structural roots by the second wave.

Moreover, the feminist academics and activists of the second wave attempted to establish that violence against women, including sexual violence against women, had a history. Brownmiller wrote in 1975: "Critical to our study is the recognition that rape has a history and that through the tools of historical analysis we may learn what we need to know about our current condition." (p.12) In many of the works that emerge from the second wave, a history of violence is established before an analysis of VAW is taken up. These histories were used to give credibility to the arguments that VAW was pervasive throughout human history and that it was deeply embedded into the hierarchical structures of Westernized society that privileged men over women. Some radical second-wave feminists, Brownmiller in particular, argued that men were privileged above women and that all men used sexual violence or the threat of sexual violence as a

²² To read more about how Indigenous women were and continue to be relegated to the margins and made invisible in the discourses surrounding VAW see: Jean Barman, *Taming Aboriginal sexuality: Gender, power, and race in British Columbia, 1900-1950*, Sherene Razack, *Gendered violence and spatialized justice: The murder of Pamela George, Missing and murdered women: Reproducing marginality in news discourse*, Yasmin Jiwani, "Newsworthy" victims: Exploring differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered Aboriginal and White women.

means of controlling all women (p.16). Brownmiller used her historical research as a means of giving this argument credibility, writing that rape and sexual violence were tactics used by men to assert their authority, power and privilege in personal and societal settings. Therefore, women's histories of violence, often trivialized or ignored by historians prior to the second wave, played an important role in the emerging discourse of systemic gendered violence (Hartman and Ross 1978, p. 932). Later scholars benefited from this historical work because a detailed history of the cultural practice of violence against wives allowed them to demonstrate the legitimacy of their argument that violence against wives was a systemic problem that needed to be addressed and stopped. Overall, the work of women's historians, and the research of second wave feminist writers, scholars, and activists, has created a space to reframe the cultural conception of VAW.

If much of the early work drew on histories of violence, then research in the current context documents the lived experiences of the women who experience violence, analyzing the effects, implications and interactions of many kinds of violence at a societal and structural level. This is frequently done by looking at case studies, court records, judgements and police reports. It is also approached through the study of media sources, including representations of gender and violence in popular culture. Academic work increasingly draws on the oral histories of women who have experienced violence. By documenting the many different types of violence that women experience, scholars are attempting to trouble the location of VAW within our societies as fixed. In order to track changing definitions and conceptions of violence, many works attempt to discern the root cause of VAW. A common starting place has been to ask why men engage in acts of violence against women. Dubinsky writes that in the context of history, "answers to this basic question rest on shaky assumptions about gender, sexuality, and violence," (1993, p.13). Stark asserts that we have a tendency to ask why women stay with abusive men or what they have done to encourage the abuse, thus placing the onus and the blame on women for their abuse and allowing men to escape responsibility for their violence (p. 130). Feminists and those engaged in day-to-day activism and support for women who have encountered domestic or gendered violence are aware of how shifting the blame to women leaves men unaccountable for their violence. As Stark points out, not only are men not held accountable for their actions, they are frequently

absent from the conversation. Melanie Randall argues that the discourse or terminology in language of violence obfuscates the reality that it is mainly men who perpetrate violent acts against women; she states that “terms such as “wife assault,” “battered woman,” “sexual abuse of children,” “incest survivor,” and “rape victim”” centre women’s bodies as natural locations for male violence while simultaneously removing men from the discourse (Randall, 2010, p. 424). Both Randall and Stark argue that discussing VAW in this way actually perpetuates it, because the question of why men feel that it is acceptable to engage in VAW is not addressed. Thus, getting to questions such as how can VAW be prevented becomes even more difficult to address and answer.

Another current trend in research on VAW involves looking at how sensationalized spectacle becomes an important part of the way that it is understood, represented, and reported. As such, the mainstream and tabloid news media is over saturated with exceptional cases that involve only the most “bizarre and horrific violence” (Gill, p.144); the resultant assumption is that for the violence to be real it will leave visible marks on a woman's body so that it may be seen and consumed by an audience. Yet even when the most obvious form of violence (death) occurs, the abuse perpetrated against the women who were murdered is often “not taken seriously” by either the media or the legal system (Stark, p. 3).²³ Thus, other scholars have turned their attention to examining the ways in which the media choose to cover (or ignore) violence perpetrated against women. Most scholars have argued that unless there has been a sustained visible assault on the woman over multiple occasions, or an exceptionally gruesome murder, it is likely that the case will not be covered (Stark, 2007; Tomes, 1978; Raphael, 2013). They contend that without visible marks, broken bones, or scars, the possibility for understanding and empathy the public has towards the victims of violence is diminished.

²³ Stark uses the examples of Nicole Brown Simpson and Terry Traficondo in his work *Coercive Control* (2007) to demonstrate how even in cases where there is a *documented* history of repeated abuse by men against their intimate partners there is little legal accountability when a woman is murdered by the man.

Further scholars such as Kelly (1988), Stark (2007), Gill (2007), Monckton-Smith (2010) and DeKeseredy (2011) have written that the perpetuation of the idea that some form of repeated and visible violence must be seen on a woman's body for the violence to be of note is problematic, because this creation of spectacle has created a space where day-to-day abuse goes unchallenged. In this paradigm acts of violence such as street harassment and flashing, for example, create a constant threat of violence to women.²⁴ Liz Kelly argues that "the threat of violence is not limited for many women to the possibility of rape by strangers but the impact of this generalized fear on women's freedom of movement was extensive." (1988, p. 99) Such acts largely go unnoticed and unchallenged, leave no visible marks on a woman's body, and are often ignored. Moreover, Monckton-Smith states, "It is precisely the argument of many news and crime scholars that the normality of gendered violence and the ordinariness of its victims and perpetrators is hidden in the language used and the types of narratives chosen." (2010, p. 84) She argues that by repeatedly reporting on the rare, horrific and extreme cases of sexual violence that a "continuum of offending with *identical* precipitating social causes to less extreme examples, which are *not* explored." becomes established (2010, p. 84) (*italics mine*).

So why might scholars perpetuate the myth that VAW occurs only in these visibly horrific ways? Perhaps the answer lies in the way that VAW has been contested, even by many who claim to be feminists. Works by feminist writers Katie Roiphe and Cristina Hoff-Sommers have challenged the construction of rape.²⁵ In order to claim legitimacy, activists and academics may rely on parading out the visible bruises, police reports and murders in order to provide irrefutable 'evidence' that women have been abused by men. Jody Raphael writes that despite the multitude of laws and the recognition of sexual assault as a violation of a women's bodily integrity, personhood, and safety, even in

²⁴ Brownmiller argues that these threats of violence and rape, in particular have been used by men as tools of control since prehistoric times (1975).

²⁵ Roiphe and Sommers have both identified as feminist and so I have used this identification for them.

cases of undeniable stranger rapes, police and prosecutors are still reluctant to press charges unless there are visible signs of struggle and a rape kit that shows physical injury.²⁶

While research on VAW approaches the topic from varying perspectives, most current models find common ground in the argument that VAW is a societal problem. This approach addresses how institutionalized settings such as government legislation, legal practice and judgement, and the (re)presentation of the violence within news media and popular culture define and normalize what constitutes 'real' violence against women. This is contrary to the construction and portrayal of abusers as lone or mentally ill men who operate outside of strictures of social and cultural norms, thus absolving them of accountability. Further, the formal treatment of sexual violence and IPV has shifted since the second wave of feminism (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Raphael, 2013; Stark, 2007; Soothill & Walby, 1983). Continued feminist activism has resulted in the acknowledgment and inclusion of VAW as part of the North American cultural lexicon. Yet in spite of changes to legislation and increased media representations that are intended to affirm the lived realities of VAW and create a social cultural awareness of IPV, change is slow. Stark argues that the revolution that was started by the feminists of the second wave has at best been stalled. He contends that bureaucracy and backlash have begun to freeze what was once a vital and thriving movement (2007). Similar arguments can be found in the writings of Jody Raphael, Walter DeKeseredy, Jane Monckton-Smith and Melanie Randall, who discuss how legislation that was intended to protect women who were abused by men might be used as a tool against them. This is often the case when the police and courts become involved. In many communities throughout the US and Canada, for example, mandatory charging and prosecution

²⁶ As Stark writes even after her murder trial jurists still questioned the relevance of Nicole Brown's abuse at the hands of O.J. Simpson. This is despite bruises, and police reports. This present day struggle of women for their attacks to be believed parallels cases from the turn of the century, Dubinsky writes, "The degree of physical resistance a woman could prove greatly helped their case before a jury. Overheard screams, a dishevelled appearance, torn clothing, or better still, marks of physical conflict such as bruises or inflamed genitals..." (23)

policies for domestic violence require that both partners are arrested. In cases where children are involved, women risk losing their children because the violence of their male partners is framed as their inability to provide a safe environment for their children (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Stark, 2007; DeKeseredy, 2011). As such, many women are reluctant to seek the help of the police and the legal system.

1.4. Literature review: Race, Ethnicity and Erasure of non-white bodies²⁷

Racialized discourses mark and define the manner in which both men and women are addressed in cases of violence against women. bell hooks writes that non-white women are acutely aware of the intersections of race, class and gender when confronting violence that is inflicted on them by intimate partners or by strangers, and frame this awareness as a lived reality in the context of “a culture that supports and promotes domination, a patriarchal white-supremacist culture” (hooks, 2007). Scholars and activists do not make these arguments because non-white communities are inherently more violent than other communities but because structural oppression has created a culture where the non-white female body is considered to have less worth than that of the white female body. This has meant that violence against non-white women has been normalized and ignored and their bodies constructed as sites whereby violence ceased to be seen as violence. In Canada and the United States, Black and Indigenous women have not been seen as rapeable, particularly when the violence that

²⁷ This is a brief review of a small section of sources that interact with non-white men and women and discourses of violence against women. Due to the predominance of the United States in westernized North American academic discourses and the history of slavery when racial identity is addressed it is most often in reference to Black men and women. This is not meant to obscure or deny the violence that is enacted on other non-white bodies. Further, it is important to note that VAW in the Nation State of Canada has been utilized as a tool of colonial conquest and as a means of maintaining power, and dominance over the Indigenous peoples who have lived on these lands since time immemorial. As Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani write, it is important to acknowledge that “Today, with hundreds of “missing” Indigenous women, women who are presumed murdered, we confront daily what Indigenous scholars mean when they write that sexual violence is how you “do” colonialism.” (2010; pg 3)

was enacted on them came at the hands of a white man (Park, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991; Razack, 1994). Dubinsky (1993) points out that both men and women were framed in the context of their constructed ethnic identity in regard to sexual violence, practice, mores and customs and urges. Racist myths about the “inherent violence of non-white men” date back to the era of slavery, and more generally, operate in the context of moral panics which claim to protect the sexual virtue and sanctity of white womanhood (Dubinsky, 1993; hooks, 1981; Hill-Collins, 1998; Davis, 1983). These myths still retain a stronghold within the cultural imaginary and are fueled by the media’s representation of violence against women. Gill (2007) notes that Alex Soothill and Keith Walby found in 1991 that “...news photographs of alleged rapists were much more likely to be used when the defendant was black, contributing to the steady drip, drip, drip of racist assumptions about sexual violence.” (2007, p. 141)

The anti-racist critique of violence against women has extended to critique of the founding theoretical texts in the field. For example, although Brownmiller’s work is significant in the way it roots VAW in patriarchy, her representation of Black men perpetuates racist and essentialist discourses.²⁸ In the chapter “A question of race,” Brownmiller constructs Black men in America in “reductionist and functionalist” ways, relying heavily on racist and colonial constructions of black male sexuality as dangerous, ‘animalistic,’ and out of control (Davis, 1983; Dubinsky, 1997)²⁹. Brownmiller’s model posits that the act of rape and sexual assault are actually acceptable behaviours within

²⁸ I use have capitalized “Black” when referring to Black or African American communities in line with Crenshaw articulation of MacKinnon’s scholarship, which acknowledges that, “Blacks, like Asians, Latinos, and other ‘minorities’ constitute a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun.” (1244)

²⁹ Due to space constraints I have not talked about how Brownmiller interacts with Black women. This is not meant to deny the manner in which Black women have addressed by society, law, and academia since the time of slavery in United States. The topic and Brownmiller’s portrayal of it deserve to be looked at in depth, and in a manner that truly acknowledges the history, as well as current sexual violence’s against Black women in the United States. For more on how Brownmiller interacts with race and Blackness in the context of the US, see the chapter “A question of race”

American Black male culture. Brownmiller cites the work of Eldridge Cleaver, a noted rapist, prisoner, writer, intellectual and member of the Oakland based Black Panther Party, as being representative of all black male intellectuals.³⁰ In regard to Cleaver she writes, "besides being a rare glimpse into the mind of an actual rapist, it reflects a strain of thinking among black male intellectuals and writers that became fashionable in the late nineteen sixties..." (1975, p. 248) While there is no doubt that sexism and sexual violence did exist within the Black power movement, nor is there any doubt that Cleaver did rape women, it is not accurate to state that all black men viewed the rape of white women as a political tool to exact revenge for their oppression within society. Davis argues that Brownmiller "...wants to intentionally conjure up in her readers' imaginations armies of Black men, their penises erect, charging full speed ahead toward the most conveniently placed white woman." (1983, p. 197). Dobash and Dobash argue that when Black men's VAW is directed at Black women, race "becomes a stronger explanatory factor than gender" and the violence is framed as the result of "stresses and frustrations they experience because of white racial oppression and not so much a form of male domination and control over women." (1992, p. 52) This is a crucial distinction for it highlights the manner in which the patriarchal component of the violence is ignored. No longer is this a case of gender-based violence that has the potential to affect any woman; instead, it becomes a culturally specific act of violence. While it would be inaccurate to remove the stresses of being non-white in a racist society it is equally misguided to obfuscate the manner in which patriarchal structures affect and impact the manner in which violence plays out.³¹

³⁰ During the Black Power movement in the 1960's in the USA there were two Black Panther Parties' (BPP). The Oakland based BPP is the one commonly thought of. For more reading on the subject see Peniel E. Joseph's *Waiting 'til the midnight hour*.

