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**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF NEWS
REPRESENTATIONS OF MALE VICTIMS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

A Thesis submitted by

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Abstract

Research on domestic violence primarily centres on female victims of male-perpetrated violence; less research, however, has been conducted on male victims. This study investigated how male victims of domestic violence are represented in 35 online news articles using critical discourse analysis. The articles were obtained from Factiva from six major newspapers in Australia between 2018-2021. The most pertinent findings of this study included most articles were considered short in length demonstrating an absence of newsworthiness; men were rarely referred to by name making them an invisible entity; an over-reporting of fatal domestic violence compared to the larger proportion of abuse being non-physical; non-physical abuse was rarely reported on; men were rarely referred to as 'victim'; and elements of victim-blaming were prevalent. These findings suggest that Australian media does not report male victimisation in ways that increase awareness and credibility. Further, this study demonstrates that there is long way to go in recognising and legitimising the experiences of victimisation that men experience as domestic violence victims.

Certification of Thesis

I, Ashly Nichole Peterson, declare that the Master Thesis titled *A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Representations of Male Victims of Domestic Violence* is not more than 40,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: 19/5/2023

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Gavin Beccaria

Principal Supervisor

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Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

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Dedication

This thesis and the research held within it are dedicated to those who experience or have experienced domestic violence and do not or did not have the support, financial means, or the services available to allow them to escape when they wanted and needed to. Also, to those victims who stay because they truly love their partners despite the trauma they endure from them. There is no shame in loving someone, wanting them to love you and hoping things will get better.

“The more that we choose not to talk about domestic violence, the more we shy away from the issue, the more we lose.” — **Russell Wilson**

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Certification of Thesis	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Aims and Research Questions	6
1.2 Motivations	6
1.3 Thesis Structure	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review	9
2.1 Domestic Violence	9
2.2 Diverse Populations	12
2.3 Sex, Gender, Attitudes and Social Norms	13
2.4 Language, Media, and Representation	17
2.5 Representations of Men	22
2.6 Critical Discourse Analysis	24
Chapter 3: Method	28
3.1 Approach to Inquiry	28

3.2 Data Collection and Sources	29
3.3 Data Analysis	32
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion	37
4.1 Newspaper.....	37
4.2 Headline	41
4. Article Length	43
4.4 Incident	45
4.1.1 Type of DV incident	45
4.1.2 Location	47
4.5 Nomination	50
4.5.1 Formalisation	50
4.5.2 Semi-Formalisation.....	51
4.5.3 Informalisation.....	51
4.5.4 Titulation.....	51
4.5.5 Pseudo-Title	51
4.6 Categorisation	52
4.6.1 Functionalisation.....	53
4.6.2 Identification	55
4.6.3 Appraisement.....	59
4.7 Framing.....	61
4.7.1 Focus	61

4.7.2 Foregrounding.....	63
4.7.3 Backgrounding.....	64
4.7.4 Omission	68
4.7.5 Connotations	74
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	84
5.1 Summary	84
5.2 Prospective Critique (Recommendations for News Reporting).....	90
5.3 Limitations	92
5.4 Future Research	94
References.....	96
Appendix A.....	1
Appendix B.....	2

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Readership of Top Australian Newspapers (2019)</i>	31
Table 2 <i>Factiva Source Names</i>	32
Table 3 <i>Keywords for Search</i>	32
Table 4 <i>Newspaper Demographics</i>	40
Table 5 <i>Most common words used to identify male victims in news articles</i>	64

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Inclusion/Exclusion Flowchart</i>	33
Figure 2 <i>Newspaper Format Breakdown</i>	41
Figure 3 <i>Headline Themes</i>	44
Figure 4 <i>Article Length of News Articles</i>	46
Figure 5 <i>Types of DV Incidents Reported On</i>	47
Figure 6 <i>Unique Incidents Reported</i>	48
Figure 7 <i>Mortality Rate of Incidents Reported</i>	49
Figure 8 <i>Articles by Location (State)</i>	50
Figure 9 <i>Articles by Location (City/Town)</i>	50
Figure 10 <i>Articles by Location (Suburb)</i>	50
Figure 11 <i>Median Household Income of Suburbs Reported in Sydney</i>	51

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2016, approximately 5.8 million Australians reported that they had experienced some form of family, domestic or sexual abuse (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Domestic Abuse (DA), Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) have all been used interchangeably to describe when an individual intentionally exerts power and coercive control over their spouse or intimate partner (Swan et al., 2008; United Nations, n.d.). Domestic violence is the prevailing terminology used in news reporting, not IPV; therefore, DV was the terminology used in this thesis. It must be emphasised, however, that the phenomenon under investigation is related to violence between intimate partners which in an academic context, is now known and researched as intimate partner violence. Any individual who experiences intimidation, stalking, threats, and abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial, spiritual, social, or otherwise), within the context of a current or former intimate relationship, is a victim of DV (Migliaccio, 2001; Services Australia, 2022; United Nations, n.d.).

Domestic violence is often viewed as a gendered issue, which is any social issue thought to primarily affect one gender, specifically within the outdated, dichotomous model of gender (Loseke et al., 2005; VicHealth, 2017). Concerning the gendered nature of DV, Australian women statistically encompass the greatest proportion of reported DV victims, and it is reported that one Australian woman dies at the hands of an intimate partner every nine days (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Statistics demonstrate that DV is predominantly perpetrated by men (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2018), but they also reveal that a considerable number of Australian men experience DV. In 2018, AIHW reported that one in sixteen men will experience physical or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner and one in six men have experienced emotional abuse within an intimate

25 relationship. In 2022, the male population in Australia is estimated to be just over 13 million; one
26 in sixteen equates to over 81,000 men who will experience physical or sexual violence and over
27 two million men that will experience emotional abuse (*Australia Population*, 2022). These
28 numbers, however, may not be complete; according to Relationships Australia NSW, up to 50%
29 of the cases they assist with involve a man as the victim ('Relationships Australia NSW', 2021).
30 These data may not reflect the official police data on rates of victimisation, however (Hine et al.,
31 2022; *Measuring Victims of Crime*, 2011). Men are less likely to report their victimisation to
32 police, therefore the statistical data collected by police is not likely to reflect the true proportion
33 of male victims of DV (*Measuring Victims of Crime*, 2011). This is where other data sources can
34 assist in understanding what proportion of DV victims are male. While men may be less likely to
35 officially report their victimisation, they are able to self-report in surveys anonymously without
36 fear of reprisal (*Measuring Victims of Crime*, 2011).

37 This project recognises all men who identify as male, regardless of birth-assigned sex,
38 gender identity or sexual orientation. It also must be acknowledged that individuals within
39 different cultural groups and the LGBTQIA+ community experience domestic violence at
40 higher-than-average rates. The focus of this project, however, will look at all individuals who
41 were identified as male within the news articles.

42 Domestic violence is commonly stereotyped as a problem almost exclusively perpetrated
43 by men which overshadows the abuse and violence men experience (Hine et al., 2022). Hine et
44 al., (2020, p. NP5595) state that men are a "hidden victim group" that experience physical abuse
45 coercive control, gas-lighting, and even stalking (Hine et al., 2022; Hines et al., 2007; Tsui,
46 2014). Another form of hidden abuse is the threat of losing access to visitation with their
47 children (Tsui, 2014). Men who experience DV are more likely to experience post-traumatic
48 stress disorder, substance abuse, feelings of isolation, suicidal ideation, and poorer relationship

49 outcomes with their children and future partners (Hine et al., 2022) (Hine et al., 2022). Male
50 victims frequently deny, dismiss, and downplay their status as a victim of DV (Hine et al., 2022).
51 Societal expectations dictate that men should be the dominant, stronger sex, therefore, when men
52 do acknowledge their status as a victim to get support, their masculinity is called into question by
53 themselves and others (Hine et al., 2022; Machado et al., 2017; Moon, 2018). When a man
54 speaks out about the abuse and victimisation that have experienced, they are often persecuted
55 and may even be labelled as the instigator and questioned about whether they hit their partner
56 first (Lysova et al., 2022; Migliaccio, 2001; Roebuck et al., 2023; Scott-Storey et al., 2023;
57 Taylor et al., 2022). Prior research demonstrates there is a lack of support and services offered to
58 male DV victims, who are also more likely to have their victimisation downplayed by
59 organisations they are seeking help from (Hine et al., 2022; Hines et al., 2007; Lysova et al.,
60 2022; Migliaccio, 2001; Taylor et al., 2022).

61 . Lee and Wong (2021) reported that although a significant portion of crime stories are
62 comprised of cases about homicide, incidents involving men as the victim are less likely to be
63 reported in the media. It was inferred that cases of men being murdered are less newsworthy as
64 they are not perceived to be as vulnerable or innocent as women, children, and the elderly
65 (Hanson & Lysova, 2021). Although news organisations are trusted to report on important
66 matters, male victimisation may not be perceived as a significant crime in comparison to other
67 types of violent crimes (Lee & Wong, 2020). According to Hanson & Lysova (2021), news
68 reporting of DV often focuses on the experiences and situations of women as victims. It is
69 argued that instances of men as DV victims do circulate, but often do not gain significant
70 attention within communities. Further, discourses that do acknowledge male DV experiences
71 frequently minimise the impact of physical violence and abuse on men in these circumstances

72 and often relay different accounts of victimhood compared to those involving women as victims
73 (Hanson & Lysova, 2021; Tsui, 2014; Vernon, 2017).

74 A significant source of information in society is derived from the media, specifically the
75 news (Lee & Wong, 2020; van Dijk, 2006). The information propagated by the media therefore,
76 has a profound influence on organisational and judicial policymaking (Lee & Wong, 2020; van
77 Dijk, 2006). Most news conglomerates are commercial enterprises and have a vested interest in
78 reporting certain events more than others; as such, news reporting cannot be trusted to be fully
79 objective (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019). Events are selected based on their
80 newsworthiness, calculated by the journalists and editors, and driven by the values of the news
81 organisation (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019; Lee & Wong, 2021). This calculation is based
82 on what is most likely to appeal to the public and generate the most interest, resulting in
83 increased revenues and viewers for the news organisation (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019;
84 Lee & Wong, 2021).

85 A thematic analysis was conducted by Hanson and Lysova (2021) in Canada looking at
86 how male victims of intimate partner homicide were portrayed throughout news articles. Hanson
87 and Lysova (2021, p.1) concluded that male victims were often blamed for their victimisation in
88 news articles, or “represented as non-ideal and illegitimate victims” in the news media.
89 Additionally, the male victim was often doubted as being the victim in the first place and blamed
90 for the precipitating factors that lead to his homicide (e.g., the man was not fulfilling his duties as
91 a husband or father correctly). Although this study is slightly different from the phenomenon
92 under investigation in this project, it does provide some evidence that there is a particular way in
93 which male DV victims are represented in news reporting.

94 The narrative of DV implicates men as being the perpetrators rather than victims; thus,
95 examination of news discourses regarding male victims of DV requires further explication. As

96 such, the purpose of this qualitative study was to ascertain how male victims of DV are
97 represented in Australian news reporting. This was achieved by conducting a critical discourse
98 analysis (CDA). CDA is a problem-oriented approach that investigates the interplay of power,
99 ideology and discourse to challenge injustices and to make power relations, domination and
100 discrimination transparent (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Language plays a powerful role in
101 influencing societal norms, the generation of stereotypes and the formulation of prejudice and
102 discrimination (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2013; Wodak, 1989). According to van Dijk (2008),
103 discourses can lead to the reproduction of social inequality and the development of in-group/out-
104 group mindsets. It is these mindsets that are complicit in the development and maintenance of
105 said stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination that men face as victims of DV. As CDA has been
106 developed to investigate complex social phenomena under a critical lens, it is a well-suited
107 methodology to explore if male victims of DV are being marginalised through news reporting
108 (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA is interested in ideologies that establish and maintain unequal
109 power relations in discourse and revealing those ideologies that perpetuate dominance (Reisigl &
110 Wodak, 2017).

111 It is important to note that extensive research has been conducted on women and
112 domestic violence more broadly, as well as in the news (Anrows, 2016; Eastal et al., 2015; Lee
113 & Wong, 2020; Sutherland et al., 2015, 2019). This thesis does not seek to minimise or detract
114 from that work, nor women's experiences of domestic violence. In respect of this, I endeavoured
115 to keep comparisons between male and female victims to a minimum. At times, some
116 comparisons will be made to highlight how the media portrays a particular construct differently
117 for men than other victims for context only. It is also important to note that this thesis was not
118 looking exclusively at female-perpetrated violence; the dataset included both hetero and
119 homosexual relationships and thus male and female-perpetrated DV towards male victims.