³¹ As Crenshaw argues, "...it is probably that racism contributes to the cycle of violence, given the stress that men of color experience in dominant society. It is therefore more than reasonable to explore the links between racism and domestic violence. But the chain of violence is more complex and extends beyond this single link." (1991, 1258) Crenshaw argues for an intersectional approach that acknowledges and actively interrogates the overlapping identities of people and communities of race and class face different obstacles.

In the post-contact colonial nation state of Canada it is also crucial to interrogate how immigrant communities are being addressed and interacted with in regard to domestic and gendered violence. Recent reports from Provincial sources such as the BC Provincial Government and the Justice Institute of BC have built upon feminist and critical race scholarship in order to start conversations as to how to take into account the intersections of racial identity, immigrant community and how these multiple statuses interact when looking to cases of gendered violence. The Justice Institute report published in 2011, "This is a man's problem": Strategies for working with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence" looks at how South Asian men are implicated in IPV in BC and suggests how to create structures and supports for the men and their families to better address IPV through culturally contextual approaches. The most recent report coming from the Provincial office of Domestic Violence, "Taking action on Domestic Violence in British Columbia", also looks to address through policy the multiple factors that contribute to IPV. The plan calls for a comprehensive plan to be put in place and administered by service providers throughout the Province and acknowledges that "the increased vulnerability of harm to women, including Aboriginal women, immigrant, visible minority and women with disabilities is a major concern." (6) With that in mind the authors write that it is important to "focus on addressing the issue without further marginalizing the victims and adding to the barriers they already face across systems." (6)

Non-white racialized women are often constructed in IPV narratives as being victims of their respective cultures. This has meant that Black and Indigenous women in the patriarchal and white supremacist nations of the USA and Canada have been constructed as being hyper-sexual and the violence committed against them easily ignored. For non-white immigrant women these narratives of deviance are compounded by their literal status of negotiated citizenship to the nation state. Dasgupta argues that non-white racialized women become constructed through a patriarchal and racist framework which locates them "as backward, subservient, and quietly accepting of male domination and patriarchal control." (2010, p. 58) She contends that these constructions are used to justify the belief that "women of 'other' cultures are inferior to their American counterparts and perhaps contribute to their own victimization." (58) These discourses claim to pay attention to cultural differences that affect immigrant

communities' interactions with and responses to IPV/H but in reality they employ racist and culturally relativist frameworks. Therefore, "many anti-racist and postcolonial feminists assert that what appear as attempts at cultural sensitivity in a multicultural context are often a form of culturalized racism that utilizes colonial and imperial constructs of women's rights and victimization." (Park, p. 493) While approaches such as these fail to help women in immigrant communities address the IPV they may be facing, they also minimize the reality of IPV/H in white families (Bograd, p. 30). Yasmin Jiwani writes that in these narratives, "violence is perceived to be an inherent feature of the racialized culture and a sign of its failure to adapt and/ or assimilate to the dominant, Western context. (2005, p. 850) This framework is articulated frequently in discussions surrounding so called honour killings in North America, whereby the male perpetrators are constructed as returning cultural practices that are not congruent with Western sensibilities (Jiwani, 2014; Olwan, 2013; Gill, 2006)

Chapter 2. Setting the scene: How the geography of Vancouver and Surrey interact with news coverage of Maple Batalia's murder

This chapter briefly looks to situate the concrete and theoretical locations of the City of Surrey, as well as the university as an institution as a means to better understand how the murder of Maple Batalia has been framed by the news media.

The way that the city of Surrey, British Columbia has been constructed within the media is an important consideration for understanding the social and cultural landscape of this thesis. With just under 500, 000 people, Surrey is quickly gaining on Vancouver in terms of population.³² Located south of the Fraser River, it is removed from the heart of Vancouver's city centre by approximately 33km³³. This distance from the core has translated to Surrey being a more affordable place to live in terms of land, housing and rental prices.³⁴ The lower cost of living has been a draw for many low income, working-class and immigrant families. Between 1991 and 2006 53.8% of immigrants to British Columbia moved to Surrey. In 2006 alone 38.3% of Surrey Residents were born outside of Canada and 46.1% were a visible minority.³⁵ As such Surrey has come to bear the

³² <http://www.surrey.ca/business-economic-development/3514.aspx>

³³ See Appendix Image B. See <http://www.northwestplaces.com/BCCanada/Surr0002.html> for a map that details the different neighbourhoods of Surrey

³⁴ The average price of a single dwelling home in Surrey in the fall of 2011 \$564,734 (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GC=933>).

³⁵ http://www.surrey.ca/files/demographic_profile_of_surrey_children.pdf

stigma of being a racialized, lower and working-class community.³⁶ This representation is not always accurate, however, for there are areas of concentrated wealth and impoverishment. For example, the average difference in housing costs between lower income area of Whalley and the higher priced South Surrey/White Rock area was \$400,000 in the fall of 2011. Lower housing and land costs have meant that Surrey has appealed to immigrant families who are concentrated in the areas of Newton, Whalley and Guildford.³⁷

A side effect of Surrey's demographic profile of lower socio-economic groups and non-white new immigrant families has been a perceived reputation of violence and deviance. This is in part because within the Westernized North American cultural imaginary being non-white, an immigrant and low income has been constructed as deviant (Jiwani, 1999; Razack, 2002; Razack, Smith, & Thobani 2010; Olwan, 2013). In recent years, high profile cases such as the Surrey Six and the apparent gang war that ensued captured media attention and put Surrey into a place to be discussed and analyzed.³⁸ When these criminal activities are combined with urban myths and anecdotes about Surrey, the construction of deviance is furthered within the cultural imaginary of British Columbians. This can be seen in an a recent internet meme that parodied Disney's *The Lion King*, which refers to Surrey as a shadowy place that Simba must never go to.³⁹ As Vancouver writer, activist and comedian Charles Demers writes in his book *Vancouver Special*, "Surrey is the whipping boy of the GVRD, it's Vancouver's New Jersey," (p.108). He writes that because of the constructions of promiscuity and violence in the cultural imaginary of the lower mainland, Surrey has become an easy

³⁶ http://www.surrey.ca/files/demographic_profile_of_surrey_children.pdf

³⁷ http://www.surrey.ca/files/demographic_profile_of_surrey_children.pdf

³⁸ The Surrey Six refers to the murder of six people in a Surrey condo in October 2008 as part of gang related drug war. Two of the people killed were bystanders.

³⁹ <http://www.quickmeme.com/img/31/316a03cc9f5c0336dde0b27f42ebb0c790dc8424ec8499d351f66fc4786b5503.jpg>

target for comedians (p.15). Over the last six years there have been jokes made from public platforms that suggest that women from Surrey are promiscuous and that the city is violent, including comedian Dana Carvey joking about the promiscuity of Surrey girls⁴⁰ and an entrepreneur from Surrey creating a line of shirts that parody the city of Surrey's slogan "The Future Lives here" with sayings such as "The future dies here" or "Better safe than Surrey".

Despite these perceptions of poverty and violence, however, Surrey is not the most violent place in the GVRD. When looking at the government of British Columbia's 2011 Regional Crime Profile, between 2002 and 2011 the city of Surrey had lower rates of criminal activity than the City of Vancouver.⁴¹ While the city of Surrey has more families living in poverty (15.6%) compared to the Provincial average (13.1%), it still is behind Vancouver which has a rate of 17.1%.⁴²

Surrey mayor Diane Watts and city council have fought to counter the construction of the city as inherently steeped in violence and crime. Since the election of Watts in 2005, the city has expanded with the construction of expensive new city infrastructure, including the relocation of Surrey's city hall from the remote 142nd street and 56th avenue location to a brand new building at 13450 street and 104th avenue. The new location is across the street from SFU Surrey and right beside the Surrey Central

⁴⁰ Carvey retold the joke: " Q: What does a Surrey girl do when she wakes up? A: Thank the team." Despite his location and proximity to Surrey (perhaps because of his proximity) the joke did not go over well and days later the incident was brought up on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, creating a bit of a media flurry (Demers, 15). Also following the coverage was a popular blogger from Surrey Miss604 who was interviewed by the CBC about the incident. <http://www.miss604.com/2008/06/dana-carvey-surrey-girl-joke-on-leno.html>. See appendix C & D.

⁴¹ This report looks at criminal code offences as determined by Statistic Canada's Uniform Crime reporting Survey. I compared Surrey's levels of violent crime and property crime across the nine years that the report encompasses. Surrey also has lower rates of crime for the "other" category until 2005 when the city of Surrey begins to surpass Vancouver.

⁴² http://www.surrey.ca/files/demographic_profile_of_surrey_children.pdf

Skytrain station. The city council has also taken on initiatives to target violence in the city, and has implemented a four pronged “Crime Reduction Strategy” (City of Surrey).⁴³ The City’s 2006 “Social Plan” addressed four components which attempt to change the city’s image and make it more livable, including the issue of homelessness. Prong four of the strategy is “Reality and Perceptions of Crime” and according to Watt’s annual State of the City address in 2007, is intended to foster communication and dialogue with the community.⁴⁴ In the 2012 progress report on the “Crime Reduction Strategy,” a key component of prong four is an effective media strategy (p.53).

Adding to these problematic perceptions of Surrey is that since 2006 some of the most reported IPV cases in the media were committed by South Asian men in Surrey. These cases have been deemed worthy of media attention in large part because they all ended with the murder of the women involved. But more than the murder of these women, it was the manner in which they were killed that raised the media profile of these cases. As Evan Stark notes in “Coercive Control,” (2007) it is the cases of ‘severe violence’ that are most likely to capture the attention of academics and the media. (3). In September of 2007, on the heels of the murders of Shemina Hirji Cheema (July 2007) and Amanpreet Kaur Bahai (February 2007) Mayor Watts announced a new strategy for addressing domestic violence in the city. Additionally in April 2007 Gurjeet Kaur Ghuman, who survived domestic violence and her husband’s attempt to kill her, spoke publicly. She asked for Indo-Canadian women to leave abusive relationships, saying that being alive was more important than the shame of leaving a marriage (CBC, 2007). The initial plan looked to integrate police, city officials and the Surrey Women’s Centre (CBC, 2007). The city of Surrey further launched the Rakhi project in 2012 as part of the crime reduction strategy; its aim is to raise awareness about domestic violence as well as to engage men as stakeholders who are invested in ending IPV. The project takes its name from a “...traditional Indian ceremony honouring the relationship between brothers

⁴³ <http://www.surrey.ca/community/8397.aspx>

⁴⁴ <http://www.surrey.ca/city-government/3055.aspx>

and sisters and involves the tying of a Rakhi ribbon by a sister on her brother's wrist as a symbol of love and respect." (City of Surrey). As a fundraiser for the initiative, purple bracelets were sold.⁴⁵ While officially the city of Surrey's domestic violence projects are aimed at ending all domestic violence in the community it is possible to see through the timing and the invocation of imagery and stories that are important to the Indo-Canadian community that the Rakhi project and its predecessor are meant to link themselves to the Indo-Canadian community of Surrey.

The murder of Maple Batalia must be understood in the context of the media's construction of Surrey, but it is also important to interrogate the precise location of the murder itself: a parking parkade at Simon Fraser University. The parkade, specifically the dark, after hour's parkade, often symbolizes danger for women. As Tseng et al. write, the "dread of violent crime in parking garages ... instill[s] fear in those who must routinely use public parking garages, especially late at night." (2004, p.21). The prevalence of victim-blaming discourses that surround cases of VAW alongside the setting of the late night parkade where Batalia was walking alone make it interesting that narratives based in an analysis that blamed Batalia for her own murder have not been raised. While this may appear to be a subversion of dominant arguments that surround VAW, it is perhaps more telling of the how the space of the university works to mitigate a narrative which questions Batalia's right to be alone in a parkade at one a.m.

It is not enough to only look at the ways that the city of Surrey becomes known when interrogating media coverage of the murder of Maple Batalia. For while the murder occurred within the city limits, it actually took place in the SFU Surrey campus parkade, a fact that is mentioned often in the early coverage of the case.⁴⁶ In mentioning the site of the murder, the press not only physically situates the murder but also helps

⁴⁵ The program continues and bracelets are sold throughout the city in July and August. To find out more about the initiative see <http://www.surrey.ca/community/13203.aspx>.

⁴⁶ See appendix E

the reader 'understand' and come to know the crime. It becomes crucial to understand how the locations of both the University and the parkade are conceived of in the cultural imaginary. As a place of higher learning, universities are often associated with pursuit of excellence and disassociated from violence and crime. This is perhaps due to the way that universities are framed as an 'ivory tower' of remoteness and seclusion from the everyday world. The university as a space is far from private, yet it would be inaccurate to say that it was it public. In fact it would be more accurate to describe the university as a quasi-public location, neither absolutely private nor completely public. The university exists along "a continuum of public and private distinguished by characteristics such as level of access, type of agency and interest served" (Button, 2003). While its grounds and many of its spaces are open to the public, some spaces are restricted to people who have paid to gain access. As such the university is a location of privilege and grants a certain status to those who have access to it. All of these factors combined have most likely influenced the construction of the university as a space of safety.⁴⁷

Moreover when crime is mentioned in relation to universities it is most frequently in reference to petty crime, such as the theft of small personal belongings from common areas like the library or cafeteria. In the case of SFU student newspaper *The Peak* in 2007, in a special article addressing crime on campus, the most serious crime mentioned is car theft. Despite these assumptions of the university as a safe space for women, many scholars, activists, and students have challenged this conception. Kloudasky and Lundy argue that "institutions of higher learning are not bastions of safety for women. Women in universities are not exempt from the problems that affect

⁴⁷ This construction of the University as a space of safety is inaccurate. Scholarship dating back to the 1970s documents the reality of crime on university and college campuses in the USA. Over the last three years even more attention has been drawn to the rates of rape and harassment of female students on college and university campuses across North America, and to the attempts of university administrations to ignore and cover up these violences. In popular culture blogs such as Feministing and Jezebel sexual assault of female students is almost a daily topic. For further academic reading see; Sarah Starkweather (2007), Gender, perceptions of safety and strategic response among Ohio university students.; R, King (2009), Women's fear of crime on university campuses: New directions?

all women in society.” (p. 134) In spite of the reality that University campuses are violent and frequently dangerous places for women, they are still frequently constructed and viewed as a place of safety. Arguably Batalia thought so, as she was there late at night to study, as were many other students. Furthermore, her brother uses her location, (being on campus), and her action (studying), as a means of demonstrating her worth as a victim, stating that she was “a homebody who studied hard” (Zytaruk, Sept 29, 2011).

This chapter has worked to locate the murder of Maple Batalia within the geographic spaces in which it occurred, in order to better understand the news media portrayals of her murder. This was done by interrogating the manner in which the City of Surrey is portrayed and conceived of in the cultural imaginary and by framing how the material and theoretical location of the University are situated. In the next section I will look at how Maple Batalia is portrayed through the Vancouver news media following her murder.

Chapter 3. Youth, Beauty and Violence: The Murder of Maple Batalia

"Maple, a model and actress who was studying health sciences." Kim Bolan September 30, 2011

On the morning of September 28, 2011 Maple Batalia died from gunshot wounds that she received as she walked to her car after a late-night study session at SFU Surrey. The public location of the murder and sensational nature of violence enacted on her, in a city that is constructed as being hyper-violent, ensured that the shooting of Batalia made headline news that morning. Initially the Surrey RCMP responded that they were uncertain as to whether or not the murder was targeted or random, though the police also took time to note that Batalia was not involved in any known criminal activity (Booth, Nov 13, 2013). Within a day of Batalia's death the headlines began to insinuate that her ex-boyfriend was implicated in the violence. Statements made by her father located Batalia's ex-boyfriend as an obvious suspect in the murder of his daughter. Jenifer Saltman for *The Province* wrote: "Batalia's father, Harkirat, said the couple broke up after she found out something bad about the boyfriend" and that "he suspected that rage or jealousy was the cause of his daughter's death." (2011).

In death Maple Batalia has been linked by the press in both overt and subtle ways to a larger cannon of femicides that have previously captured the attention of the news media. This is not surprising given the public location of her murder, her youth, and beauty. Yet despite more than forty years of activism, little has changed in the narratives put forth in news media, popular culture and often institutional settings about the causes and solutions of VAW. While certain academic theories and scholarship have become more nuanced when addressing IPV, the mainstream news media reflects cultural perceptions that women are responsible for and invite the violence that is done to them (Zeisler, 2008; Valenti, 2009). In particular, the worthiness of the woman becomes a central part of most mainstream discourse on IPV. Through these

discourses an idealized femininity and victimhood is framed, which frequently leaves the woman culpable for the violence enacted on her. After a brief examination of how idealized female victimhood has been historically constructed, this chapter will look at how representations of Batalia's murder drew on certain tropes of beauty, youth, and respectability in order to frame her status as a 'worthy' victim.

In historical and current cultural contexts, the idea of worth within Westernized North America has been restricted to women who have adhered to an idealized and adequately performed definition of womanhood. Rosalind Gill writes if you were "white, middle-class, married, a virgin and house-wife with children" (p. 137) then you could possibly avoid denigration.⁴⁸ This standard excluded many women who, due to ethnicity, race and/or class, were deemed incapable of embodying a space of "respectability." This is particularly important to acknowledge in the colonial settler states of Westernized North America, because female respectability has been used as a tool in white supremacist nation-building projects, and has been instrumental in the cultural genocide of Indigenous women and the oppression of non-white women on stolen lands.⁴⁹ Over the last two decades the number of women entitled to occupy respectable femininity has increased, though feminist and critical race scholars have noted that this increase is dependent on multiple factors. For all women who experience violence, but especially non-white women, the appearance of sexual availability has been and continues to be an important part of how their worth will be interpreted by the police, the courts and media coverage (Monckton-Smith 2010 & 2012; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009; Stark, 2007). Angela McRobbie's work on "the aftermath of feminism" looks at how racialized

⁴⁸ For more detailed accounts please see Brownmiller, *Against our will: Men, women and rape* (1975); Dubinsky *Improper advance: Rape and heterosexual conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929*. (1993); Dobash and Dobash, *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy* (1979); Kelly *Surviving sexual violence* (1988).

⁴⁹ For further reading see: Sherene Razack, *Gendered violence and spatialized justice: The murder of Pamela George*; Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith & Sunera Thobani, *States of race: Critical race feminism for the 21st century*; Jessica Yee, *Feminism for real: Deconstructing the academic industrial complex*.

non-white women have been granted a kind of conditional acceptance as 'women' who are capable of being feminine and desirable. She discusses how non-white racialized women, particularly those from developing nations, have been

Defined in terms of an intersection of qualities which combined the natural and authentic, with a properly feminine love of self-adornment, and the playfully seductive of the innocent, so as to suggest a sexuality which is youthful, latent and waiting to be unleashed. This marks out a subtle positioning, a re-colonisation and re-making of racial hierarchy within the field of normative femininity. (p. 89)

McRobbie does note that despite this shift, non-white racialized women still lack the freedom of white women to negotiate and embody various aspects of what an 'empowered' and 'respectable' womanhood looks like. She notes that "it is one thing for young white women to playfully disrupt the divisions that underpinned the old double standard for between the good girl and the whore, but adopting the appearance and the street-style of whore, brings starkly into visibility, the division which exist between white privileged femininity and its black and still disadvantaged counterpart." (p. 87) She notes that Asian women who do not embrace Western style dress or sexual display are often portrayed as submissive to religious and patriarchal hierarchies (p. 87). For all women the appearance of sexual availability is an important part of how their worth will be interpreted. But if women deviate from the appearance of sexualized availability and actually engage in sexual acts, their respectability is called into question. While often we only think of sexual experiences defining interactions with survivors and victims of sexual violence, Jane Monckton-Smith (2012) writes that when looking at trials of men who have killed their current or former partners, the woman's sexual history frequently becomes a centralized part of discourse: "There is a logic which says that where a man has been provoked by infidelity,...then there is the potential danger that he will respond with fatal violence." (p. 3) She asserts that this is related to how women are still regularly regarded as property by their partners and by society.

On the surface the murder of Maple Batalia is a straightforward matter. It is the story of a young woman who was murdered while leaving a late night study session at Simon Fraser University. Yet upon taking a closer at the narratives which publicly mark her death, it becomes clear that the Batalia case awkwardly straddles and balances

multiple locations involving questions of worthy and unworthy victimhood, private and public space, and the centrality of a non-white racial designation in constructing relevance in news media coverage of Intimate Partner Violence and Homicide. These overlapping spaces and narratives force us to deconstruct how we come to read, understand and ultimately know IPV within Canadian culture. Further, these discourses have the potential to challenge perceptions of what IPH/V can and does look like.

The coverage of Maple Batalia's murder also presents multiple and contradictory constructions in how the mainstream news media frames and interacts with discourses that surround IPV/H. According to Monckton-Smith, narratives that surround cases of IPH and IPV are frequently steeped in patriarchal narratives that proclaim heterosexual love as the reason for the violence. These discourses take the theme of a heterosexual love to its most extreme end, whereby the woman's identity, personhood and literal body are considered to be the property of the romantic partner. This desire for the male partner to possess and control the female partner and her body is considered to be an inherently masculine trait. This normalization is frequently used as a justification for the violence that has taken place. However, in the mainstream press coverage of Batalia's murder, this discourse of romantic love as the motivating factor has not been utilized.⁵⁰ This seeming difference in the representation and framing of Batalia's murder may be because, as I argue in the next chapter, Dhaliwal, his family, and friends have been relatively absent in the news media coverage. At this point in the coverage of the case Dhaliwal, his family and friends and their stories have all been absent from the media

⁵⁰ There is one reference to a romanticized version of Batalia and Dhaliwal in the coverage and it comes after the arrests of December 8, 2012. In an interview with Grace Kl of *CTV News* Sarbjit Batalia tells the reporter that she remembers how Dhaliwal used to walk her daughter home from school. Throughout this thesis I have discussed the manners that Batalia and her family have been accepted into the fold of so-called 'Canadianess' and granted privileges that have historically been denied to non-white bodies in westernized discourses. It is arguable here that one of the reasons that the discourse of romantic love has not been brought up is because of Dhaliwal's status as a non-white racialized man. For just as discourses of worthy, virtuous womanhood have largely been regulated to upper and middle class white women, so have discourses of romantic love been constructed in western spaces.

coverage. It is also possible that this framework and manner of addressing the relationship has not occurred yet as the trial has not begun.