120 Although I argue that male victims are marginalised through the way they are represented in
121 news reporting, it is not women or female victims that are the source of that marginalisation and
122 oppression. Instead, I argue it is the patriarchal structures and related socialisation that are the
123 source of marginalisation (Chesney-Lind & Chagnon, 2017). This thesis does not argue that male
124 victims are represented less favourably than female victims; in fact, it became clear that
125 similarities do exist in how both male and female DV victims are represented in news reporting
126 (Anrows, 2016; Chesney-Lind & Chagnon, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2015). Further, the rationale
127 of this particular topic and research design has been developed with future research in mind. It
128 was important to get a sense of how men are represented in news reporting so that a future study
129 may look at similarities and differences between male and female victims. To date, however, no
130 studies have explicitly explored representations of male victims in news reporting and it was
131 deemed important to start from a narrow scope so that future studies can be broader. The
132 findings from this thesis intend to address a gap in the literature by revealing exactly how male
133 victims of DV have been represented in Australian news reporting from 2018 through to 2021.

134 **1.1 Aims and Research Questions**

135 The aim of this project is to investigate representations of male victims of DV in online
136 news articles, and in doing so answer the following research questions:

- 137 1. In news reporting, how are male victims of DV referred to and how is the domestic
138 violence incident described?
- 139 2. In news reporting, what characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to male
140 victims of DV and the domestic violence incident of which they are victims?

141 **1.2 Motivations**

142 As the researcher, I bring my own experiences of child abuse and intimate partner
143 violence with me, both as a bystander to others' experiences (male and female) and as a survivor.
144 I am passionate about raising awareness that domestic violence affects everyone and that
145 statistics only tell part of the story. The challenge I faced during my research journey was to
146 remain aware of my own biases and experiences through self-awareness and reflection. Machin
147 & Parsons-Smith (2019) relay the importance of critical reflection in psychology to identify and
148 reduce negative mental processes that can impede and influence one's work. Throughout the
149 analysis of this study, I aimed to critically analyse the data while taking into account my innate
150 biases, which inevitably influenced my interpretation of the findings. I strived, however, to
151 remain driven by the data and make conclusions from the data as opposed to seeking data to
152 confirm my beliefs. This entailed considering different perspectives and meanings when
153 undertaking this interpretivist work. I detail the strategies I used to manage 'the researcher within
154 the research' in the *Methodology* section.

155 Given my experiences, I felt compelled to take on this project to make visible a
156 phenomenon rarely acknowledged. There are organisations, politicians, and individuals fighting
157 every day on behalf of female victims of DV; those standing up and speaking out for men are far
158 fewer. For me, this does not represent the equality that feminism is supposed to advocate for.
159 Gender theory provides a great foundation for understanding why this phenomenon, male
160 victimisation, is kept hidden from the dominant discourses. Attitudes of what is masculine and
161 what is feminine drive how society views, identifies and believes who a victim can and cannot
162 be. At the same time, Hall's theory of representation helps to explore how meaning is formed
163 and reinforced through the way individuals are represented (Hall, 2013). In the media, men are
164 represented in ways that reflect the dominate attitudes towards masculinity and men but
165 ultimately reinforce a culture that does not perceive men as legitimate victims. Finally, van

166 Leeuwen's social actor theory assists in categorising representations of social actors by
167 highlighting whether they are excluded or included in the discourse (van Leeuwan 1996; 2008).
168 van Leeuwan (1996) says social actors are rarely excluded unintentionally and social actors may
169 be deliberately presented in certain ways that are driven by propaganda strategies (van Leeuwan,
170 1996). With respect to male victims, it becomes apparent that exclusion strategies are deployed
171 by the sparsity of news coverage male victims receive and the ways they are portrayed when they
172 do receive news coverage.

173 **1.3 Thesis Structure**

174 This thesis is divided into five chapters. Following the *Introduction* chapter, the
175 second chapter encompasses the *Literature Review* which provides essential background
176 information about domestic violence, language, media, sex and gender, attitudes and social
177 norms, and representations of men. The third chapter, *Methods*, will inform readers about the
178 Discourse Historical Approach and its key concepts, how data were collected, and how the
179 research process was conducted. This will then lead into the fourth chapter, a combined *Findings*
180 *and Discussion*, which will examine, interpret, and discuss the findings of the data analysis.
181 Finally, the *Conclusion* chapter will summarise the findings of this project, provide
182 recommendations for better reporting practices as well as for future research, and finally address
183 the limitations of the study. The literature review in Chapter 2 will provide a sense of context for
184 this study and outline a rationale for the planned analysis. In accordance with the exploration of
185 the research on domestic violence, there will be consideration of the ways that language,
186 representation, media, and gender function to position common understandings of DV.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Domestic Violence

Decades of research has explored the profound impacts of DV on female victims, including the establishment of structural to situational theories and models to explain and understand why DV occurs against women (Bohall et al., 2016; Gelles, 1980; Holmes et al., 2019; Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012; Johnson, 1995, 2006; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Pyles & Postmus, 2004; Roebuck et al., 2023). Research has also identified that female victims of DV are frequently faced with many impacts and challenges (ACT, 2022; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023; Barrios et al., 2021; Blunden & Flanagan, 2022; Diemer et al., 2017; MacGregor et al., 2021; Trevillion et al., 2012). Female victims experience moderate to severe bodily harm, threats, and fear of loss of life, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, suicidal ideations, disruptions to work, loss of relationships with family and friends, homelessness, and death, either self-inflicted or by the hands of their partner. (ACT, 2022; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023; MacGregor et al., 2021; Trevillion et al., 2012). Additionally, women may have difficulty getting support to leave the relationship or may not want to leave, hoping the abuse will stop or do to shame and embarrassment (Kennedy & Prock, 2018; Loke et al., 2012; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016). Some women fear or know they will be killed if they try to leave; for others, cultural factors may prevent them from leaving (ACT, 2022; Afrouz et al., 2023; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023). Women with children have additional concerns as to being able to provide for the children, losing care of them, having to co-parent with their abuser, or that harm will come to them because of leaving (ACT, 2022; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023; Blunden & Flanagan, 2022; Diemer et al., 2017). As such, considerable work has been undertaken and

211 remains needed to address these challenges for female victims to have access to the support and
212 resources they need.

213 It is also proposed that there are different types of DV that exist between intimate
214 partners and motivations for perpetration vary based on typology (Johnson, 1995, 2005, 2006).
215 For example, in situational couple violence, both partners actively participate in acts of DV,
216 potentially as a result of poor communication and emotional regulation that escalates but without
217 intent to control (Johnson, 1995, 2005, 2006; Maloney et al., 2023; Neilson et al., 2023). In this
218 theory, it is argued that DV is gender symmetric, victimisation and perpetration between men
219 and women are almost equal (Johnson, 2006). Kimmel (2002) heavily criticises the notion of
220 gender symmetry, however, and argues that it is a matter of poorly interpreted data that presents
221 an illusion of symmetry. It has been identified that there has been an increase in female
222 perpetrated DV (Boxall et al., 2020; Hester, 2012). Boxall et al. (p.10) stated that “the proportion
223 of women identified as a POI [person of interest (in a domestic violence incident as the
224 perpetrator)] also increased from 24 to 56 percent.” It is suggested, however, that the models and
225 theories of why men perpetrate DV are not applicable to female perpetration (Hamberger &
226 Potente, 1994; Swan & Snow, 2006). It is argued that, unlike male perpetrators, women do not
227 perpetrate DV from a desire to maintain power and control over their partners. Instead,
228 researchers have articulated that women predominantly perpetrate DV in relation to self-defence
229 of themselves and their children (Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Swan & Snow, 2006). This in
230 particular is one source of difficulty in legitimising male victims’ experiences of DV. Other
231 studies have in fact identified that women do exert violence over partners to coercively control
232 (Hine et al., 2022; Hines, 2010; Hines & Douglas, Emily, 2010; Lysova et al., 2022; Lysova &
233 Dim, 2022).

234 Limited research has been carried out on male DV victimisation in comparison to other
235 victims of crime (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018; Bates et al., 2019a; Hines et
236 al., 2007; Swan et al., 2008). Statistics indicate that physical acts of violence are overwhelmingly
237 male-perpetrated, however, DV is also perpetrated against men by male and female partners
238 (Australian Institute Of Health And Welfare [AIHW], 2019). Several studies indicate men are
239 less likely to report the various types of DV perpetrated against them (Australian Institute of
240 Health and Welfare, 2018; Bates et al., 2019). According to AIHW (2019), nine out of ten men
241 (approximately 97%) of male victims who were physically assaulted by an intimate partner, did
242 not report it to or involve the police. Men are a minority group within the DV narrative and a
243 process of marginalisation takes place concerning legitimatising their experiences as victims
244 (Lysova et al., 2022; Migliaccio, 2001; Roebuck et al., 2023; Scott-Storey et al., 2023; Taylor et
245 al., 2022). For this project, marginalisation is defined in terms of an individual's alterity, wherein
246 "being marginalized [sic] constitutes being defined as *other* [sic] by the dominant group, which
247 designates an individual to a lower status in the social hierarchy" (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Hines
248 et al., 2007; Migliaccio, 2001, p. 207).

249 This marginalisation of the male victims of DV gained attention in the Australian media
250 amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Gleeson, 2020). In 2020, Gleeson reported via *ABC News* that
251 men are finding themselves unable to locate services specific to their plight as victims of DV.
252 Due to a scarcity of appropriate resources, some men have even faced homelessness as a result.
253 Gleeson (2020, para. 13) states that "...some causes of domestic violence may be going
254 unaddressed because of a reluctance to recognise that men can be victims in the first instance,
255 and a lack of services if they manage to overcome intense shame and stigma and reach out for
256 help.") Further, Gleeson reported that 44% of calls to the service were related to the male caller's
257 experience of domestic violence from their partner.

258 Huntley et al., (2019) conducted a systematic literature review and identified five key
259 themes: men are afraid to disclose their victimisation; the stigmas of being a male victim
260 challenge masculinity; a desire to remain committed to the perpetrator despite the abuse; the
261 longer-term effects which lead to a reduction in confidence and/or increased despondence; and
262 men’s perception of services and their (un)availability specifically for men. A study conducted in
263 California found that requests for a temporary restraining order (TRO) were 42% more likely to
264 be rejected if the plaintiff was a male, and 84% more likely to have a permanent restraining order
265 (PRO) rejected (Muller et al., 2009). In comparison, 95% of TROs and 31% of PROs requested
266 by female plaintiffs were granted (Muller et al., 2009). A limitation of this particular study in
267 relation to this thesis is that the study was conducted in the United States; therefore may not
268 generalise well to an Australian judicial system. Another study explored male victims’
269 experiences with support services, where one man reported “I called eleven different numbers for
270 battered women and got no help” (Hines et al., 2007, p. 68).

271 Compared to victims of other crimes, male victims are underrepresented statistically,
272 specifically in academic research, within policy-making, and within news reporting (Australian
273 Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018; Hayes & Prenzler, 2015). It is suggested from the existing
274 research that the experiences of male domestic violence victims are minimised in various
275 contexts (Hine et al., 2022; Lysova et al., 2022; Roebuck et al., 2023; Scott-Storey et al., 2023;
276 Taylor et al., 2022). The source of these conflicting theories, arguments, and statistics is that
277 researchers are using different sampling methods and theoretical perspectives to examine DV
278 (Hine et al., 2022; *Measuring Victims of Crime*, 2011). Additionally, individuals are more likely
279 to report their status as victim or perpetrator in anonymous self-reports than to involve police
280 (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Lysova et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2022). This means that official data
281 of actual incidents recorded by the police do not necessarily reflect the true rates of DV

282 occurring, regardless of which gender is victim or perpetrator (Hine et al., 2022; *Measuring*
283 *Victims of Crime*, 2011).

284 The scope of this project does not allow for an in-depth consideration of the experiences
285 faced by the Indigenous populations of Australia, nor those in the LGBTQI+ community.
286 However, it is necessary to acknowledge that domestic violence also exists in these populations.
287 For example, a survey carried out by Hill et al., (2020) found that men who identified as
288 LGBTQIA+, particularly transmen, (a person who was born female but transitioned to male) had
289 experienced higher rates of all types of domestic violence than that of female-identifying
290 respondents or cisgender men (a person whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at
291 birth) (*Inclusive Language*, n.d.). Additionally, survey data from Pitts et al., (2006) demonstrated
292 that within the LGBTQIA+ community, 27.9% of males, 61.8% of trans-males and 36.4% of
293 intersex males reported being abused by a partner. With respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait
294 Island populations, female victims are the predominant focus of research leaving male victims in
295 this population underrepresented. With that being said, a study comparing the differences in
296 Indigenous victims compared to non-Indigenous victims found that Indigenous men do
297 experience domestic violence at similar rates as non-Indigenous men (Boxall et al., 2020).
298 Further research is needed to fully understand how DV is experienced by men in these
299 populations within an intimate partnership context.

300 **2.3 Sex, Gender, Attitudes and Social Norms**

301 *Sex* refers to the biological distinction between male and female, while *gender* is
302 associated with socially constructed external behaviours related to masculinity and femininity
303 (Blakemore et al., 2009; *Inclusive Language*, n.d.). Although a spectrum of gender identities
304 exists (Abrams, 2019), there remains a dichotomous understanding of gender: male and female,
305 man and woman, boy and girl, that define normative formulations of gender (Crabb, 2021; J.

306 Taylor, 2021). Blakemore et al. (2009) states that gender is the most basic way in which social
307 life is organised, with society emphasising differences between boys and girls from conception
308 onwards. According to (Butler), (2004, p. 42):

309 Gender is not exactly what one “is” nor is it precisely what one “has.” Gender is the
310 apparatus by which the production and normalisation of masculine and feminine take
311 place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and
312 performative that gender assumes.

313 Butler (1988) posits that gender is not naturally inherited upon birth but rather it is an act, a
314 socially constructed performance where the script outlines who (based on sex) and how
315 (behaviourally) an individual performs masculinity or femininity. Butler believes that gender is
316 something a person “does” by performing a particular gender script, which is acquired from and
317 conforms to socially developed gender norms.

318 Street and Dardis (2018) stated that hegemonic masculinity refers to “a societal pattern in
319 which stereotypically male traits are idealized as the masculine cultural ideal.” While there will
320 be individual differences in the degree to which men embody these traits, it is socially expected
321 that men will endeavour to exemplify these qualities more so than not (Donaldson, 1993). In
322 Western cultures, a boy is a boy because he behaves in what is idealised as “boy-like” by playing
323 with trucks, rough-and-tumble play, getting dirty and the like (Moon, 2018).

324 Flood (2020) wrote a report for VicHealth which investigated attitudes about masculinity
325 and health in Australia. They found that 33% of men and 66% of women agree that traditional
326 gender stereotypes and masculine hegemonic beliefs are harmful and limiting for men, women,
327 and children. It is interesting that only one-third of men found these stereotypes problematic
328 whereas the majority of women believed they were in fact problematic. Flood (2020, pp. 4-5)
329 differentiates attitudes from social norms by saying:

330 Attitudes refer to internally motivated judgements that people make about something, for
331 example about what they like or do not like. ‘Social norms’ refer to beliefs about what
332 other people do and approve of...Although attitudes and norms are distinct, they are
333 related, in that either can influence each other... At the societal level, stereotypical
334 masculine norms are embedded in media and popular culture, shape the cultures and
335 social relations of workplaces, sports, and religion, and inform government policies on
336 parenting, work and other areas.

337 Through this study, it was possible to gain a sense of how Australians hold particular
338 attitudes about Australian men. These attitudes contribute to and perpetuate social norms about
339 what is expected of men, but also what is incongruent with manhood and masculinity (i.e.,
340 victimhood). These socially constructed, normative ideals of masculinity have arisen out of
341 patriarchal systems that date back to the beginning of civilisation. Being sensitive, vulnerable, or
342 victimised is not often associated with men; to be these things, socially, diminishes the
343 perception of a boy or man’s masculinity (Luther et al., 2018; Moon, 2018). Men are socialised
344 to behave in certain ways which reinforces assumptions about masculinity and ‘being a man’
345 (Butler, 1988). At the same time, men are predominantly represented in the media in ways that
346 reflect the performative act that is associated with normative conventions of what it means to be
347 a man.

348 I argue that patriarchy and some feminist ideologies play a significant role in why male
349 victims are a marginalised group. It is recognised that female victims are a marginalised group;
350 but both victim groups are marginalised, sharing similarities and differences (Roebuck et al.,
351 2023). The key source of this marginalisation lies within the social systems of patriarchy. Ortner
352 (2022) describes patriarchy as a social arrangement of power; a system where men hold power
353 over most social aspects, leadership roles, moral authority, property, and social privilege.

354 Patriarchy is “about the power of “men” over both women and other men” (Ortner, 2022, p.
355 307); like an exclusive club where women and “wrong men” are prohibited (Ortner, 2022, p.
356 309). This notion of wrong men is a critical concept to this thesis. Male victims are considered
357 ‘wrong men’ because ‘right [real] men’ would not allow themselves to be subjected to DV (Croft
358 et al., 2015; Hine, Bates, et al., 2022; Hine, Wallace, et al., 2022; Hines, 2010; Lysova et al.,
359 2022). Even if this notion is not overt and explicitly stated, there is ample evidence to
360 demonstrate male victims perceive this notion to be true (Bates et al., 2019b; Croft et al., 2015;
361 Lysova et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2022).

362 On the other hand, feminists, both female and male, have fought hard for decades to
363 tackle, minimise, and criminalise DV; a phenomenon that historically was socially acceptable for
364 men to perpetrate in the home (Danis, 2003; Williams & Walklate, 2020). A significant amount
365 of activism has taken place to elevate women from a place of oppression which is based on men
366 as oppressors in patriarchal societies (Hunnicut, 2009; Kuskoff & Parsell, 2021; Phillips, 2006).
367 The feminist perspective argues that men that fall victim to DV are not victims of oppression but
368 are the oppressors whose victims finally defended themselves (Phillips, 2006; Roebuck et al.,
369 2023). This perspective portrays men as holding all social power with the ideology that men
370 cannot be oppressed if they are the oppressor. In line with feminist theory, this may not account
371 for the individual experience of the victim, irrespective of gender. Social power is defined as
372 “the control exercised by one group or organisation or its’ members over the actions and/or the
373 minds of the members of another group, thus limiting the freedom of action of the others, or
374 influencing their knowledge, attitudes or ideologies” (van Dijk, 1996, p.84). While research
375 supports the view that in some cases the men were the oppressor and the woman retaliated, there
376 is also research demonstrating the opposite to be true (Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Hine et al.,
377 2022; Hines, 2010; Lysova & Dim, 2022; Roebuck et al., 2023; Swan & Snow, 2006). This

378 social power may be held by some men, but men who do not meet the standards of masculinity
379 do not. I argue that some feminist ideologies wilfully fail to recognise men who are
380 demonstrably oppressed by the same patriarchal systems that oppress women (i.e., “wrong men”
381 as Ortner (2022) describes).

382 Fairclough & Wodak (1997) advise that how discourses are represented, and the
383 positionality of people can lead to reproductions of unequal power relations. Feminist
384 perspectives alongside established patriarchal institutions work in ways that delegitimize male
385 victims’ experiences of victimisation. Politically, those who seek to present a more balanced
386 perspective of DV are often criticised, ostracized, and condemned (Ortner, 2022; Roebuck et al.,
387 2023; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008). This feminist perspective, paired with pervasive
388 patriarchy, perpetuates stereotypical ideals of masculinity, and reinforces notions of male
389 victimisation as illegitimate. Regardless of theoretical perspective, model, or typology, DV is a
390 global issue that affects men and women who experience significant impacts. There is, however,
391 significantly less research on male victimisation making it apparent that male victims are an
392 overlooked population and forms the rationale for this thesis.

393 **2.4 Language, Media, and Representation**

394 According to Hall et al., (2013), language is the way individuals within a society come to
395 create and understand shared meaning, while representations are the ways meaning is conveyed
396 through language. Language produces knowledge and creates a system of representation
397 whereby meaning is constructed using signs and symbols. Over time these signs and symbols are
398 constructed to hold meaning for people, ideas, concepts and so forth. Eventually, these signs and
399 symbols coalesce into discourses that define and prescribe sets of practises that correspond with
400 an individual’s behaviours and interactions.

401 Discourses are not singular statements, ideas, or institutional practises, but rather
402 establish a collection of ‘knowledge’ that maintain characteristic similarity within a specific
403 context or period (Hall et al., 2013). Discourses correspond with representations and descriptions
404 of phenomena, and individuals through text and other media. Discourses, language, and social
405 practise come together to construct a ‘sense’ of the phenomenon and define how it is perceived,
406 talked about, and understood. This is then used to control how knowledge is practised and
407 regulates communication about a topic in a specific time and place across a variety of texts (Hall
408 et al., 2013). In terms of domestic violence, the discursive framing of victimhood typically
409 acknowledges the plight of women as victims, relegating men’s experiences as less visible, and
410 less discussed (Migliaccio, 2001). Men as victims do not obtain the same recognition and
411 credibility that is afforded to female victims (Lysova et al., 2022; Migliaccio, 2001; Roebuck et
412 al., 2023; Scott-Storey et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2022). This is evident in a range of social
413 ‘texts’, including the representations that are cast in news articles recounting the experiences that
414 male victims have with counselling services, the courts, domestic violence shelters and law
415 enforcement (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Hines et al., 2007).

416 Given that the production of meaning is socially constructed, a key location of this
417 formation of social meaning is derived from the media (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Grosholz &
418 Kubrin, 2007; Hall et al., 2013). ‘Media’ is an expansive term that corresponds with any form of
419 communication intended to convey a specific meaning. For this project, media relates to news
420 reporting undertaken by the industry recognised as the ‘mass media’ and conveyed in the form of
421 news reporting (Lister et al., 2009). Much of what individuals know and how they learn about
422 the world around them in this modern, technologically-driven era is gleaned from media
423 interpretations and portrayals (Tsfati & Cohen, 2012). Additionally, media narratives are
424 incredibly powerful, reaching a large population that impacts and shapes public perceptions,

425 societal norms and even policy-making (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; van Dijk, 1996). Dunaway et
426 al. (2015) suggest that the decision to report news stories in a certain way is tactical, whereas
427 Entman, (2007, p. 165) states “‘telling people what to think about’ [through media] is how one
428 exerts political influence in noncoercive political systems... it is through framing [and news
429 slant] that political actors shape the texts that influence or prime the agendas and considerations
430 that people think about.”

431 An aspect of news reporting that is not always considered is what instances of
432 manipulation are taking place, intentionally or not. This can happen as a result of the journalist’s
433 political ideology and role perception, and it can also be related to the organisation’s political
434 stances (i.e., right-wing vs left-wing); or stories can be written in such a way that it influences
435 and even conforms to what is socially normative and accepted (Arias, 2019; Scherr & Baugut,
436 2016). One method used by the media to manipulate readers is to omit facts and information not
437 deemed relevant, but such omissions may influence their reader’s perception of the event
438 (Parenti, 1997). Beder (2004) even states that some editors are averse to reporting certain events
439 due to their controversial nature, politically or socially, that may result in losing readers. This
440 also speaks to the power that the media holds and maintains through selective coverage of events
441 (Beder, 2004). This selectivity can manipulate viewers' perception of an issue by only reporting
442 on stories that present a particular narrative about that issue and not providing readers with all
443 perspectives to consider. According to van Dijk (2006), this manipulation shapes and forms the
444 shared social representations that individuals hold as a society long-term. He further states that
445 once these social representations are developed and attitudes regarding them are solidified, little
446 effort is required to reinforce these attitudes which drive beliefs and behaviours accordingly. Van
447 Dijk (2006) concurs with Beder (2004) in that manipulation results in how information about a
448 reader’s attention is drawn to certain facts and away from others. One example cited is how

449 headlines are used to ‘emphasize irrelevant details, rather than the most important topics of a
450 discourse’ (Dijk, 2008, p. 366). For example, one article was titled “Gym owner put husband in
451 headlock after ‘video binge’.” The fact that the perpetrator was a gym owner was not particularly
452 relevant to the issue at hand. Additionally, van Dijk acknowledges that manipulation may not be
453 intentional, but it is democratically illegitimate since it results in reproducing inequality that
454 inevitably hurts those in the minority group of a particular issue.