The patriarchal narrative that constructs Batalia as the property of a man is not entirely absent in the coverage of her murder. Throughout the press coverage the readers are presented with the grief of Harkirat Batalia, Maple's father, who is featured in thirty-three articles during the span of this research. While grief of the other family members is mentioned, comments about Harkirat Batalia's sorrow remain forefront in letters to the editor, such as the one written by Gord Fletcher in *The Surrey Now*. Fletcher writes, "If there is anyone out there who loves his daughter more than this man, I don't know who." (Nov 24, 2011). This description of all consuming guilt for his daughter is countered by the grief that is articulated by Sarbjit Batalia, Maple's mother, whom we rarely hear from directly. During the two year time-frame of this research, Sarbjit Batalia only appears by name in five articles, and her words are most often presented by a second party, either a police constable, Surrey City councillor Barinda Rasode, or the reporter retelling her stories. When the search parameters are changed from Sarbjit's name to "mother" there are twenty-three additional articles. It is in these articles where Sarbjit is presented as the 'mother' where we begin to witness her grief. However, her grief is presented differently than that of her husband; for example, she is quoted more than once as stating that she is grieving not only for her daughter but also for the families of Dhaliwal and Bedi. At one point she even tells Grace Ki from *CTV News* that she is grieving for Dhaliwal himself (December 8, 2012). This altruistic expression of grief places her as a caregiver and mother whose nurturing instinct is stronger than the need for violence, revenge, or retribution. Instead those spaces are left to her husband and daughter Roseleen. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, the primacy of Harkirat Batalia's voice on its own is a disruption of narratives that locate South Asian masculinity as being inherently misogynistic. But the inclusion of Harkirat Batalia's grief within the normative framework of 'worthy' victimhood, while disruptive of racial designations, also works to re-enforce the privileging of a patriarchal model whereby we come to know Batalia's worth through a male, paternal perspective.

When looking to cases of VAW and IPH that have been taken up by the news media it is important to question what makes these stories stand out. More precisely, what makes the women whose lives have been ended by male violence stand out in a

way that attracts sustained attention from the news media? In 2011 alone over 70 women were killed by their Intimate Partners in Canada; however, we will not hear about the lives, stories or deaths of most of these women.⁵¹ If we look to academic scholarship on gendered violence it becomes clear that the element of spectacle is a central part of the discourse in which cases are considered to be worthy of media representation. Media scholars argue this is because of increased demand for easily consumable material that may lack content and depth but can grab the attention of the audience (Gill, p. 132).⁵² Historian Karen Dubinsky writes that in trials for sexual crimes during the late 19th century and early 20th century, cases garnered more attention and became scandals "when they involved powerful or famous men, when they involved acts deemed to particularly horrific, or when they involved certain types of women" while "cases of fatal or near-fatal wife abuse...tended to attract much less attention within the courtroom and in the press." (p. 94). When looking at how spectacle today becomes part of narratives surrounding IPV/H, we can locate it in a variety of spaces. Spectacle can be present in a space (the location of the final violent act) or in descriptions of extreme violence. At times the status of the murdered or the woman herself can be a contributing factor in the sensationalizing of the violent act(s) within the news media. When these elements intersect, the case seems even more spectacular, news worthy, or important. The Batalia case easily conforms to this realm of spectacle. The public location of the shooting combined with the noted beauty of Batalia make the case readily packaged and consumable for an audience. Furthermore, the actual physical location of the murder is a late night parking lot in the suburb of Whalley, which is a community in Surrey, BC that is marked as a place of violence.⁵³ But while the geographic space is located in a "violent" area, it is not one that immediately conjures violent imagery, because while the murder

⁵¹This number has stayed relatively consistent since 2008 according to Statistics Canada. See <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11738-eng.pdf>

⁵² Gill draws on the concept of "newzak" to represent a journalism that has become tabloidized*

⁵³ Journalist Michael Booth, for *The Now* wrote in November of 2013 about violence in Surrey and noted that Whalley is a particularly violent area of the city. As noted in Chapter Two it is an area that has a great deal of poverty and non-white immigrants.

occurred in a parkade, it is a parkade at the Surrey campus of SFU, a space which, as previously stated, is still constructed as being safe.⁵⁴

When looking to historical accounts of gendered and domestic violence, the division between public and private has been a crucial distinction. Acts of violence that are perpetrated against women in public spaces have garnered the attention of the public and the media because these locations invite curiosity and the public gaze, while violence that occurs within the space of the home has been both literally and figuratively sheltered from the attention of the public and has long been considered a private matter.⁵⁵ This has created a disconnection between where the public sees the violence occurring and the public most commonly imagines as violent space.

The Batalia case occupies a unique space that is at once public and private. The violence was public, because Batalia was murdered in the SFU parking lot. Yet the university as a site within the cultural imaginary has been historically thought of as a location of safety.⁵⁶ The open space of the parkade dissolves the boundaries between the public and the private. As such, Batalia's murder and body become public and visceral markers of violence. The violence that was enacted upon her cannot be ignored as her body is taken from the parkade and her blood stains the pavement. This contradicts the remoteness and removed nature of what we expect IPV to look like. In typical IPV narratives, a paradigm is constructed where murders by lovers, boyfriends and husbands take place in the home and are devoid of rationality and sexual motivation, while stranger murders, which are most often constructed as being sexually

⁵⁴ The parkade of a university has often been framed as a space of violence and fear for women. It is possible to see this in University security measures that offer safe walks after dark for young women to their cars.

⁵⁵ However, there are exceptions to this as work by Evan Stark and the Dobash's demonstrate.

⁵⁶ It is arguable that this perception of safety has changed in the wake of university shootings that have increased since the mid 1990s.

motivated, take place in public.⁵⁷ This is an important construction because it shapes who becomes seen as a threat to women, and defines why they are a threat. This dichotomous portrayal of gendered violence sanitizes the reality of IPV. Perhaps it is because of this sanitation of the nature of IPV in news media portrayals that when there are cases such as the murder of Maple Batalia, violence is alluded to throughout the coverage but is never named and certainly not interrogated or questioned.

When women are murdered in public spaces the narrative surrounding the case becomes dominated by theories of sexual predators (Monckton-Smith, 2010). It is significant to note that in the Batalia case, though the police maintained that they had no suspects until the arrest of Dhaliwal, that the spectre of stranger murder was not posed. It is surprising that this narrative does not become a part of the Batalia case, particularly because the geographic area, the time, the physical location and Batalia's noted beauty, are all factors which frequently lead to suppositions on the part of the police and the news media that a woman would have been a desirable and ideal victim. Furthermore, Surrey newspapers, *Surrey Now* and *The Leader*, began to reference Batalia's case alongside that of teenager Laura Szendrei who was murdered by a stranger in a sexually motivated attack the year before.⁵⁸ Conflation of unlike forms of gendered violence is not uncommon in the reporting of VAW (Monckton-Smith, 2010), but it is problematic because it does not allow a complex or nuanced understanding of why these violences continue to occur. While both murders occurred in public spaces, Batalia in the SFU parkade and Szendrei in a city park, the crimes are fundamentally different. In placing them together in the same category we do both women a disservice. Despite the fact

⁵⁷ While sexual desire is often seen to be detached from IPH, as Monckton-Smith notes in *Murder, gender and the media; Narratives of dangerous love* (2012), frequently homicides committed by current or former partners are told through a lens of sexual possession and ownership. In some cases the narratives even include the final sexual violation of the female partner as a manner of re-establishing ownership of the woman.

⁵⁸ Szendrei was murdered in September of 2010 as she walked through a Delta park. The young man who was convicted of murdering her admitted in court that he had intended to rape a woman that day (Diakiw, October 13, 2013).

that both women were murdered because of their gender, the motivations and the forms of gendered violence that were enacted upon them were very different. Despite the grouping of Szendrei and Batalia's cases, the news media never takes up the possibility of a stranger attack in relation to Batalia's murder. This is arguably the result of the information that Batalia's family was giving to the media that pinpointed Dhaliwal as the person responsible for the murder.

This conflation of two like, yet unlike, forms of violence is informed by the myths that surround, support, and actively maintain systems of gendered violence in North America. These myths lead us to conceive of VAW that happens in public spaces as being the result of the women's youth and beauty, perhaps even a random act divorced from power and gender hierarchies. In order to better understand how such connections are present in the news media coverage of Maple Batalia it is useful to return to Barthes' theory of myth making, as it allows us to deconstruct how the images and text used in the Batalia murder coverage interact with these dominant discourses. By viewing images of Batalia in the press we are simultaneously being encouraged to consume and read these photographs both as a literal representation of Batalia (essentially this was her), and a dissociated signifier of worthy womanhood/victim. In essence the pictures of Batalia need to be both abstract and concrete. Layered into these constructions of what IPV looks like in Canada is the myth that only *worthy* victims are *actual* victims of IPV.

The coverage of the Batalia murder includes both stories and photographs. In order to read the photographs of Batalia used by the news media, the consumptive audience must be first made aware of Batalia's location as a victim in relation to the violence that was enacted upon her. It is expected that we will draw on our knowledge of where the violence occurred (the literal location, but also the city/community) as well as Batalia's youth and gender in order to understand her murder. Moreover it is expected that these readings of Batalia's photographs will then be filtered through the ways in which we know IPV, thus joining narratives of location, gender, ethnicity, and violence as a means of understanding the images before us. The photographs encourage readers to see Batalia as an individual who is worthy of sympathy. For example, when the photograph of Batalia at her high school graduation is used, the text which accompanies the photographs includes the words "beautiful," "stunning,"

“gorgeous,” and “lovely.” While it is assumed that she will be noted for her beauty, the photo evokes sympathy for a young woman who was working towards achieving her educational goals when she was murdered.

It is not enough to merely look at the pictures as a concrete representation of Batalia; we need to look at photographs as images used by the media to connote what an ideal or worthy female victim of IPV looks like. For while the details (pictures and text) in the news articles are specific to her case, the case itself is used as a means to better understand what IPV looks like within Canada, and even more specifically within the Greater Vancouver area. The photographs that routinely accompany the news media coverage of Batalia's murder subtly assert that both beauty and youth are markers of an adequately performed western womanhood. When looking at the pictures that are routinely chosen by the print media, we are confronted with pictures of a woman who is young and beautiful. These pictures show Batalia through a western frame of beauty; she is slender, youthful, and very light skinned.⁵⁹ These photographs construct her not as ethnic or a racialized community member, but as a young woman who has adopted a “Canadian” identity. Yet a Google image search for Batalia reveals different and more complex sorts of representations. Photographs from her modeling career, for example, show her in South Asian clothing. In choosing one type of photograph over another, and by not using images which root Batalia in her South Asian cultural community, Batalia is granted a space by the news media as ‘one of us’ rather than an ‘other’. This is an important factor in a purportedly post-feminist, post-racial, neo-liberal society, partially because worth is attached to socially sanctioned conformity to westernized standards of citizenship and womanhood. Beauty, youth, adherence to western norms of femininity, and the perception of drive to succeed, are important in the construction of a worthy victim in cases of VAW (McRobbie, 2009; Monckton-Smith,

⁵⁹See, <http://iv1.lisimg.com/image/7363224/600full-maple-batalia.jpg> and http://image2.findagrave.com/photos/2011/272/77357103_131740146882.jpg for pictures of Batalia.

2010; Brownmiller, 1975). In the Batalia case, these attributes are assumed to be present and exemplified in the photographs that are offered by the media outlets.

It is also possible for myth to be maintained and created through the text of the articles. In the news media stories that address Batalia's murder, the text of the articles reinforce the conception of her as a worthy or ideal victim based on her appearance. This becomes evident in the centering of Batalia as an aspiring model and actress, for both of these identities are confined to a specific presentation of euro-centric, westernized beauty. In a key word search of the newspaper articles in the SFU online archive, roughly forty-five percent (ninety-eight out of approximately two hundred-sixteen) use the words "model" or "actress" in the text. Twenty-two of those articles use the terms model or actress in the headline, and seven use both words. All of these articles use both the text and the photographs of Batalia as a means of reminding the viewer that Batalia's worth and status was tied to her youth and beauty. It is clear that Batalia's ability to fit into a westernized standard of beauty aids in the construction of her worth as a victim.

However if we build on Angela McRobbie's construction of both the "post-feminist masquerade" (2009) then we need to look at how Batalia's status as a university student becomes an integral part of the narrative constructing her worth.⁶⁰ Of the same pool of articles, one hundred-fifty-eight (just over seventy-three percent) mention that Batalia was a student. Forty-two of the articles note that she was a student in the headline, and seven make mention of her being a model, actress and student. In the text of the articles, Batalia's academic aspirations are superficially expanded on. Twenty-two of the articles claimed that Batalia aspired to be a doctor while four claimed that she desired to be a dermatologist. By referencing Batalia as a student who took her academic pursuits seriously, these articles work to validate her capability, worth and cultural citizenship. In one of the first articles written after her murder, Batalia's brother Kulmeet describes her

⁶⁰ For a full explanation of how McRobbie defines "post-feminist masquerade" see chapter 3 in *The aftermath of feminism*.