455 Parenti (1997, p.5) stated that “mainstream media faithfully reflect the dominant ideology
456 seldom straying into territory that may cause discomfort to those who hold political and
457 economic power.” The dominant ideology around domestic violence is that men are perpetrators
458 (Boxall et al., 2020; Migliaccio, 2001; Tsui, 2014). It is argued that acknowledgement of male
459 victimisation is controversial because statistically most domestic violence is disproportionately
460 perpetrated by men (Loseke et al., 2005). As such, overreporting of male victimisation or overly
461 sympathetic news articles of male victimisation are likely to come under criticism by readers and
462 result in a loss of revenue. This may reflect why news reporting of male victimisation is
463 considerably less frequent, in addition to men being less likely to report their own victimisations
464 (Hine et al., 2022; Lysova et al., 2022; Migliaccio, 2001; Roebuck et al., 2023; Scott-Storey et
465 al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2022). Domestic violence is discussed and recognised as a woman’s
466 issue, but discourses need to consider the experiences of male victims as well. Legitimising
467 men’s experiences of victimisation does not discredit nor minimise women’s experiences as
468 victims. The selective reporting of male victimisation, however, is likely to influence public
469 perception of this important social issue, which is a form of manipulation that does marginalise
470 men as victims of DV.

471 According to Shoemaker, (2006, p.105) “news is a social construct, a thing, a
472 commodity, whereas newsworthiness is a cognitive construct, a mental judgment.”

473 Newsworthiness could also be considered more of a collective understanding based on the social
474 values of a given society. Journalists are seen as gatekeepers, assessing what is relevant and
475 significant enough to be reported on or what may be deemed harmful and thusly omitted
476 (Shoemaker, 2006). Logistically, only a small proportion of events can be reported on, so
477 specific factors are considered when determining a story's newsworthiness (Fleming et al.,
478 2006). These factors include "conflict or controversy; prominence; novelty, oddity or the
479 unusual; sensationalism; importance, impact, or consequences; interest; timeliness; and
480 proximity" (Shoemaker & Mayfield, 1987, p. 10).

481 Shoemaker & Cohen (2012) proposed that there are two overarching predictors of
482 newsworthiness: deviance and social significance. Deviance, in the context of newsworthiness, is
483 viewed as a trait that sets people, behaviours, ideas, or events apart from what is socially
484 acceptable or normative and is indicated by novelty, oddity, conflict, controversy, and
485 sensationalism (Eilders, 2006; Grosholz & Kubrin, 2007; Pritchard & Hughes, 1997). Research
486 has shown that perceptions of deviance and crime are moderated by gender, meaning the gender
487 of the perpetrator can moderate how severely the behaviour is perceived and punished (Herzog &
488 Oreg, 2008; Piquero, 2001; Tittle et al., 2003). Social significance is broader in that it addresses
489 how an event has an impact on a social system locally and globally, with respect to political,
490 economic, cultural, and public significance (Shoemaker, 2006). Per Shoemaker (2006), coverage
491 is not solely determined by newsworthiness, but events that are both high in deviance and social
492 significance are more likely to be reported on.

493 Intimate partner violence should be considered high in both deviance and social
494 significance. DV contravenes normative conceptions of healthy relationships and has a
495 significant impact on the victims. At a societal level, domestic violence has been described as a
496 pandemic, affecting children, families, and society as a whole. Although improving, historically

497 male victimisation has been seen as an outlier. An example of this derives from the way that the
498 majority of DV stories reported on are cases of male-perpetrated domestic violence against
499 women (Muroyi, 2016; Scharrer, 2008). The scarcity of reporting demonstrates that male
500 victimisation does not meet the threshold of newsworthiness compared to other crime stories and
501 thereby obscures the issue from public awareness (Grosholz & Kubrin, 2007). This reinforces
502 public perceptions that male victimisation is an anomaly and in turn further marginalises male
503 victims and their experiences (Davis & Dossetor, 2010; Fortunato & Martin, 2016; McCombs &
504 Shaw, 1972). The dominant discourse on DV in the media focus on the experiences of women,
505 i.e. portrayals and discourses regarding violence against women or on men as perpetrators. It
506 should be noted that this literature is seminal work, key to the methodology and theoretical
507 framework of this thesis due to a lack of prior research focusing on portrayals of male victims in
508 the media. Instead, the broader, overarching seminal literature used was applied to the issue of
509 men being DV victims.

510 **2.5 Representations of Men**

511 According to Turnbull (2020, p. 44) “every time you encounter a representation of
512 anything, you evaluate its limitations and then weigh up its usefulness in terms of the credibility
513 gap between what the representation suggests and your own experience or assumptions.”
514 Discourses on men are represented in specific ways purely based on the link between their
515 biological sex and societal notions of gender (Kimmel & Aronson, 2016; Luther et al., 2018).
516 Luther et al. (2018) asserted that men in Western contexts have historically maintained
517 positionality as the dominant gender with specific notions of masculinity stemming from this
518 place of power. As such, representations of men and masculinity reflect what Foucault would
519 refer to as a discursive formation (Hall et al., 2013). This refers to when a specific concept, like
520 masculinity, is represented across a variety of mediums in a recognisable style and pattern. This

521 is particularly demonstrated in the way all forms of media represent, or frame, men within these
522 scripts (Luther et al., 2018).

523 In popular cultural depictions, men are often portrayed as: “gallant and macho...[playing]
524 roles as pioneers, western heroes, thieves, pirates, and war heroes” (Lont, 1995 p.265 as cited in
525 Luther et al., 2018). Luther et al. (2018, p.180) stated that within media representations “Two
526 dimensions exist for males... They are either sex-crazed and “manly” or comical and inept.”
527 Framing men in the media in particular ways, like those above, does not explicitly say “this is
528 what a real man looks like” yet influences normative perceptions of masculinity (Bicchieri,
529 2017). Specific discursive formulations regarding men exist with the underlying implication that
530 men are not men if they are shown as sensitive, weak, vulnerable, and least of all, a victim.
531 Representations of female victims are commonplace across all forms of media; men, however,
532 are rarely depicted as such (Luther et al., 2018).

533 There is minimal research available on how the news represents male victims of DV. The
534 main search terms and search strategies that were utilised to explore the existing literature can be
535 found in Appendix C. One thesis explored the media representations of men and women on
536 issues of domestic violence in Zimbabwean newspapers (Muroyi, 2016). This thesis, however,
537 was more focused on the positive, biased representations of men as offenders (blameless) and
538 negative representations of women as victims (blamed), not on the experiences of male victims.
539 Hines and Douglas (2010) presented a conference paper titled *Media Portrayals of Intimate*
540 *Partner Violence Against Men: Do they Reflect Reality? How Do They Impact Helpseeking*
541 *Experiences?* Hines and Douglas conducted a comparative analysis of news article headlines
542 covering both female DV victims and male DV victims. They found that when females were the
543 DV victim, the term domestic violence was prominent in the headline while domestic violence
544 was not mentioned at all in the headlines regarding male victims of DV. Their paper also

545 identified that public outcry was considerably higher when a female was assaulted (for example,
546 by being *punched*) on a reality television show, as compared to when a man was assaulted on the
547 same show. Hines and Douglas also demonstrated how men abused by their female counterparts
548 on American sitcoms were considered funny, acceptable, and in many cases, justified.

549 More recently a thematic analysis study was conducted by Hanson and Lysova (2021)
550 looking at news articles that portrayed male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner
551 homicide. The study was not published at the time this project commenced but is very closely
552 related to what this project is also investigating. The key differences were the methodology, the
553 dataset, and the investigation of fatal domestic violence only. Nevertheless, one of the findings
554 were similar to the findings of this project. Despite approaching the investigations differently,
555 one of the themes was “doubting the victim (who is the victim?)” (p. 9) which also married up
556 with victim precipitation (victim-blaming). The other theme was victim recognition ‘he didn’t
557 deserve this’ – this finding, however, was less prevalent in the findings of the current study. This
558 finding relayed characterisations of men as genuine “victims of a serious crime rather than
559 victims of their actions” (p.12). This is in contrast to the first theme where doubt was cast on
560 whether the man was a victim.

561 The focus of the current project is to how are men represented in Australian news articles.
562 Critical discourse analysis will be applied to a sample of Australian news articles reporting on
563 incidents of domestic violence towards male victims to investigate whether portrayals of male
564 victims in Australia mirror contemporary research.

565

566 **2.6 Critical Discourse Analysis**

567 Critical Discourse Analysis is both a methodology and a theoretical framework that is
568 used to critically explore how language is a social process (Fairclough, 1989). Language can be

569 used to perpetuate and maintain inequitable ideologies which reinforce power imbalances
570 between social actors (Fairclough, 1989; van Leeuwen, 2008). Power, in social terms, is the
571 ability of individuals to influence, control or shape behaviour, decisions and outcomes based on a
572 social standing (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). More importantly, power plays a crucial role in
573 determining access to resources, decision-making processes, and the distribution of privileges
574 and opportunities (Fairclough, 1989; Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Fairclough (1989) states that
575 language occupies a substantial role in generating, upholding, and altering social dynamics of
576 power. A key goal of critical research is to highlight and reveal social wrongs, such as injustice,
577 inequality, racism, sexism, and so forth (Fairclough, 2009). Discourse and society have a
578 reciprocal effect on one another; language is shaped by society, but it also shapes society through
579 ideologies, identities, and beliefs (Fairclough, 1992). Language, specifically meaning, is socially
580 constructed by individuals which can vary broadly from culture to culture (Burr & Dick, 2017b).
581 In essence, what may be seen as sexist or derogatory in one culture, may be perfectly innocent
582 and harmless in another culture. Weiss and Wodak (2003, p. 14) advise that “language is not
583 powerful on its own” but “gains power by the use powerful people make of it.”

584 As identified earlier in this thesis, societal norms and gender roles often perpetuate the
585 belief that men should be strong and immune from DV as victims, influencing how male victims’
586 experiences are perceived and communicated about. CDA can identify how power dynamics
587 manipulate discourse about male DV victimisation, in terms of hidden assumptions, ideologies,
588 and biases entrenched in language. It also encourages the critical questioning of narratives and to
589 explore marginalised perspectives, such as DV is solely a women’s issue and can assist in
590 highlighting overlooked experiences of male victimisation. Additionally, CDA can highlight
591 underlying beliefs that might downplay or dismiss male victims’ experiences due to societal
592 notions about masculinity. This critically driven theory provides the tools to examine how

593 language is used to legitimatise the marginalisation of male victims; specifically, how language
594 can be used to silence male victims or portray them as the exception. Men are typically seen as
595 the keepers of power; therefore, certain ideologies may dictate that men are ineligible to be
596 victims or marginalised. This in turn can inform and challenge conversations about masculinity,
597 gender roles, and the need for inclusive support for all victims of DV.

598 As CDA was developed to investigate complex social phenomena critically, it is a well-
599 suited methodology to explore how male victims of DV are being represented in news reporting
600 (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This project utilises two brands of CDA, Wodak's *Discourse-*
601 *Historical Approach* (DHA) and van Leeuwen's *Representation of Social Actors*. DHA is
602 interested in identifying ideologies that establish and maintain unequal power relations in
603 discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). Ideology is highlighted in DHA, which Wodak and Reisigl
604 (2017, p.88) defined as "an (often) one-sided perspective of world view composed of related
605 mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, and evaluations, which is shared by
606 members of a specific social group." A relevant example is gender ideology which describes
607 beliefs about what roles men and women should fulfil in society (Saguy et al., 2021). Ideologies
608 are often employed as a means for prevailing dominant groups to maintain a status quo of
609 unequal power relations (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). DHA seeks to reveal ideologies that
610 perpetuate dominance while acknowledging the social and historical factors that were complicit
611 in the evolution of said ideologies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). Ideologies can become ingrained in
612 the fabric of society that it takes a long time and considerable effort to change them. As such,
613 language is only as powerful as the value people assign to it, and people and organisations in
614 positions of power, like the media, can make changes to discourses that shape public perceptions
615 and beliefs about a given issue (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017).