“as a homebody who studied hard” and that “she’d been hitting the books at the campus library” (Zytaruk, Sept 29, 2011). Batalia's status as a student with ambitions of becoming a doctor is frequently mentioned by her family in the coverage after her murder. On the surface these may seem like competing narratives; the student vs. the model/actress, or intelligence as opposed to beauty. The cultural imaginary in Westernized countries has actively worked to construct intelligence and beauty as being oppositional characteristics.⁶¹ However, McRobbie argues that the combination of youth, beauty, academic ability, and independence have become integrally connected in the performance of a post-feminist masquerade (2009):

The luminosities of the post-feminist masquerade and the clouds of light bestowed on the figure of the young women by the fashion and beauty system are matched, if not surpassed, by (and frequently intersect with) the visibilities which produce the well-educated young woman and the working girl. Together these comprise two key elements of the new sexual contract. (p. 72)

Batalia occupies both of these theoretical spaces; her status as a model and actress re-enforces her adherence to the beauty and fashion standards of the western world while her status as a university student allows her to be seen as independent and capable. Through the perpetual referencing of Batalia's beauty and academic pursuits, the mainstream news media actively recreates and normalizes the myths that have long supported systems that uphold VAW. We come to understand Batalia's worth and innocence not as something integrally tied to her personhood, but as a variable accrued through her adherence to the cultural standards of westernized womanhood. This framework is succinctly summed up in a statement to *The Vancouver Sun* made by Batalia's friend Bettina Ward, who told reporter Medha that "Maple was a lovely person. In the end it was her good nature and her good looks that took her away..." (Oct 11, 2011).

⁶¹ Articles about Lauren Marbe from Essex, England who has one of the highest IQ's in the world articulate this perceived separation of youth, beauty and intellect. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2277493/Girl-IQ-161-Lauren-Marbe-Essex-blonde-whos-smarter-Albert-Einstein.html>

Arguably, Batalia's beauty is still signified as the most important marker of her worth, as it is re-enforced both visually and textually.⁶² The privileging of Batalia's beauty can be seen in the statements made by the police to press. RCMP spokesperson Sgt. Peter Theissen, when addressing the press, made note first of Batalia's beauty then her intelligence (Bolan, Sept 30, 2011), while Surrey RCMP Chief Superintendent Bill Fordy told the press that "the loss of Maple Batalia, a *beautiful* young woman with a promising life in front of her, is a tragedy that cannot be measured in the community"[italics mine] (Zytaruk, Dec 4, 2012). This privileging of beauty over intelligence becomes more apparent when looking at the number of times that the word beautiful is used throughout the coverage. Batalia is referenced as 'beautiful' twelve times, her 'good looks' are mentioned once, and she is referred to as 'gorgeous' once. This means that her physical appearance is directly noted by the press, the police, or her family and friends in fourteen of seventy-two articles. Conversely she is only noted as being "intelligent" once and "brilliant" twice in these same articles. While Batalia is only called beautiful twelve times in the coverage that follows her murder, in nearly half of the articles she is noted as either a model, an actress, or both. This is significant, for using these two words signals to the reader that Batalia was a beautiful young woman. When these descriptors are combined with the pictures which accompany the press, it becomes unnecessary to explicitly state that Batalia was beautiful. As such, when she is explicitly noted as being beautiful in addition to the visual reminders and the descriptors of being a model/actress, it becomes clear that Batalia's appearance is a significant factor in how we are meant to interact with her and ultimately how we are supposed to know IPV. Beauty as a concept being tied to IPV is furthered by an article that appeared in the *Now* newspaper shortly after the arrests of Dhaliwal and Bedi. The article first notes that Sarbjit and Roseleen Batalia were in attendance at a conference on dating violence. Later the author quotes the keynote speaker Anita Roberts, who said "'we have to stop

⁶² McRobbie writes that the performance and representation of the female body within the confines of the post-feminist masquerade, require the appearance of a disciplined body, "that will remain presentable in the workplace and employable in the long term." (73) as a way to mediate their new place in society as capable, independent, intelligent wage earners.

telling our daughters how beautiful they look and we have to start telling our daughters how beautiful they are.”” (Zinn, Dec 6, 2012) While the sentiment that Roberts expressed is important, the message being conveyed here without additional context is that being "beautiful" either makes women weak or makes them a target of violence. Roberts thus perpetuates the idea that IPV is tied to a woman's beauty.

Beauty is not the only marker of worth that becomes attached to Batalia in the press following her murder. The theme of innocence or of being beyond reproach comes up more than once, whether it is from comments made by readers in *The Province* or by her family. The most obvious statement is one made by her sister Roseleen, who urges people to think of Maple not only as a face that is representative of violence, but also one that represents innocence: "It just shows you that violence has a new face - and that face is the face of innocence; that face is my sister." (O'Connor; Dec 24, 2011). Roseleen Batalia implies that her sister represents a previously unknown quantity in knowing IPV; innocence. Yet historically, the constructed innocence of a woman has been crucial to whether or not a woman's story of IPV and even IPH are to be trusted and believed (Dubinsky, 1993; Stark, 2007; Kelly, 1988; Dobash and Dobash, 1979). To contend that Batalia's innocence provides a new or a different way of coming to know IPV is misleading.

There is a degree of subversion of the common discourse of IPV in the Batalia murder case; despite her status as an Indian-born woman, for example, she is granted access to a respectability formerly reserved for ethnically-identified white women, and her friends and family members play an important role in shaping the discourse of her life. Outside of the police, the only political actor who comments on the murder is Surrey City counselor Barinda Rasode, who is a non-white woman. Therefore, the demand to view Batalia as innocent and her murder as worthy of justice comes from her home and community. However, while the voices of Rasode and Batalia's family are given primacy, they are framed by the media and informed by the culture at large which has, through the process of colonization, continued to view the bodies of brown women as in need of protection from the brown men in their communities. (von der Lippe & Vayrynen, 2011; Spivak, 1988). The case of Batalia's murder is therefore framed both by family and community, which attempts to subvert racist conceptualizations of non-

white women as less worthy of concern and attention, and by cultural assumptions about the dangers that not-white women face from the men within their communities.

In the mainstream news media coverage, IPV is central to the ways that we know the narrative of the case, yet it remains, in some ways, on the periphery. While the news articles imply that IPV is at the heart of the Batalia murder, words that explicitly name the violence and/or define IPV are almost never used. Nor are we told of the relationship details that would allow for this argument and its relevance to Batalia's murder to be better understood. This is not an argument for including lurid details or for prying into the private life of Batalia or her family. It is not necessary for the media to document specific incidents of violence that may have occurred throughout their dating relationship. But when words like “jealousy” or “bad guy” are commonly used, or stories like Harkirat Batalia's story of Dhaliwal following Batalia and her mother the day before the murder are offered, they need to be put into larger context. Including these examples implies that details about Dhaliwal and his relationship to Batalia are noteworthy, but because the media does not expand on how they are connected or relevant to IPV, their inclusion is ambiguous. Nowhere is this ambiguity more obvious than in an interview that occurs on December 5, 2012 on *CBC* with Surrey City counselor Barinda Rasode, Sarbjit Batalia and Batalia's friend Benisha Aujla. Rasode tells the reporter that Sarbjit and Roseleen Batalia had said to her that morning:

they feel it's really important that as we move forward and developing maybe curriculum in schools where we teach life skills. That we talk about how to deal with emotions, emotions such as anger and jealousy and umm how to break the cycle. Because uh, often gender stereotypes or in some situations, in some homes, it wasn't the case in this home, where there may be some abuse. They just don't know any other way of dealing with it.

Because this statement takes place after a conference on teen dating violence, the intended message is that IPV is a problem and that attributes such as anger and jealousy are connected to IPV. But this statement never clearly states who is implicated in what. What specific gender stereotypes are we concerned with here? What life skills need to be taught, and to whom? What type of abuse is occurring and who is being most affected by it? Discussions of what IPV is and what it looks like remain vague and at the periphery of the story.

Most of the articles from the first three months after Batalia was shot imply that her ex-boyfriend Gary Dhaliwal was responsible for her murder. But not naming murder as a form of gendered violence is problematic. When Harkirat/Harry Batalia is quoted numerous times as saying that Batalia found out “bad things” about Dhaliwal, or that he (Dhaliwal) was jealous, these are ambiguous statements that could be true for many relationships regardless of whether abuse is taking place or not.⁶³ This ambiguity is important when addressing discourses that shape and surround mainstream news media reporting on IPV, because it contributes to a narrative that leaves unclear the lived realities of the actual violence. For example, an article in *SURREY NOW* in December of 2012 stated that “many, many young women put up with bad boyfriends” (2012); this language downplays the severity of IPV and suggests that women encourage or allow for violence to be perpetrated against them. Narratives like this frequently claim that women, in part because of feminist activism around IPV, are not able to tell the difference between what is not a great situation and one that is actually abusive. These narratives contend that feminist activism around VAW and IPV has made women over sensitive and that they are no longer able to tell the difference from an abusive and non-abusive relationship.

Of the nearly two hundred newspaper articles written about this case between September 28, 2011 and January 1, 2013 only one directly mentions IPV or domestic violence, and in a keyword search only two articles come up. The article that mentions domestic violence is about a conference which Sarbjit Batalia attended, entitled “Looking through the Lens: Teen Dating Now, a seminar on domestic and teen dating abuse.” While the *SURREY NOW* article is focused on the conference, it does not address directly whether Batalia was in an abusive relationship; rather, it states that Batalia’s “ex-boyfriend is one of two men charged with her murder.” Notably, Sarbjit does not directly

⁶³ The phrase 'bad things' is ambiguous. It could refer to activities Dhaliwal was engaged in outside of his relationship to Batalia. It could refer to the manner in which he treated Batalia. Not clearly defining what 'bad things' are leaves space for the reader to interpret Dhaliwal and his actions as inconsequential or conversely as a man who was potentially involved in and capable of greater forms of violence.

name the violence that was enacted on her daughter, nor does she explicitly name the relationship that Batalia was involved in as an abusive one. Instead, Surrey City councilor Barinda Rasode tells the press on Batalia's behalf: "'She wants to talk about how we make sure that young people in these situations either learn how to get support for their anger, for their jealousy.'" (Zinn, Dec 6, 2012) With this article, once again Batalia becomes linked to other women who have died at the hands of their intimate partners, but the abusive nature of her own relationship is left elusive. Other than her murder, it is only insinuated that Batalia's relationship to Dhaliwal was problematic or abusive. The RCMP never confirms that Dhaliwal is a suspect until he is arrested. Nor does the RCMP ever confirm whether or not Batalia received a restraining order against him in the week prior to her death as had previously been reported by the both *The Province* and *The Surrey Now*. Yet this statement about anger in the context of dating violence, even in its ambiguity, presents a slight shift in the dominant discourses that surround IPV and VAW. Sarbjit Batalia's call for supports that teach youth how to deal with their anger and jealousy marks a break from hegemonic discourses because it places the onus for violence with the man committing the violence. This disrupts previous ways of knowing that locate onus for the violence with the woman who was attacked. However this potential disruption to the narrative has only minimal impact because ultimately, the nature of the relationship between Batalia and Dhaliwal is left ambiguous.

As previously discussed, the role of Maple Batalia's family is crucial in the coverage of her case. Their conversations with the media subvert and reaffirm a variety of narratives within the discourses that surround IPV, racialized communities, and citizenship. First, the support of her family grants Batalia worth as a victim of IPV. However, the way they speak about their daughter also works to affirm the status of the Batalia family as "good immigrants" (Mahtani, 2008). This status allows the family to be distanced from the supposedly inherent violence and misogyny associated with the

immigrant South Asian family.⁶⁴ Without granting the Batalia family the space to be ‘good immigrants,’ their public intervention to seek justice for Maple would be more difficult. In order for Maple to be constructed as worthy, we first have to grant her family a location of worth. This is largely done in articles that are published immediately after Batalia’s murder and that contain the small amount of background on the Batalia family that is given to the press. In one of these interviews Harkirat Batalia said he immigrated because “he thought Canada would provide amazing opportunities for his family.” (Bolan, Sept 2, 2011). This statement works to normalize the family within the nation state boundaries of Canada while concurrently constructing Canada as a nation of hope and non-violence.⁶⁵ With this statement Harkirat Batalia is able to demonstrate his right to claim a position of social citizenship, and as such the ability to argue for his daughter as a person and a victim who is deserving of justice. Arguably we need to address this statement with an eye to the fact that the Batalia family appear to be acutely aware of their ability to construct the narrative surrounding the coverage of their daughter’s murder in a manner that justifies their right to demand justice on her behalf.