616 Reisigl and Wodak (2017) described DHA as a socio-philosophical approach that is
617 comprised of three types of critique. Firstly, there is the discourse-immanent critique which
618 seeks to explore problems within a discourse. Then, there is the socio-diagnostic critique which
619 identifies manipulation and persuasion in the discourse, and draws upon contextual (cultural,
620 historical, and social) knowledge and theories to interpret it. Lastly, there is the prospective
621 critique which allows the researcher to inform future best practices that evolve from the findings
622 (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). This project utilised DHA to examine how male victims of domestic
623 violence are represented in news articles by: analysing news articles for dominant, concerning
624 trends or themes as asked by the research questions (discourse-immanent critique); unpacking
625 the historical and social contexts that developed and maintained these trends and themes where
626 applicable (socio-diagnostic critique); and finally, making recommendations to improve future
627 news reporting on male victims of domestic violence (prospective critique). To assist in the
628 discourse-immanent critique and answering of the research question, van Leeuwen (2008)
629 provided a set of “tools” or categories that allow a researcher to identify how social actors are
630 represented in discourse. Van Leeuwen’s approach seeks “to draw up a socio-semantic inventory
631 of how social actors can be represented and to establish the sociological and critical relevance”
632 (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 23).

633

634

Chapter 3: Method

635 3.1 Approach to Inquiry

636 This project was approached from a social constructionism perspective, which
637 argues that individuals understand the world and all that encompasses it by way of language and
638 how it is used to represent people, places, events, and objects through the production of
639 discourses and systems of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Burr & Dick, 2017a). Young and
640 Collin (2004, p.375) state that social constructionism “emphasizes that the social and
641 psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction.” For
642 social constructionists, there is no single truth, and it is recognised that there will always be
643 different perspectives, although particular perspectives will emerge as dominant and indicative of
644 the prevailing politics of the context in question (Burr & Dick, 2017). According to Willig
645 (2013), language is constructive and how we categorise research concepts through language
646 influence how we interpret and perceive the research findings. Thus, researchers should be
647 critically aware of how they are using language within and through their research endeavours.
648 This awareness forms part of the researcher’s reflexivity, whereby one must acknowledge their
649 subjectivity and its influence on the researcher as an interpretivist (Braun & Clarke, 2019;
650 Willig, 2013).

651 It is for this reason that researchers must declare their theoretical positions and values so
652 that their interpretations can be understood accordingly, as I have disclosed in the *Introduction*.
653 Additionally, van Dijk (1996) states that meaning is derived from culture, and language on its
654 own cannot produce meaning without the influence of culture. The meanings I attached, as the
655 researcher, to the findings of the data were influenced by specific cultural beliefs and
656 understandings as a Caucasian, cisgender, female American immigrant who naturalised to
657 Australia. Additionally, my past experiences as a victim and bystander to both male and female-

658 perpetrated domestic violence also may have influenced my interpretations of the data. I
659 personally have witnessed several instances of female-perpetrated domestic violence against
660 their partners through means of coercive control, as well as physical, financial and emotional
661 abuse. Despite the biases I hold, as a scientist, I recognise a need to maintain academic rigour in
662 my approach. I did this by recording my reflections within the spreadsheet I used to analyse the
663 data. At the end of each article that provided enough detail for a deep analysis, I reflected on my
664 thoughts about the article. Some articles were simply too short and lacking in detail to record any
665 significant reflections. Thereafter, I would debrief with my supervisors about my analyses and
666 reflections. They reviewed the articles and then my observations and reflections for each. My
667 supervisors challenged my interpretations of the data where it seemed evident the data was not
668 driving my conclusions. They also highlighted additional explanations for the finding that I had
669 not considered due to the lens I was viewing the data through. Appropriate amendments were
670 made upon further consideration of the feedback given by my supervisors.

671 **3.2 Data Collection and Sources**

672 This qualitative study aimed to critically analyse online news articles to identify the
673 current representations of Australian male victims of DV. The articles were obtained from 2018-
674 2021 from the six most subscribed Australian newspapers (see Table 1 on page 25) and analysed
675 using *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA). The source of data for this project were archival news
676 articles, specifically articles made available online. Online news articles were chosen instead of
677 print articles for two reasons: first, practicality. Articles were easily accessible via the Factiva
678 database and required no additional subscriptions. The second reason is that the readership of
679 online news in the digital age is higher than print subscriptions (see Table 1) and therefore the
680 impact of online news is greater (*Roy Morgan, 2019; Newspaper Influence, 2015; Gorvett,*
681 *2020*). Additionally, online news articles can be shared with non-subscribers through social

682 media networks like Facebook and Twitter, with an increased reach beyond subscribers alone
 683 (Bowd, 2016). The data were collected via the Factiva database to which the University of
 684 Southern Queensland holds a subscription. A search was undertaken specifically for articles that
 685 met the following criteria: the news report covered a domestic violence incident in an intimate
 686 partner context (or as implied in, or inferred from, the article); the victim of the incident is a
 687 man; and the article was published online in one of the six newspapers in Table 1, between
 688 01/01/2018 and 31/08/2021.

689 **Table 1**
 690 *Readership of Top Australian Newspapers (2019)*

Newspaper	Paper Readership	Online Readership	Paper + Online
Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)	871,000	3,745,000	4,125,000
The Age	738,000	2,503,000	2,782,000
Herald Sun	1,155,000	1,919,000	2,729,000
Daily Telegraph	1,143,000	1,773,000	2,625,000
The Australian	851,000	1,824,000	2,421,000
Courier-Mail	874,000	1,077,000	1,748,000

691
 692 *Note.* Adapted from Roy Morgan (2019).

693 Factiva was searched using the listed Sources and Keywords, in Table 2 (page 26), to
 694 locate articles that matched the specified criteria. Despite intimate partner violence being the
 695 preferred terminology in academia, a Factiva article search using “intimate partner violence”
 696 returned 51 hits and “victim” AND “intimate partner violence” only returned eight hits. The
 697 returned articles found using intimate partner violence did not meet the criteria and instead
 698 focused on government or organizational views or policy matters, not specific cases. As such, the
 699 terminology ‘intimate partner violence’ was excluded from the keyword search as it was not
 700 encompassing the data needed for the project. Although the keywords were quite prescribed and
 701 narrow, this was done strategically to limit the results; a search of domestic violence alone

702 yielded too many results to work with for a master’s level project. These keywords were
 703 purposefully selected to target the phenomenon under investigation, specifically how men are
 704 represented as victims within the context of domestic violence.

705 **Table 2**

706 *Factiva Source Name*

Factiva Sources
The Sydney Morning Herald – Online
The Age - Online
Herald Sun - Online (Melbourne, Australia)
Daily Telegraph (Online) - Sydney
The Australian – Online
Courier Mail – Online (Brisbane, Australia)

707

708 **Table 3**

709 *Keywords for Search*

Keywords (# of hits)
"woman charged" AND "domestic" (48)
man abused by partner (0)
"man dead" AND "domestic" (18)
"man stabbed" AND "domestic" (12)
"man killed" AND "domestic" (9)
"victim" AND "domestic" (1,939)
"victim" AND "domestic violence" OR "domestic abuse" (1,237)
Total: 3,253 articles

710

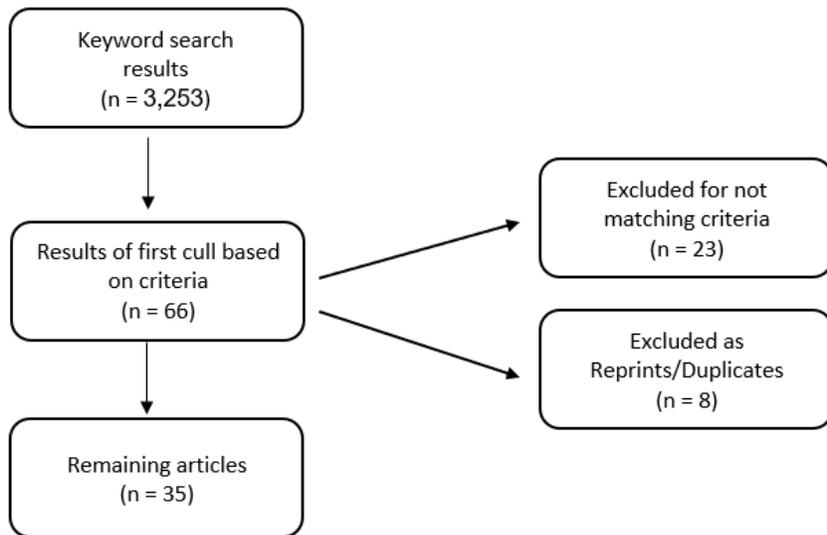
711 When conducting the search in Factiva, there were 3,253 articles that I found using the
 712 specified search terms. Referring to Figure 1, p.28, all but 66 articles met all three criteria (as
 713 addressed above). If the articles did not meet all three criteria, they were excluded from the
 714 dataset. Thirty-one of those 66 articles were found to either be a duplicate (8) or they met the
 715 criteria, but contextually they did not fit the criteria after consulting with supervisors (23) (i.e.,
 716 most of these articles were in relation to the court hearings, not the actual incident). As this was a

717 master's level project, 35 articles for a qualitative CDA study were deemed sufficient to
718 eliminate those articles on the court hearings. The articles were then stored on Google Drive to
719 be referred to as required and imported into NVivo. Nvivo was, however, only used to conduct a
720 content analysis on the news article headlines while the remaining analysis was carried out
721 between the article and the spreadsheet using the framework previously outlined. The list of
722 included news articles has been provided in Appendix D with each news article assigned
723 assigned a numeral; henceforth, articles will be referenced according to the numeral assigned to
724 it.

725

726 **Figure 1**

727 *Inclusion/Exclusion Flowchart*



728

729

730

731

732

733 **3.3 Data Analysis**

734 To create a framework of analysis, I used van Leeuwen's Representation of Social Actors
735 as well as concepts from other methods as justified below. Van Leeuwen (2008, p.40) stated that
736 "Social actors can be represented in terms of their unique identity by being *nominated*, or in
737 terms of identities and functions they share with others (*categorization*)". As such, the specific
738 tools being used for this project are Nomination and Categorisation (see Appendix A).

739 **Nomination** is the way individuals are named within a discourse. Individuals can be referred to
740 by their last name alone (*formalisation*); first and last name (*semi-formalisation*); first name only
741 (*informalisation*), by kinship, titles or ranks (*titulation*) and lastly, by names made up to
742 represent someone (*pseudo-titles*). **Categorisation** breaks down into **Functionalization**
743 (referring to someone by role or occupation); **Identification** which is comprised of *classification*
744 (age, gender, class, race, religion), *relational* (referring to the relationships between individuals),
745 and *physical identification* (representing someone by their physical features); and **Appraisalment**
746 (individuals are 'appraised' or judged by the author within the discourse in such a way that
747 portrays them either positively or negatively).

748 The following categories were also recorded: **Headline; Newspaper; Article Length;**
749 **Incident Type; Location; and Framing** (*focus, foregrounding, backgrounding, omission, and*
750 *connotations*). **Headline** was recorded as a means of organising the data but they are also "the
751 most prominent elements of news reports" (Smitherman & Dijk, 1988, p. 221). Without a
752 captivating headline, most articles will go unread; therefore, headlines play a vital role in
753 newspaper readership. Further, Hines and Douglas (2010) found that the terminology 'domestic
754 violence' was rarely used in headlines when the victim was a man. This project also investigated
755 whether similar patterns exist in Australian news. **Newspaper** was recorded for demographic
756 purposes to identify if there were any particular trends between the different types of newspapers
757 (broadsheet versus tabloid, right vs left-leaning). **Article length** was included to demonstrate the

758 newsworthiness of a story; the longer the article length, the more newsworthy a topic is
759 considered (Boukes et al., 2022; Elorza, 2014; Miller, 1997). **Incident Type** was included to
760 identify if there were any prominent trends in reporting certain types of incidents (stabbing,
761 poisoning, etc) and mortality rates; and, whether those reported on mirror prior findings of
762 female-perpetrated DV (Boxall et al. 2020; Puzanchera et al., 2021). **Location** was used to
763 identify if there were any geographical trends in the articles that were selected for reporting as
764 previous research has identified DV is more prevalent in lower socioeconomic communities
765 (Davies et al., 2015; Rennison & Planty, 2003). Finally, the **Framing** of articles was captured by
766 looking for instances of *focus*, *foregrounding*, *backgrounding*, *omission*, and *connotations*.
767 These concepts are basic tools of CDA that look at how people and concepts are positioned
768 within discourses and where reproductions of power, inequality and manipulation take place
769 (Huckin, 1997). *Focus* was a category I developed to understand who the main social actor was
770 in each article and how the victim was referred to linguistically. This category looked at which
771 words were used the most to describe the victim, but also how frequently the victim was referred
772 to compared to the perpetrator. This provided an understanding of which social actor (victim or
773 perpetrator) had the greatest importance and prominence in the story (Ahlstrand, 2019; Baker,
774 2012b, 2012a; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). *Foregrounding/Backgrounding* refers to the way a
775 discourse is written where some aspects are emphasised or positioned early in a discourse
776 (foregrounded), while others are less prominent (backgrounded) or not included at all
777 (*Omission*). Huckin (1997, p. 82) states that “the ultimate form of backgrounding is omission -
778 actually leaving certain things completely out of a text.” Finally, *Connotation* is how something
779 is said, written or portrayed to convey more than one meaning, interpreted through social,
780 cultural, and personal knowledge (Chandler, 2021; Huckin, 1997; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

781 These specific categories were chosen to create a framework that allowed me to critically
782 explore and make visible how men are represented as victims within news reporting. Using this
783 framework, I identified how male victims of DV are portrayed within a selection of news
784 articles. This approach allowed me to explore how narratives of victimisation are presented to
785 the public through news reporting.

786 The data analysis began with the discourse-immanent critique phase utilising the
787 framework outlined above via a spreadsheet (see Appendix B) to methodically analyse each
788 article, looking at the following categories: **Headline; Newspaper; Word Count; Incident**
789 (Type of DV Incident, Location mentioned); **Nomination** (formalisation, semi-formalisation,
790 informalisation, titulation, and pseudo-titles); **Categorisation** (functionalisation, identification
791 (classification, relational, and physical) and appraisalment); **Framing** (focus, foregrounding,
792 backgrounding, omission, and connotations). I reviewed each article looking for relevant
793 information that related to each of the categories listed above. I and copied direct quotes from the
794 articles into the table with the relevant information that corresponded to each category. I also
795 recorded my reflections after I analysed each article. For Headlines, a content analysis was
796 conducted using NVivo to identify what words were most used which allowed key themes to be
797 identified which can be found in 4.2 Headline.

798 I then conducted a second pass, this time looking across all articles, one category at a time
799 with the intention to keep a narrower focus on each specific category. For example, I opened
800 each article up looking for details specific to **Nomination** so that I could double-check that my
801 initial assessment of this category was still the same. Where necessary, any amendments or
802 additions made to the spreadsheet were under the relevant article and category. I did the second
803 pass to ensure that I had not missed anything in my first review of each category. There was a lot
804 of information to consider in each article and how it fit into the different categories under

805 investigation. I felt that completing a second pass while looking at one category at a time
806 allowed me to be more rigorous. After I was satisfied that my initial findings matched the
807 subsequent review, I evaluated the results looking for commonalities and patterns within the
808 data. This process provided an opportunity to discover what trends existed between articles and
809 develop a broader understanding of how men are generally represented as victims of DV in news
810 reporting. The findings of each category are outlined and discussed in Chapter 4: Findings and
811 Discussion.

812 After completing the discourse-immanent critique, (as outlined above), I began carrying out
813 the process of Wodak's second critique, the socio-diagnostic critique. I reflected on what
814 possible historical, social, or cultural factors may have influenced the patterns and themes found
815 across the data and reviewed relevant literature to explain the findings.. Not all categories had
816 relevant literature to my research questions so not all categories had this critique carried out as
817 elaborately as others. For example, under *Incident Type*, I investigated what types of violent
818 incidents were most likely to be reported on when men were victims of DV. The rationale for
819 this was to explore if the types of incidents reported were more uncommon, novel, or odd and
820 consider if that made the article more newsworthy.

821 Finally, I completed the final phase of Wodak's DHA, which is the prospective critique. I
822 chose to position this critique in the *Conclusion* as this is where recommendations are usually
823 found. In this critique, I used the knowledge I gained from the data to make recommendations to
824 inform reporting practices. These recommendations are largely not unique and have already been
825 suggested in the DV, media, and news reporting space. Previous recommendations have been
826 predominantly for the representations of women but would also improve representations of male
827 victims.

828

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

829 As previously mentioned, Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach looks at discourses to
830 provide three distinct critiques: the discourse-immanent critique which seeks to explore problems
831 within a discourse; the socio-diagnostic critique which uses contextual knowledge and theories to
832 interpret and understand the problematic discourses; and lastly, the prospective critique which
833 offers up best practice recommendations to address problematic discourses. An adaptation of van
834 Leeuwen (2008) *Representations of Social Actors* was used as the framework for the initial
835 discourse analysis and form the foundation for the three critiques. This section will comprise the
836 combined discourse-immanent and socio-diagnostic critiques, as well as a discussion of these
837 findings. These critiques will be integrated to allow for a comprehensive understanding of each
838 category. I will unpack each category adapted from van Leeuwen and where appropriate, reveal
839 the prominent trends and problems found in these data (discourse-immanent critique) and
840 simultaneously explore the contextual relevance of these findings supported by existing research
841 (socio-diagnostic critique). The critiques could be written separately however each category is
842 distinctly unique; therefore, combining these critiques allowed for better cohesiveness and
843 contextual understanding. The final critique, prospective critique, will be found later in the
844 Conclusion, in Chapter 5.

845 **4.1 Newspaper**

846 The newspapers selected for data collection were based on overall readership and subscriptions.
847 This provides context to the narratives being presented about male victims of DV to the largest
848 proportion of Australians. As shown in Table 4 (below), of the six newspapers, three of them
849 maintain their headquarters in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), one in Brisbane, Queensland
850 (QLD), and two in Melbourne, Victoria (VIC) (*Australian Newspaper Directory*, n.d.). As the
851 table below shows, more articles were published in Sydney than in any other city. Given that

852 NSW is home to 32% of Australia’s population, it makes sense why it has more newspapers and
 853 a large readership (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Brisbane came in with the second-
 854 highest number of articles published about male victims of DV. The Australian Bureau of
 855 Statistics (2021) estimated the population of Brisbane to be around 2.5 million, whereas
 856 Melbourne had a population of 4.9 million and Sydney at 5.2 million. Only one article came out
 857 of Melbourne while its population is almost the same as Sydney’s, and double that of Brisbane.

858 **Table 4**
 859 *Newspaper Demographics*

Name of Newspaper	Newspaper Headquarters	Format of Newspaper*	Political Leanings**	# of articles
The Daily Telegraph	Sydney, NSW	tabloid newspaper	Right	18
The Courier Mail	Brisbane, QLD	tabloid newspaper	Right-Centre	10
The Sydney Morning Herald	Sydney, NSW	compact/broadsheet-quality newspaper	Left-Centre	6
The Age	Melbourne, VIC	compact/broadsheet-quality newspaper	Left-Centre	1
Herald Sun	Melbourne, VIC	tabloid newspaper	Right-Centre	0
The Australian	Sydney, NSW	broadsheet	Right-Centre	0
Total				35

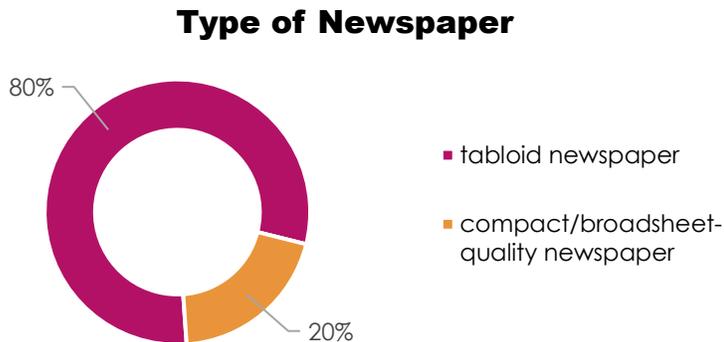
860 *Note.* Paper World, (n.d.)*, *Media Bias/Fact Check News* (n.d.)**

861 Half of the newspapers are classified as tabloid newspapers, while the remaining three are
 862 either broadsheet or compact broadsheet papers (Paper World, n.d.). The data revealed that
 863 domestic violence stories about male victims were 80% more likely to be published by tabloid
 864 papers (see Figure 2, below), specifically the Courier Mail and The Daily Telegraph.

865

866 **Figure 2**

867 *Newspaper Format Breakdown*



868

869 The man quoted as the ‘Godfather of tabloids’, Generoso Pope Jr, once observed the
870 behaviour of bystanders at a traffic accident and realised that blood and gore are “what people
871 want to see” (Vitek, 2008, p. 52). Tabloids have a reputation for printing sensational and
872 scandalous stories, particularly the private lives of individuals (personalization), and overall,
873 tainting the quality of news reporting (Skovsgaard, 2014). According to Skovsgaard (2014,
874 p.202), tabloid papers are considered soft news and have “a more extensive use of narratives and
875 more limited use of an analytical mode, as well as a greater emphasis on personal and human-
876 interest stories.” The more blood, sex, drugs, and overall scandal, the more likely a story will be
877 printed in a tabloid paper. Overall, stories printed in tabloids are often not taken as seriously as
878 those printed in broadsheet formats (Bird, 2008; Örnebring & Jönsson, 2004; Skovsgaard, 2014).
879 The research on tabloid papers and tabloidization is based on hardcopy newspaper reporting
880 practices. Given that this project focused on articles obtained online, there was a concern about
881 whether the same tactics would be applied to online articles. Research is showing, however, that
882 online news is increasingly becoming more tabloidized than print papers (Burggraaff & Trilling,
883 2020; Georgetown University, 2009). It is arguable that that tabloids are not necessarily seen as
884 hard news; this is problematic in that victimisation should be important, regardless of how

885 scandalous or novel the incident was, to be recognised across all types of media. Accordingly, as
886 80% of the articles were published in a Tabloid paper, it would appear that male victimisation is
887 not seen as a hard news issue.

888 Finally, the political leanings of the newspapers were predominantly right-centre to right,
889 with only two papers being considered left-centre; however, only seven articles were published
890 between these two papers (*Media Bias/Fact Check News*, n.d.; Paper World, n.d.). The articles
891 themselves were not determined as left or right but rather the newspaper they were published in is
892 known to present a particular political stance based on ownership, established by independent
893 media research (*Media Bias/Fact Check News*, n.d.) What these leanings represent is a set of
894 political ideologies which are “ideas, beliefs, values, and opinions, exhibiting a recurring pattern,
895 that [provide] action for public policy making in an attempt to justify, explain, contest, or change
896 the social and political arrangements and processes of a political community” (Freedon, 2001,
897 para. 1). Typically, left-leaning political ideologies are associated with “ideas such as freedom,
898 equality, fraternity, rights, progress, reform, and internationalism” (Heywood, 2015, p. 119). It
899 is expected that male victimisation would fit within the scope of liberal/leftist media news values
900 given the left ideology favours social justice and change.

901 Politically right-leaning beliefs are usually more associated with those individuals whose
902 ideological beliefs are typically socially conservative (Busch, 2012). Social conservatives are
903 more likely to belong to religious affiliations that hold certain gender beliefs about men and
904 women (‘Religion and Social Issues’, 2017). Political leanings of newspapers influence how
905 stories are written; these leanings reflect ideological beliefs that can alter the way an issue is
906 perceived and represented in a news article. As Australia was colonised by the British, Christian
907 beliefs were embedded into society during colonisation. Other major world religions, however,

908 also exist in Australia, all of which bring their views on gender roles and expectations (*Religions*
909 *in Australia [ABS], 2017*).