The centering of the Batalia family in the press coverage of her murder challenges the idea that IPV and VAW is both an accepted and acceptable part of South Asian communities in Canada by disrupting the belief that the supposed normalcy of IPV and VAW in the South Asian community results in silence. However we must also think critically about which familial voices we are granted access to. Under what specific circumstances are these voices being presented and why are we privy to these voices? The relationships between news media and the families of the victims of gendered violence can be fraught with difficulty (Monckton-Smith, 2010 & 2012). This can be in part because the image that the family wants to portray of their loved one can differ from

⁶⁴ The narrative of the South Asian family that supports, encourages or condones IPV can be found in mainstream articles such as Margaret Wentz’s or the piece on Gurjeet Kaur Ghuman by the CBC in 2007.

⁶⁵ The Batalia family has been in Canada for nearly two decades and they are entitled see themselves as social citizens within this nation state.

the way that the media portrays them. In some cases, the family may desire little to no media interaction. But what happens if the family refuses to interact and engage with the media after the murder? Is their loved one forgotten and the case relegated to the back burner? Does increased media focus on a case increase the pressure on law enforcement to pursue the killer? All of these questions make it important to ask why and how we are given the voices of the Batalia family. How, in the information that they share or chose to withhold, are they exerting their agency to be active participants and actors in the media coverage?

From the date of Batalia's murder to the arrest of Dhaliwal and Bedi, the news media talks to all four surviving members of Batalia's family: her father Harkirat or Harry; mother Sarbjit; older brother Kulmeet; and sister Roseleen. The Batalia family become actors in the narrative following the coverage of Batalia's murder, and while the roles assumed by each member of the family in certain ways can be seen as caricatures it is important to acknowledge that these personas are shaped not just by the news media but also by the family members themselves. In most news coverage, for example, there is a quote by or reference to a statement made by the family. The majority of these statements are from Harkirat and Roseleen. Only once, immediately after her murder, is Kulmeet Batalia quoted in the press. The voice most frequently heard or referenced is that of Batalia's father. Harkirat Batalia publically mourns his daughter, frequently referring to her as his 'jewel' and asking for help from anyone who might have information about her murder. It is significant that the first familial voices received by the press are from Batalia's father and brother. Their voices challenge the conception of South Asian men as misogynistic and violent, since they are shown to be publically grieving and asking for the public's help in solving the crime. However, their centrality to the narrative simultaneously reinforces that speaking out against the crime, and claiming space for Batalia as a worthy victim, is the responsibility of the men in her family. This assertion of patriarchal space mitigates what may be construed as deviance from a norm. The media's assurance of the non-violent nature of the men in the Batalia family is again affirmed in an interview with Surrey City councillor Barinda Rasode who, when discussing dating violence and how VAW can be normalized in family settings, states "often gender stereotypes or in some situations, in some homes, *it wasn't the case in*

this home, where there may be some abuse. They just don't know any other way of dealing with it.” [italics mine] (CBC; Dec 5, 2012).

Ultimately, Batalia's sister Roseleen states that the family has actively worked to keep the focus on Batalia and off Dhaliwal because “there's been a lot of focus on the bad guys, and often the women get left out [...] “we're really avoiding that in Maple's case.”” (*The Surrey Leader*, 2013) This has been one strength in the coverage in the murder of Maple Batalia. The focus on the personhood of Batalia has disrupted some of the conventional dialogues that surround publicized cases of IPV. Perhaps most importantly it has, at least in the mainstream news outlets, kept the victim blaming that occurs in cases of IPV out of print. Aside from a few early assertions that Batalia was not involved in any criminal activity by RCMP spokesperson Sgt. Peter Theissen, there is never again conjecture in the mainstream press that Batalia may be to blame for the violence that was done to her. We repeatedly read over two years of coverage that Batalia was innocent and did not deserve the violence enacted upon her. In *The Vancouver Province* column “Back Chat” the weekend after Batalia was murdered, many people wrote in to express their opinions of the Batalia case. Much of the commentary was critical of youth and gun violence, none however mentioned IPV or located Batalia as being responsible for her murder. However one anonymous contributor wrote that “parents continue to fail when it comes to teaching their children about jealousy, peoples boundaries and that “no means no”. This girl did what she was supposed to do, and did not have a clue that this person would snap like this. This family will miss a daughter they raised to do the right thing.” (p. A3) Once again in this letter we see coded language such as ‘jealousy’ and the use of the term ‘no means no’ which hint at IPV, yet never fully bring the issue into a space where it can be openly discussed. It is unclear who this writer deems responsible for the murder of Maple Batalia, and while they hint that Batalia's naiveté and innocence contribute to her death, ultimately she is not considered to be responsible.

Throughout this chapter I have looked at the multiple and at times contradictory narratives that surround the mainstream news media coverage of Maple Batalia's murder. The agency of and subsequent centering of Batalia's family as gatekeepers of her memory and her case throughout the coverage creates a space whereby she is granted a status of both personhood and worthy victimhood. It is possible to see how

this discourse of worthy victimhood is established in part by using Barthes' theory of myth making as a tool to interrogate the articles and placement of photographs used in this research. By using a feminist discourse analysis we are able understand how these discourses are created and maintained through the use of words such as beautiful, gorgeous, and intelligent when framing Batalia as worthy. In the following chapter, I will focus more closely on Maple Batalia's father and ex-boyfriend, examining their interaction with or portrayal by the news media in the larger context of theories of masculinity.

Chapter 4. Harkirat Batalia and Gurjinder Dhaliwal: Representations of Masculinity in the Coverage of Maple Batalia's Murder

*"This wonderful child, a jewel of mine, has been snatched away forever,"
Harkirat Batalia October 1, 2011*

Central to the narratives that surround the mainstream news media coverage of Maple Batalia's murder is the construction of South Asian masculinity in the Canadian cultural imaginary. As with the other narratives that are integral to the coverage of her murder, the narratives and constructions of masculinity can be viewed as conflicting and contradictory. Batalia's father is constructed as the good immigrant and man who steps outside cultural expectations of misogyny and violence. In opposition to this we are offered Gurjinder Dhaliwal, Batalia's ex-boyfriend, who is represented as violent, possessive and jealous. The positioning of these men throughout the coverage puts them in oppositional categories. Significantly, it is through these two men that we come to know Batalia. Through her father we come to know Maple as a driven, intelligent, personable young woman whose life was ended prematurely. It is through the narratives of her friends and family, and her father in particular, that she becomes marked as exceptional and special, and someone whose life and death need to be remembered.

This chapter will look at the different ways in which Dhaliwal and Batalia are presented and represented throughout the media coverage as a means of interrogating how South Asian men are constructed in discourses surrounding IPV. Central to understanding the manners in which the two men are presented by the news media is the construction of violence and South Asian masculinity in the Canadian nation state.

As the murder of Maple Batalia was made public through Canadian news media sources, the speculation regarding the motive for her attack and the identity of the perpetrator became central to the coverage. Within a day of her murder, Gurjinder Gary

Dhaliwal, Batalia's ex-boyfriend, became central to the emerging news reports. While Dhaliwal remained unnamed in news media coverage until October 4 2011, Batalia's father Harkirat posited in his first interviews that Dhaliwal, his daughter's ex-boyfriend, was responsible for or at least involved in the murder of his daughter.

Maple Batalia's father was the first to publically speculate that Dhaliwal was connected to her murder. In contradiction to both the police spokesperson and his own son, only one day after Batalia was murdered her father told Mike Raptis from the *Vancouver Province* that "his daughter had disassociated herself from a former boyfriend... after she "came to know something about his personal association with bad things." He further stated that "[Maple] became really steadfast to not keep close relation with this kind of person after learning that he's no good...so out of jealousy, this is what has happened." These statements about Dhaliwal's activities and the implied connection to Batalia's death were contradicted by the statement made by Batalia's brother who, when "asked if his sister had been experiencing problems with anyone...said 'No, never. She was friendly with everyone.'" (Zytaruk, 2011) It is never clear why Batalia's brother contradicts the statements made by his father, for while the rest of the Batalia family remains central to the coverage surrounding the case, he was not interviewed again. In the same article where her brother denies that Batalia was having problems with anyone, her father goes on to say that the day before the murder, Maple and her mother had been followed on a walk by Dhaliwal. Over the following weeks Harkirat Batalia maintained that 'jealousy' was the reason for his daughter's death, while officially the RCMP and the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT), which took control of the case, maintained that they had no persons of interest or suspects in the case. On October 6, 2011 after Dhaliwal was arrested for uttering threats at Fleetwood Park Secondary School in Surrey, his arrest and its consequences are not mentioned in the mainstream news media again.⁶⁶ At the time IHIT once again issued a statement that Dhaliwal was not a suspect in the Batalia case. Despite these

⁶⁶ In the articles that mention this incident it is never mentioned who Dhaliwal made threats against, nor is the incident mentioned again.

assertions, Dhaliwal continued to be associated with the Batalia in news media reports. During the first two weeks of October neither the press nor IHIT would name Dhaliwal as an official person of interest.⁶⁷ They did not need to name Dhaliwal as a suspect because the news media had already associated him with the murder by reporting accusations from the family about his 'jealousy,' reporting on seemingly unrelated events, and implying that these events are interconnected and related to Batalia's murder. These incidents also work to establish Dhaliwal as a violent individual, thus furthering the idea that he was connected to Batalia's murder without having to directly say that he was involved.

According to press outlets on September 24, 2011 a police complaint was filed against Dhaliwal which resulted in a warrant for his arrest (Bolan, October 4, 2011; Diakiw, October 4, 2011; Zytaruk, October 4, 2011). While the article in the *Surrey Leader* does not name Batalia as the female who was reportedly assaulted in this case, on October 8, 2011 Kim Bolan from *The Vancouver Sun* wrote, "The day after Maple was gunned down, a warrant was issued for Dhaliwal on two counts of assault for **allegedly** attacking her and a 19-year-old male at a Tim Horton's restaurant in Surrey on Sept. 24." (emphasis mine). The charges against Dhaliwal for this attack were dropped by the 20th of October 2011. In later coverage of the case, Batalia is listed as the woman involved in the altercation, and it is assumed to be a statement of fact that Dhaliwal engaged in some form of aggression that night. Before Dhaliwal's arrest these violent interactions were considered enough by the news media to create a story of violence between the former couple, fostering speculation about Dhaliwal's involvement in the murder. Once again the idea of IPV is positioned to be a consideration in the case, especially when the violent incidents, particularly ones involving Batalia, were considered alongside the fact that they had recently broken up. All of these factors are warning signs in abusive relationships, in particular the escalation of violent acts and the

⁶⁷ It is likely that the police did not name Dhaliwal as a person of interest or as a suspect in order to be able to conduct their investigation properly.

separation initiated by Batalia. However the press leaves these lines to be connected by the reader.

There are many reasons that the media may have chosen to approach the case in this manner. First, in the early stages of the coverage related to Batalia's murder, the police claimed that they had no persons of interest in the case. As such, despite what the Batalia family may have thought or what information they may have given to the press, it would not have been a wise move for the media to directly accuse Dhaliwal of the crime. Moreover as Monckton-Smith writes, there are many cases where the police and the press strike deals regarding when and what information can be released (2010, 142). This can help aid the police in keeping crucial information away from the public so that they can continue to investigate as efficiently as possible. It can also benefit the press as they may be offered exclusive coverage or pieces of information along the way if they cooperate with the police.