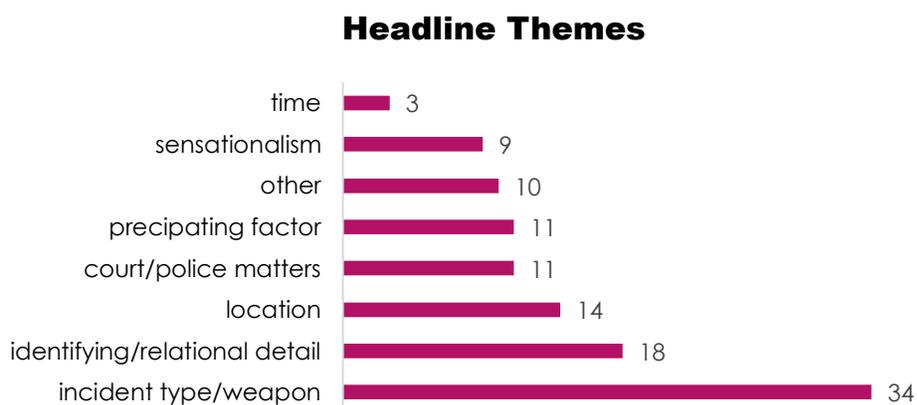
910 Historically, religions have typically maintained particular norms that women are to be
911 submissive whilst men maintained a position of dominance in relationships (McClintock, 2021;
912 Perales & Bouma, 2019; Sudarso et al., 2019). Perales and Bouma (2019) found that a Victorian
913 Government report revealed faith-based practices, beliefs and attitudes contributed to the
914 domestic violence issues under investigation. For example, the researchers highlighted that
915 religious membership was sometimes a barrier to women seeking help in domestic violence
916 situations. Due to religious beliefs, DV may be seen as an issue to be handled between husband
917 and wife or between families, not the law (Perales & Bouma, 2019). Domestic violence seems
918 more socially normative to occur against women and less so against men. The link between
919 conservative, religious beliefs, political leanings, and gender role expectations now becomes a
920 little clearer. If a DV story is reported by an Australian newspaper that maintains a right-leaning,
921 socially conservative ideology, it is conceivable that those ideologies may influence how the
922 story is portrayed to the public. This may entail minimising or downplaying the actual issue of
923 DV against the male victim in favour of portraying him in a normatively masculine way.
924 According to a Queensland Government Factsheet, “the media play an important role in society
925 as a source of information, but also as a “watchdog” or scrutiniser” (Queensland Parliament,
926 2015). It is not clear how the media can play that role fairly or objectively if there is an inherent
927 bias built into news corporations’ ideologies and reporting practices. Additionally, the individual
928 journalist’s role perception and personal ideological beliefs may also influence the spin that is
929 used within the news article (Scherr & Baugut, 2016).

930 **4.2 Headline**

931 A content analysis was conducted on the 35 headlines and the themes that were identified
 932 can be found in Figure 3. It should be noted that several themes were identified for most
 933 headlines. The primary themes were *incident type/weapon* (words like ‘stabbing/stabbed’ (12)
 934 ‘murder’ (10)); *identifying/relational detail* were words that often were used to describe the
 935 victim and perpetrator (‘woman’ (18), ‘man’ (14), ‘wife’ (4) ‘boyfriend’/‘husband’/‘partner’
 936 (9)); *location* entailed either geographical location or location within the home where the
 937 incident occurred (‘bayside’(1), ‘Coogee’ (1), St Marys (1), bed (1)); *court/police matters*
 938 pertained to words that often refer to some legal element of the situation like ‘charged’ (12),
 939 ‘accused’ (4); *precipitating factor* were words that denoted a reason the perpetrator attacked the
 940 victim (‘anger’/ ‘rage’ (3), ‘drinking’/ ‘drunk’ (2)); *other* was assigned to words that did not
 941 have a clear context to assign a theme to (‘put’ (1), ‘told’ (1)); *sensationalism* was words that felt
 942 as if they were included to entice the reader to click on the article (shocking (1), terrorised (1);
 943 and finally, *time* (‘hours’/ ‘night’/ ‘past’(1)).

944 **Figure 3**

945 *Headline Themes*



946

947 The primary theme found in domestic violence headlines was incident type and inclusion
 948 of a weapon, it further validates Generoso Pope Jr and his belief that blood and gore are “what

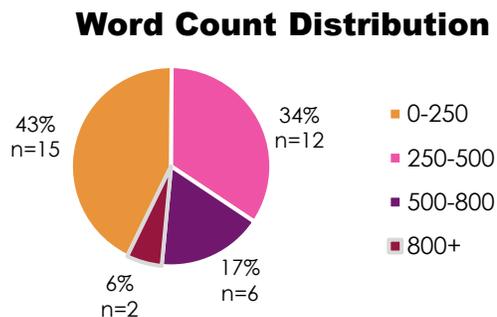
949 people want to see” and these factors serve as a hook to pull people into the story (Vitek, 2008,
950 p. 52). Article headlines are designed to generate interest, or ‘clicks’ in an online environment
951 clicks, therefore, the more enticing and scandalous an article headline is, the more views it will
952 likely get from readers (Kuiken et al., 2017). These findings mirror those of Hines and Douglas
953 (2010) who found that the wording ‘domestic violence’ was scarcely used in headlines where the
954 victim was a male. Out of 35 articles, only two articles used ‘domestic violence’ and one article
955 ‘DV’ in the headline. This is relevant because it seems like journalists avoid using this
956 terminology when referring to male victims and exemplify another way male victimisation is
957 hidden from public discourses. The narrative cannot change if journalists are not prepared to
958 acknowledge these incidents for what they are.

959 **4. Article Length**

960 Per Figure 4, out of the 35 articles, 77% came in at under 500 words per article, with
961 almost half of those being under 250 words. It is argued there are no hard rules for how many
962 words an article must have, but grey literature suggests that a newsworthy article is between 500
963 and 800 words (Boukes et al., 2022; *How Long Are The Most Shared Stories On Social Media?*,
964 2017; *What’s The Average Word Count of Viral Stories?*, 2013; Masini et al., 2018). According
965 to research, more newsworthy stories will be higher in word count and contain more newsworthy
966 factors than found in shorter articles (Boukes et al., 2022; Lee & Wong, 2020). These researchers
967 also found that conflict was one of the most significant newsworthy factors and stories with
968 conflicts tended to have longer article lengths. These findings align with what is already known
969 about news reporting of crime which tends to be disproportionately covered due to the public
970 interest in true crime (Bates, 1999; Lee & Wong, 2020). In the context of this project, the articles
971 from the data were considered short to very short according to Masini et al., (2018) and therefore
972 may reflect a sentiment that stories about men as victims of DV are not newsworthy. Despite

973 other research showing that violence generally captures public interest more and thus should be
974 considered newsworthy, the limited word count of these articles demonstrates that male
975 victimisation is not that newsworthy (Näsi et al., 2021; Potter & Kappeler, 1998; Vitek, 2008).
976 Additionally, low word count means details are being left out or omitted, which was identified
977 by van Dijk (2006) as a form of manipulation and a means of reproducing inequality. The
978 inequality in this sense is that there are other stories of DV published with considerably higher
979 word counts, but not generally the case when the victims are men. This reinforces the social
980 representations that domestic violence is not a significant issue that men experience nor one that
981 readers are likely to consume and empathise with.

982 **Figure 4**
983 *Article Length of News Articles*



984
985 *Note.* ($n = 35$).

986 Conversely, other factors may have influenced the article's length. For example, hard-
987 copy tabloid newspapers are known for being physically smaller in size than broadsheet papers.
988 Given that 80% of the articles in the data set were produced by tabloid news corps, stories may
989 be shorter in article length as a by-product of tabloid-style formatting practices (Andersson,
990 2013; *Differences Between Broadsheet and Tabloid Newspapers*, n.d.). Additionally, when
991 comparing online news and print news, Burggraaff and Trilling (2020) posit that shorter articles

992 may be more a result of “the characteristic of the Internet itself” with stories being written for
993 individuals that are seeking bite-sized pieces of information in a fast-paced world.

994 **4.4 Incident**

995 *4.1.1 Type of DV incident*

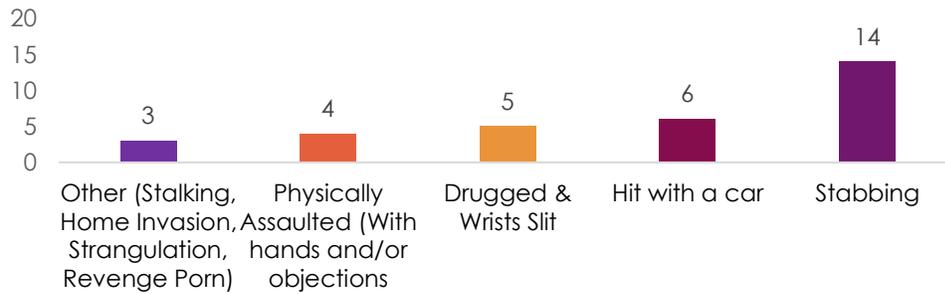
996 There were five main categories of domestic violence incidents. As depicted in Figure 5,
997 the most predominant incident type was stabbing, followed by using a vehicle to hit the victim.
998 There were only a few articles that covered psychological abuse (i.e., stalking, revenge porn),
999 sexual abuse (revenge porn) or financial abuse. Those articles that did relay accounts of non-
1000 physical violence were perpetrated by another male. Most articles only covered incidents of
1001 physical violence which hides from the public the other types of abuse men encounter in intimate
1002 relationships.

1003 Statistical information on the methods women use in their attacks is scarce in an
1004 Australian context. According to Boxall et al. (2020), however, one-third of women in their
1005 findings used a weapon to attack their male partners, specifically “furniture, kitchenware, knives
1006 and other sharp objects, appliances and electronics (for example, a laptop)” (p.7). This data
1007 matches the trends found in crime statistics around women and their choice of weapon when
1008 perpetrating violence at least in a Western context. According to the FBI’s Supplementary
1009 Homicide Reports, women are more likely to use a knife than a personal attack or blunt object as
1010 a weapon (Puzzanchera et al., 2021).

1011 **Figure 5**

1012 *Types of DV Incidents Reported On*

Incident Type in All Articles



1013

1014 Some incident types were repeated due to the same story being printed multiple times.

1015 For example, drugging and slitting wrists were included five times, but all five incidences

1016 pertained to the same case. Only a handful of stories were reported on more than once, but the

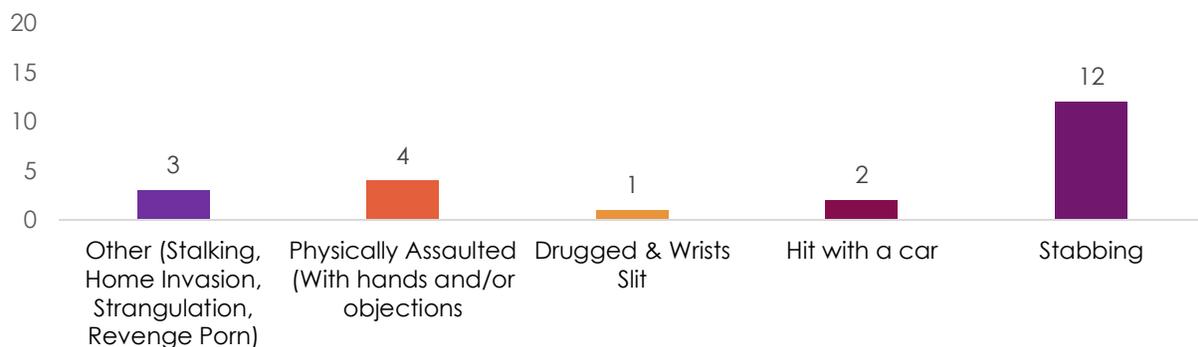
1017 Venn and Musa cases received more coverage than the rest. Therefore, Figure 6 is based on the

1018 number of unique incidents that took place.

1019 **Figure 6**

1020 *Unique Incidents Reported*

Unique Incidents Reported



1021

1022 Another aspect of incident type was the proportion of fatalities versus non-fatalities

1023 reported. There did not appear to be a bias in the reporting regarding mortality because there was

1024 almost an even number of incidents where the victim was pronounced deceased versus non-fatal

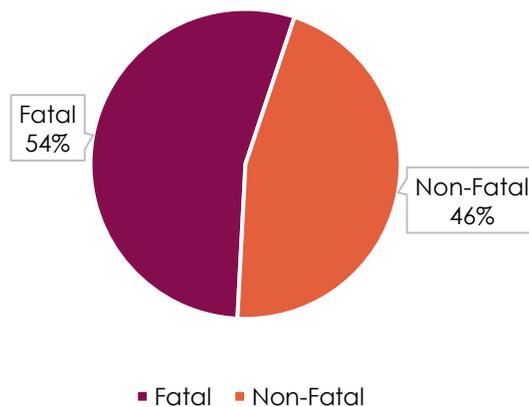
1025 incidents (see Figure 7). However, it was then considered that the majority of domestic violence

1026 is non-fatal. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019) estimated that there were
1027 548,000 men (from the age of 15) who experienced physical or sexual violence, but only about
1028 25 men were killed by an intimate partner between 2014 and 2016. That averages out to be
1029 approximately 12 men killed per year from domestic violence. For a narrower and more specific
1030 incidence rate across a single year, 560 men were hospitalised by their intimate partner in 2014-
1031 2015 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). What these numbers reveal is that the
1032 proportion of non-fatal physical and sexual domestic violence (not taking into account
1033 psychological, financial, and so forth), is much higher than fatal domestic violence. Ergo, with
1034 54% of incidents reported as being fatal, there is an over-reporting (and over-emphasis) on fatal
1035 domestic violence compared to all other forms of domestic violence men experience.