Despite the insertion of Dhaliwal into the coverage of the murder, he as a person and an individual has remained distant. He is a spectre in the coverage and nowhere pre- or post- arrest do the audience hear from either him or his family. The only person to speak on the behalf of Dhaliwal is his lawyer after the initial court date. His lawyer reminds the reporters that Dhaliwal has not yet been convicted and that he is pleading not guilty. Despite the fact that Dhaliwal is almost omnipresent in the press coverage surrounding Batalia's murder, ultimately very little is known about him or his relationship with Batalia and the little information that has become public has come through the family and friends of Maple Batalia. Moreover, rarely are pictures shown of Dhaliwal. In contrast to the multiple photos of Batalia that are often used in a single article or news cast, when Dhaliwal is shown it is in a snapshot in a yellow t-shirt, in the court room sketch, or in the footage of him leaving the Surrey Courthouse after being arraigned on the 2011 assault charges.

Throughout the coverage Gurjinder Dhaliwal and Harkirat Batalia are constructed as occupying alternate and oppositional spaces in the narrative; that of grieving father and the man accused of being responsible for her death. However they are also constructed in ways that position them within the trope of "good" immigrant and "bad"

immigrant. This construction is achieved by situating Dhaliwal in the position of 'other' while Batalia is positioned as being 'just like us'. As very little information has been released to the media regarding Dhaliwal it is unclear whether or not he is a Canadian citizen or if he was born in Canada. Dhaliwal's legal status in Canada is beside the point, however, for his portrayal works to contest his ability to claim a "Canadian" identity and social citizenship. One way that this is accomplished is through the naming of the men in the mainstream news media coverage. Dhaliwal's name appears throughout as Gurjinder "Gary" Dhaliwal or as Gurjinder (Gary) Dhaliwal. In a keyword search for Dhaliwal when entering "Gurjinder Dhaliwal" in the SFU database only 14 articles show up, four of which were relevant for this work. When the keywords are changed to "Gary Dhaliwal" 41 articles are found, 19 of which were used in this work. Of the 19, 17 of the articles use either quotation marks or the brackets to identify Dhaliwal. It is arguable from the articles that reference Dhaliwal as Gary that he is known by and uses this name. However, the use of quotation marks around Dhaliwal's anglicized name works to signify that this name is not his to use or to claim, that in fact his real or true name is the name that marks him as 'ethnic' or racialized, and that the anglicized name has been falsely and illegitimately claimed by Dhaliwal. As such the readers and audience are made aware that Dhaliwal is not fulfilling the role of a 'good' immigrant. He is instead the 'bad' immigrant who has failed to conform to the social and moral codes of a 'proper' or 'true' Canadian citizen. Furthermore, the media hints at Dhaliwal's potentially violent and criminal lifestyle by printing comments made to news media outlets by Harkirat Batalia where Dhaliwal is said to be "bad" and involved with bad things. These ambiguous comments about Dhaliwal's character, when partnered with the coverage of his arrest for uttering threats, work to emphasize the relationship between South Asian male youth in the Greater Vancouver area and criminal activity. Most frequently South Asian men in the Lower mainland are linked to gang activity and violence, as well as VAW.⁶⁸ This works to align Dhaliwal within the confines of the cultural imaginary that

⁶⁸ For more on South Asian men and gang violence in the Lower Mainland see the documentary film, *A Warrior's Religion*, by Mani Armar; Jo-Anne Dillabough & Jaqueline Kennelly, *Lost*

perceives and constructs non-white racialized men as more likely to be engaged in criminal activity. Descriptions throughout the coverage by Harkirat Batalia and Michelle Cyr that describe Dhaliwal as jealous and controlling further contribute to the idea that non-white racialized men are more misogynistic than their white counterparts. As Sokoloff and Dasgupta write, when looking to representations of IPV and non-white men, misogyny becomes a product of culture whereas violent white men are constructed as lone actors. Their actions are said to be that of a disturbed or psychotic individual, whereas non-white men are constructed as being controlled by their culture.⁶⁹

Alternately Batalia's father is frequently referred to as Harkirat Harry Batalia, or most often Harry. It is not just in the framing of Batalia as a grief stricken father that he comes to stand in for the good immigrant, as I discussed in the previous chapter; it is also possible to see how Batalia has been granted the status of good immigrant by how he is named and addressed throughout the coverage. During the two years of coverage that this thesis examines, Batalia is predominantly referred to as Harry, and when he is called Harkirat, Harry generally follows. Unlike Dhaliwal where Gary is modified by quotation marks, Harry always goes unmarked. The anglicized version of his name is left unquestioned and therefore appears to be a name that he has the right to use. Through this presentation of name Batalia has been granted a form of acceptance into Canadian citizenship and society. This manner of naming him tells readers that Batalia is not attempting to claim a name to which he has no right. This process of naming, particularly when looked at in conjunction with the presentation of loving fatherhood, furthers the perception of Batalia's acculturation and solidifies his location as a good immigrant. Through the news reports we primarily come to know Harkirat Batalia as a grief stricken father; a man and father who, according to one letter writer to *Surrey Now*,

youth in the global city: Class, culture and the urban imaginary.; Jaspreet Sidhu, *Canadian youth criminality and identity formation: A South Asian (Sikh) perspective*.

⁶⁹ In both settings it is important to note that men are not held accountable as individuals for the violence they commit against women. Non-white men are considered to be acting as mindless agents of culture (Dasgupta, 1998). White men as mentally unstable individuals (DeKeseredy, 19).

is a citizen who loved his daughter more than any other man could love theirs (November 24, 2011). His central status as a grieving father works to make his immigrant status less pronounced. As a grieving father Batalia becomes 'just like us,' a man who loves his family and would do anything to keep them safe or to seek justice on their behalf. Moreover, this status works to distance him from the conception of the violent South Asian man. The narrative of Batalia as an exemplary father and immigrant is further bolstered by the story that he tells reporter Kim Bolan about the family's decision to immigrate to Canada, and that "he thought Canada would provide amazing opportunities for his family." (Bolan, September 29 2011) It is arguable that Batalia and his family are aware of the manner in which they have presented themselves to the media and that they have made conscious choices in how they are representing themselves. A grieving father is not only 'more like us', he is also someone with whom we empathize and someone who is able to keep the murder of his daughter and the pursuit of her killer from being relegated to the periphery. The presence of Batalia, his wife Sarbjit, and his daughter Roseleen all provide a visceral reminder of grief and a concrete connection to the murder of Maple Batalia. This works to locate him as the patriarch of his family and serves as an important reminder that the Batalia family conforms to and meets the patriarchal and normative standards of Canadian culture.

Harkirat Batalia further distances himself from the perception of being a 'bad immigrant' through statements in early coverage that talk about Canada as being a place of opportunity for his family. He further distances himself from constructions of violence by calling for justice not just for his daughter but for all women, making comments such as "whatever it takes, please save the life of the women and the girls and all the children around you" (October 9, 2011). In calling for an end to violence against all women and not just his daughter Batalia, he creates a space for himself within the larger narrative on IPV/H. He is not only a grieving father, but also a man invested in the saving of women. This type of language takes up narratives that have been previously seen as the purview of "heroic white males who take up the cause of protecting their women, children and nation," but it also aligns Batalia within the dominant patriarchal narrative of IPV/H while simultaneously distancing Batalia from the assumed misogyny and violence of South Asian men. (Park, p 494) Batalia's conformity to a larger patriarchal narrative plays an important role in the overall coverage of Batalia's murder. The framing of Harkirat

Batalia as the family patriarch not only creates space for his voice to be heard, it also locates Maple Batalia within the familiar framework of a patriarchal family structure. While the Batalia family identify Maple as a person and a victim of violence who deserves justice, the patriarchal narrative of heterosexual love demands that ultimately that we come to know her in relation to a man in her life. In this case, however, the patriarchal figure is the loving father as opposed to the jealous lover.

As with the rest of the coverage that surrounds the Batalia case the presentation of South Asian masculinities is far from being unilateral. Through Harkirat Batalia and Gurjinder Gary Dhaliwal two differing masculinities are articulated by the press. In the press coverage thus far, Dhaliwal has been constructed in a manner that aligns him with the cultural imaginary that conceives of South Asian male youth as violent. This presentation of him has been in part allowed to continue because he has yet to speak to the media on the case or about the nature of his relationship with Batalia. Nor have any of his friends and family spoken on his behalf. As previously discussed this is most likely a conscious decision that has been made by Dhaliwal and his legal team so as not to interfere in his upcoming trial.

When looking to the coverage of Harkirat Batalia, much like his daughter Maple, it is possible to contend that he has been able to occupy a space that has previously been denied to non-white communities in discourses surrounding VAW in Canada. It is arguable that this positioning is a combination of media presentation, his agency in how he has chosen to approach the murder of his daughter, and the privileging of him as a man in a patriarchal society.

Ultimately we as media consumers need to be aware and critical of the manner in which both men are portrayed by the news media. It is crucial to question how the two men are positioned as opposing representations of South Asian masculinity and to question whether these different masculinities create a space for individuality and personhood, or whether they are simplistic tropes which reaffirm a binary of good vs. bad immigrant or man. These representations deny both Gurjinder Dhaliwal and Harkirat Batalia personhood and constrain the manners in which they are able to act as agents in the news media coverage of Maple Batalia's murder.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

"She is brilliant, obedient, everything. But I think I have to help her"
Sarbjit Batalia, 2012

Coercive forms of social control are often obscured in everyday life.
Dobash & Dobash, 1992, p. 21

There is much work that still needs to be done when looking at how the murder of Maple Batalia is constructed within the Vancouver mainstream news media and how those constructions shape the way that Canadian citizens come to know and consume IPV. The coverage of Batalia's murder has allowed for certain disruptions in normative discourses that surround IPV. When taken in isolation it is hard to examine whether or not these disruptions are part of a greater reworking in the cultural imaginary or if they are indicative of normative discourse being re-articulated. Crucial to reaching a better understanding is the question of whether or not Batalia's respectability is a challenge to dominant and normative discourses, given the long history of constructing the bodies of non-white women outside the boundaries of respectability. Or is this narrative problematic since the sexist standards of worth used to designate respectability and worth have not been dismantled? Narratives of worthy victimhood are being re-inscribed and have become extended to reflect a purportedly post feminist and post racial state that "marks out a subtle positioning, a re-colonisation and re-making of racial hierarchy with the field of normative femininity" (McRobbie, p. 89) so that non-white women are included in the reworked discourse. As discussed previously, the inclusion of Batalia as a worthy victim is partly subversive and partly a maintenance of the normative discourses.

It is possible to begin to see how the normative discourses of gendered violence are present in the coverage of Batalia's murder through the connections that the media, her family, and friends publically make to other murdered women. Yet the continual linkage of Batalia to other cases of IPV in the mainstream media is problematic. While it

is useful to link some cases of IPV, the correlations made in the mainstream press are not adequately explained or justified, and not placed within a larger discussion of systemic gender inequality. To connect these women's lives and ultimately their deaths without explaining the connection or reasoning behind those connections is problematic. For example, the media should make distinctions between different forms of gender based violence, and should, if they do make connections, be careful to carefully analyze and define what they are. Not doing so allows for false understandings to be reached about the nature of VAW and IPV/H. Connecting acts of violence that are gender based but unrelated in causal factors or final violent acts is misleading, and works to confuse what conversations need to be happening.

Moreover, the linkage to other cases of IPV without specifically naming the relationship between Batalia and Dhaliwal as abusive is problematic. As I have argued, this does not need to take the shape of an explicit description of the various forms or incidents of violence that occurred between the two. But instead of loosely insinuating that the Dhaliwal was an aggressive or bad person and maintaining ambiguity regarding the nature of the previous dating relationship, their relationship needs to be explicitly located as one that falls within the parameters of IPV. The closest statement that the relationship was abusive in nature comes from Batalia's friend Michelle Cyr, when she tells *CTV News* that Dhaliwal desired to control Batalia's interactions with people, particularly with other men. This is an important detail in their relationship, but it is not mentioned again. Nor is the statement clarified by Batalia's family, friends, or the police. The media also never draws on community experts to help contextualize this information. This is problematic, for if we understand that Dhaliwal's desire to control who Batalia interacted with falls under the consideration of all three non-physical components of "coercive control," it becomes clear how the dating relationship between the two can be constructed as abusive⁷⁰. However most people are not well-versed in

⁷⁰ Evan Stark defines coercive control "as a course of calculated, malevolent conduct, deployed almost exclusively by men to dominate individual women by interweaving repeated physical abuse with three equally important tactics: intimidation, isolation, and control. Assault is an

the subtleties of IPV/H or the models of coercive control and thus may see this story of jealousy and control as part of normative heterosexual dating practice. The framework of heterosexual love in a patriarchal system has socialized us to believe that jealousy and the desire to possess and control a woman's body and sexuality are constructed as being natural and normal masculine traits within a romantic relationship (Monckton-Smith, 2010 & 2012; Mackinnon, 1989; Dworkin, 1981). It is important to ask why this detail was discussed after the arrests of Dhaliwal and Bedi. Is it because the news media is attempting to only relate details in the case that cannot be considered as slanderous to Dhaliwal? While this interview with Cyr is the only one to outright state that the relationship was abusive and dangerous, the concrete information in this piece informs previous information hinted at after Batalia's death.

Batalia's murder and the subsequent mainstream news media coverage offer us a chance to interrogate how IPV/H are currently constructed within Canada. This thesis looks at the Maple Batalia case from the time of her murder until Dhaliwal and Bedi are arrested and charged with her murder. This means that some important content which will help understand the manner in which IPV is portrayed in news media coverage is being left out. The coverage of the trial and what is retold in the story of this crime will show how IPV/H is framed through media lenses. The trial coverage has the potential to draw attention to the reality of IPV in Canada, specifically IPV that happens within youth dating relationships. The mainstream media has the opportunity to not only report on what is happening in the trial but also to foster a dialogue that links Batalia's murder to a larger discourse of IPV/H and the ways that different forms of privilege or oppression can interact with gendered violence. But the coverage also has the potential to re-inscribe the myths that surround IPV and non-white and immigrant communities within Canada. Will Batalia's murder continue to be grouped only with other cases of IPV that happen in non-white racialized communities, specifically those from Vancouver's South Asian community? Or will there be linkages made to IPV in all Canadian communities

essential part of this strategy and is often injurious and sometimes fatal. But the primary harm abusive men inflict is political, and not physical, and reflects the deprivations of rights and resources that are critical to personhood and citizenship." (p. 5)

irrespective of ethnicity and socio-economic standing? This is future research that needs to be taken up by other scholars.

As I stated in the introduction, the case of Maple Batalia is indeed a straightforward case of IPV in many respects. It is the case of a young woman who was allegedly murdered by her ex-boyfriend. But Batalia's death is marked by discourses that simultaneously occupy familiar narratives of what IPV looks like while also occupying spaces that disrupt these narratives we are accustomed to hearing. We need to pay close attention to these disturbances in order to assess whether or not there has been a shift in the news media portrayal of IPV when non-white bodies are involved. Moreover, we need to question whether the discussion of IPV in South Asian communities by mainstream news media outlets is actually challenging problematic constructions of IPV, or reinstating racist ideology that constructs south Asian women and their bodies as inherent locations of violence. I suggest in this thesis that the media actually does both in the Batalia case. Allowing Batalia's family to actively work to shape the discourse that surrounded her murder, as well as her life, is a disruption, because Batalia is granted a location of personhood and worthy victimhood that many women are denied. But by continuing to link Batalia's murder to other cases of IPV from the South Asian community without discussing the reasons why these women's lives and deaths are being connected, the news media perpetuates Margaret Wente's statement that VAW in Canada only exists in the South Asian community (May 12, 2011).

Not only does the Batalia case disrupt constructions of IPV by challenging the idea that women bear responsibility for the violence enacted upon them, it also contests the cultural imaginary that IPV is considered acceptable and normal within South Asian Canadian communities, an association that has been fostered through the routine grouping by the news media in cases of IPV in immigrant and specifically South Asian and Muslim communities (Jiwani 2014; Abraham 2005). During the last decade in the city of Surrey the most high profile cases have been from the South Asian community,

fueling the conception that IPV is a common occurrence there.⁷¹ As I have discussed a key part of these narratives is the belief that men in the South Asian community are more violent than their white contemporaries, combined with a belief that IPV is condoned and accepted in the community as a normative practice (Thiara & Gill, 2010; Dasgupta, 2010). Furthermore, the fact that her family, particularly her father, continually speak to her murder and actively work to keep Dhaliwal in the purview of the coverage challenges the conception that IPV is normal and/or accepted in all South Asian communities.

Central to the representations of the Batalia family and Dhaliwal throughout the coverage is racial identity. Yet, race is not always explicitly marked and is frequently left unspoken in the news media coverage of Batalia's murder. Arguably markers such as associations to other South Asian Canadian women who have died at the hands of their partners, names, and photos are used to underscore ethnicity. On one hand this allows Batalia to break the history of what a venerated and worthy victim looks like at a literal level. However this disruption is not necessarily representative of less racist ways of interacting with worthy victimhood, but may be reflective of Batalia's perceived embodiment of a normative Westernized womanhood.

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed how the media has interacted with and actively worked to shape the narratives that surround the coverage of Maple Batalia's murder. It is important to remember that all of the actors in this coverage have agency and may be actively working to shape and negotiate their own news media interactions and representations. These acts of agency may look different for each person. For Dhaliwal, Bedi and their families, agency may take the form of not speaking to the press

⁷¹ This conception of violence as a unique problem to the South Asian community can be found in Councilor Barinda Rose's comment to the media: "Regardless of what your age is, domestic abuse and abuse within relationships is prevalent across the board. Unfortunately we've had some very high profile cases that have come from a particular community. The only one thing that is common at this point is that still people are still not prepared to talk about it, she said." See <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/no-guilty-plea-in-maple-batalia-s-slashing-says-lawyer-1.1257540>

and remaining away from the public eye. For Batalia's family and friends, the stories they choose to share and the manner in which they present themselves as grief stricken or justice seeking showcase their agency in how they want to be known and how they want Batalia to be known. This also demonstrates an awareness of what they need to do in order for Batalia's murder to remain part of the mainstream news media discourse. As previously discussed, the legal and police narratives that have been woven into the coverage of Batalia's murder have been limited by the need to keep details that may have impacted the investigation and the upcoming trial out of the press. It is only once these differing ways of approaching the case have begun to come together that the media begins to create the story that they present to the public. As both Dubinsky (1994) and Gill (2007) have noted, the manner in which the information is presented by the press and the reasons that certain stories are considered viable is in part due to the spectacle of the crime and how sensational the story is considered to be.

Ultimately what we need in order to better understand IPV/H within the Canadian Nation State are nuanced portrayals that cease to group all instances of VAW against women under the same banner. Moreover these portrayals need to explicitly document, name, and acknowledge IPV so that coverage is not coded in such a way that previous knowledge of the subject is required in order to understand the significance of the information reported. It is important to name the specific types of violence, as well as the reasons that women may become trapped or targeted, in order to better begin to dismantle the systems that allow IPV/H and all VAW to be maintained. Throughout the time period for this thesis there have been no accounts from experts or activist organizations that detail the many ways that IPV can manifest in the news media reporting. And even when Sarbjit and Roseleen Batalia have been included in forums or asked to speak at conferences on relationship violence the mainstream news media still talks around the subject matter. This allows for denials of IPV as a social issue and perpetuates misunderstandings of what IPV can and does look like. Moreover, using the Batalia as the literal face of what IPV 'is' and not discussing what and how it manifests in many communities, South Asian communities in Canada become re-inscribed as inherently violent. The fact the murder of Maple Batalia is connected to other South Asian women who have died at the hands of their intimate partners is not in and of itself a bad thing. What is problematic is that this connection is happening without

conversation and explanation. And whether or not it is the intended outcome the grouping of these women together subtly re-enforces the idea that in the city of Surrey VAW is only a problem in the South Asian community. While VAW and IPV/H occurs in Surrey's South Asian community, this is not the only community in Surrey where VAW and IPV/H occurs. However as long as IPV continues to be presented by the grouping of women without larger discussions about why violence is occurring, South Asian communities in Surrey and Canada will continue to be constructed as sites of inherent violence.

The statement that Batalia represents the new face of violence continues this ambiguity, for the violence is never expressly named. When violence is brought up the connections between the case mentioned and Batalia's murder are again left ambiguous, leaving readers to question what kind of violence her murder is actually connected to: is it IPV, sexually motivated stranger attacks, youth violence, gang crime, or gun violence? Are we being called to reference cases like Laura Szendrei's or cases like those of Poonam Randhawa or Manjit Panghali? While gendered violence was perpetrated against all of these women, there are distinctions between them. Szendrei's murder was the rare case of stranger murder; Randhawa was killed by her ex-boyfriend; Panghali by her husband. By not naming the specific forms of gendered violence encountered by these women, the discourse surrounding VAW and IPV continues to lack nuance and is marred by confusion, generalization, and inaccuracy. The coverage so far of Maple Batalia's murder has presented a challenge in certain ways to how IPV/H is presented in the mainstream news media, but it has also shown that there is much still to be done in terms of nuanced representation and critical understanding. With the power to shape the narratives that are being put forward, the mainstream news media has the potential to begin to change the way that we as Canadians view, talk about, and understand IPV. Yet it is clear from this research that there is still much work that needs to be done in how IPV and VAW is framed and discussed within the mainstream Canadian news media.

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Appendix A.

Timeline of Events

September 2011

September 24 Dhaliwal allegedly attacks Batalia and an unnamed male friend at a Surrey Tim Horton's

September 28 Batalia is shot in the SFU Surrey Parkade at 1am after leaving a study session. She is declared dead at the hospital

September 29 A warrant is issued for Dhaliwal in regard to the incident at the Tim Horton's

October 2011

October 3 Dhaliwal turns himself into police on assault charges

October 6 Dhaliwal is detained after allegedly calling into Fleetwood Park Secondary School and uttering threats

October 17 Dhaliwal's court date for assault charges. The charges against him are stayed.

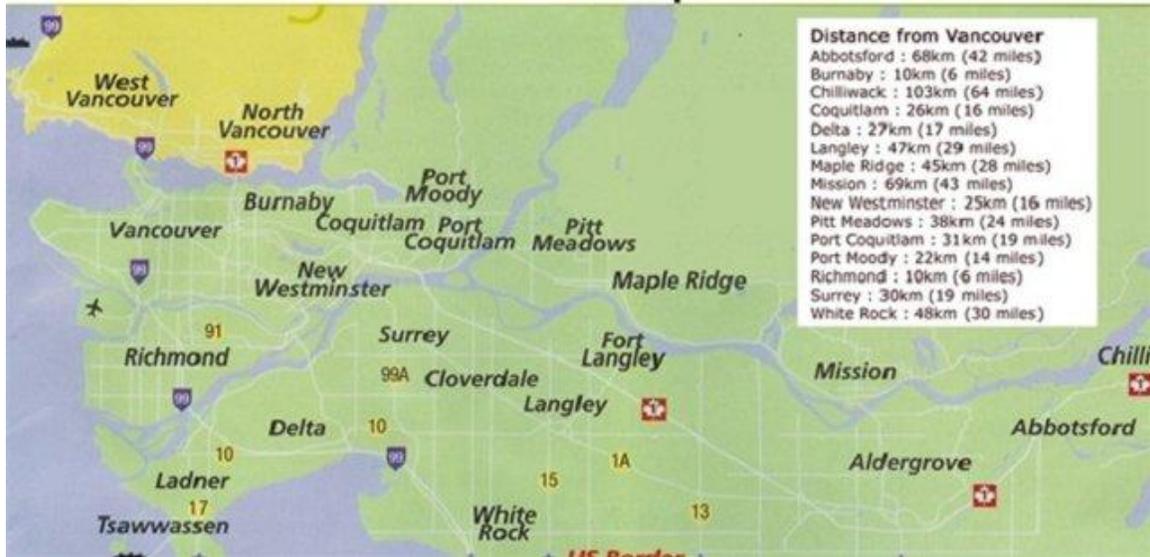
December 2012

December 1 Dhaliwal and his associate Gursimar Bedi are charged with the murder of Maple Batalia

Appendix B.

Vancouver Area Map

Vancouver Area Map



Retrieved from <http://annafadina.com/lower-mainland-map.html>

Retrieved with permission from Simon Fraser University <http://www.sfu.ca/campuses/surrey.html>

Appendix C.

“Surrey: The future dies here”



Retrieved with permission from <http://surreyshirts.com/product-info.php?pid7.html>

Appendix D.

“Better safe than Surrey”



Retrieved with permission from <http://surreyshirts.com/product-info.php?pid1.html>

Appendix E.

SFU Surrey



Retrieved with permission from Simon Fraser University <http://www.sfu.ca/campuses/surrey.html>