1036 **Figure 7**

1037 *Mortality Rate of Incidents Reported*

Mortality Rate of Incidents Reported



1038

1039 **4.1.2 Location**

1040 The data for the location were collected based on what state (Figure 8), major city (Figure
1041 9), and primary suburbs (Figure 10) which was derived from the locations that were mentioned
1042 in the articles.

1043 **Figure 8**

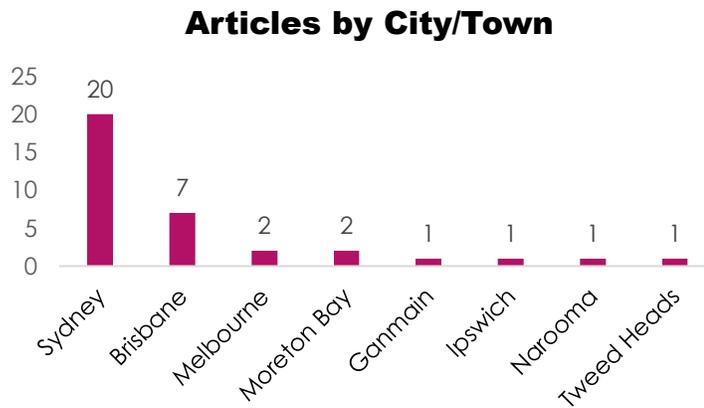
1044 *Articles by Location (State)*



1045

1046 **Figure 9**

1047 *Articles by Location (City/Town)*

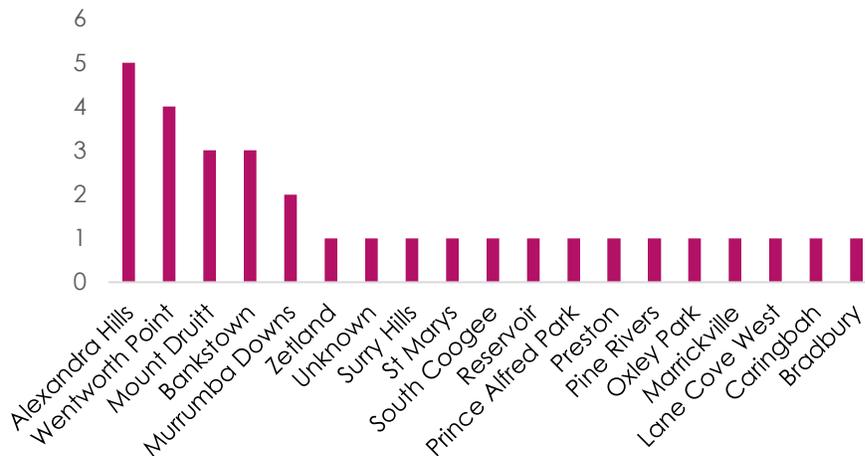


1048

1049 **Figure 10**

1050 *Articles by Location (Suburb)*

Articles by Suburb



1051

1052

Locations that appeared multiple times were usually a result of the same incident being reported

1053

more than once. According to the 2021 Census, Sydney is the most populated city in Australia,

1054

so it is logical that a significant proportion of crime would take place there (Australian Bureau of

1055

Statistics, 2021). Of the 35 incidents, 20 of them took place in the greater Sydney area and as

1056

such New South Wales had the highest proportion of incidents (66%). As outlined in the

1057

Newspaper heading above, a proportion of the locations did fall under the median household

1058

income level for Sydney, which was \$2,212 per week, (excluding suburbs outside of Sydney)

1059

(see Figure 11) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This finding supports previous research

1060

that domestic violence may be more likely to occur in homes with lower incomes (Bell, 2003;

1061

Davies et al., 2015; Rennison & Planty, 2003; Slabbert, 2017). There is no known research

1062

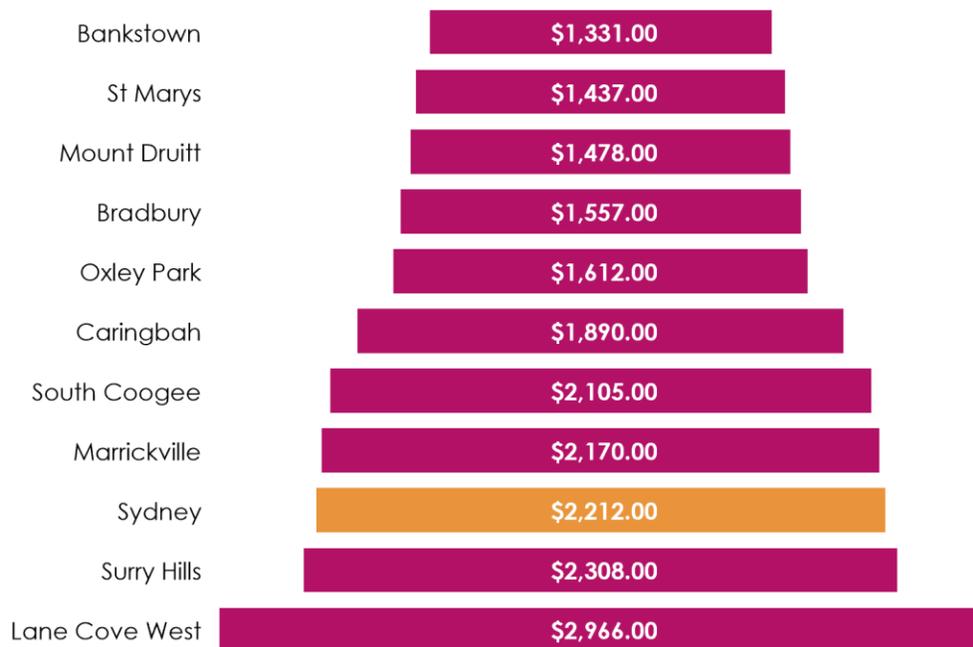
assessing income levels and male victims of DV.

1063

Figure 11

1064

Median Household Income of Suburbs Reported in Sydney



1065

1066 *Note.* Taken from 2021 Australian Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021)

1067 There was not enough data to inform conclusions for Queensland or Victoria, but two of
 1068 the three Brisbane locations met or exceeded the median household income. It was only Ipswich
 1069 that had a significantly lower weekly median household income at \$1,134 per week compared to
 1070 Brisbane at \$1,849. As previously identified, only one domestic violence article from this period
 1071 was identified in Victoria that met the criteria.

1072 **4.5 Nomination**

1073 **4.5.1 Formalisation**

1074 Formalisation is referring to a social actor by last name, with or without, honorifics (e.g.,
 1075 Mr., Dr., etc.). Out of 35 articles, only 12 articles used formalisation concerning the victims and
 1076 all the victims were referred to as ‘Mr.’ and their last name; but only five of the 12 were unique
 1077 cases (e.g., “*Mr Crumblin*”(7), “*Mr Phillips*” (21), “*Mr Murray*” (22, 23), “*Mr Venn*” (11-13),
 1078 “*Mr Thagipur* (33-35)”). An interesting finding, however, was that when the victims were

1079 named, they all had honorifics included. The remainder of the articles only referenced the
1080 perpetrator by their last name. The male victims were rarely given a formal identity, but, when
1081 they were, they were all given a level of respect through the use of honorifics.

1082 **4.5.2 Semi-Formalisation**

1083 When an actor's first and last name are both included (with or without honorifics) in a
1084 discourse, it is called semi-formalisation. The data showed that 13 out of the 35 cases, semi-
1085 formalisation was used to refer to the male victims. These all took place in the same articles
1086 where formalisation also occurred, except in one additional article, where semi-formalisation
1087 was used but formalisation was not also used in another part of the article.

1088 **4.5.3 Informalisation**

1089 Informalisation is the referencing of a social actor by their first name only. Of the 35
1090 articles, only one referenced the victim by a first name, and only as part of a direct quote by a
1091 family member: "*Now Ashley has gone it has left a hole in my family that can never be filled,*"
1092 *cousin Ian Bray...*" (21). This suggests that referring to social actors by first name only in news
1093 reporting is not standard practice.

1094 **4.5.4 Titulation**

1095 Titulation is the use of honorifics such as Dr. (doctor), Prof. (professor) and kinship titles
1096 (e.g., Aunty). Only eight of the 35 cases included an honorific to identify the victim; all of which
1097 used 'Mr' exclusively. Kinship titles were not used.

1098 **4.5.5 Pseudo-Title**

1099 Pseudo-titles are ways the news media may falsely attribute an individual, a fake title that
1100 may be drawn from a situational, occupational, or behavioural attribute. There were no instances
1101 of pseudo-titles being used for victims in this dataset.

1102 These subcategories of *Nomination* demonstrate how men were referred to within the
1103 data. How individuals are addressed and named carries significant implications; while this does
1104 vary from culture to culture, there are specific rules for what is socially acceptable in each
1105 culture concerning the use of names (Anchimbe, 2011). How individuals are referred to by name
1106 often relays certain values like respect and honorifics are often used as a sign of respect to the
1107 individual they are given to (Lakoff & Ide, 2005). While most victims were nameless, at least the
1108 ones that were named, were given respect and recognition through the use of an honorific,
1109 namely “Mr.” Anchimbe (2011, p.1474) argues that the ways individuals address each other has
1110 to do ‘with “representational” and “social” functions of language and how they correlate with
1111 negotiations of power, friendliness, and social balance between interactants.’ A report by
1112 ANROWS (2016) found that 31.5% of female victims were named in news articles of domestic
1113 violence, but after accounting for the duplicated stories, my data found only 18% of male victims
1114 were named (5 out of 28 unique articles). Van Leeuwen (2008, pp 39-40) states “Indetermination
1115 occurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, “anonymous” individuals or groups...
1116 indetermination anonymises a social actor. The writer treats his or her identity as irrelevant to the
1117 reader.” I argue that recognition and power are taken away from male victims who remain
1118 nameless in these articles and readers are manipulated to disregard these stories as insignificant.
1119 It is not possible to recognise one male victim’s story from another as a unique case of
1120 victimisation when their names are omitted.

1121 **4.6 Categorisation**

1122 Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 40) states categorisation is how “social actors are represented by
1123 their identities and functions they share with others” and he distinguishes this in three ways,
1124 functionalisation, identification, and appraisal. Functionalisation occurs when social actors
1125 are referred to by their professional roles, while identification describes mostly demographic

1126 information about the individual (gender, class, race, relationship, and physical characteristics).
1127 Identification attributes are identified in three separate categories: classification, relational and
1128 physical. Appraisal is how social actors are characterised in some way as good or bad, or
1129 portrayed positively or negatively.

1130 **4.6.1 Functionalisation**

1131 As outlined above, functionalisation takes place when social actors are named and
1132 referred to by their occupations or hobbies. Victims were only functionalised in five of the
1133 articles, and only three of which were unique:

1134 *“Mr Crumblin was an **avid fisherman** ...My father was a very hard working man and*
1135 *never let anything beat him”(7).*

1136 *“Mr Thagipur’s best friend Samuel Zizi said he had grown up in Iran before relocating*
1137 *to Australia in 2012 and worked **hard as a painter** ... He was **hard working**” (34-35).*

1138 *“Mr Murray’s Facebook says he is a married father of two young girls and a son and*
1139 ***works for Lenard’s Chicke.** (22-23).*

1140 Given that this category was so rarely included in news reporting, I have considered this
1141 to be primarily omitted and thus address Functionalisation further under the Omission category.
1142 The two articles that did make functional references, play directly into traditional, masculine
1143 stereotypes that are still prevalent in Australian society (Donaldson, 1993; Street & Dardis,
1144 2018). Being identified as **hard-working** is the epitome of the ideal standard for men and re-
1145 enforces the assumptions of how a ‘good’ man should behave (Butler, 1988; Flood, 2020). It is
1146 easy to recognise the patterns of masculinity and how they are represented within these texts
1147 with respect to the positive appraisal given around being **hard-working** and **worked hard as**
1148 **a painter**. It is more socially acceptable to be a hard-working man than an, unemployed one. The

1149 second article identifies the victim as working for *Lenard's Chicken* which is a shop for chicken
1150 products, which could be considered a manual, hard-working job. Both of these articles
1151 identified the victims with honorifics when addressing them (*Mr Thagipur, Mr Murray*). It is
1152 noteworthy that when the men's occupation was linked to hard work, they were also identified
1153 by name, and with honorifics. This reinforces the belief held by other scholars that certain traits
1154 are idealised as masculine and how masculinity is performed through occupation (Butler, 1988;
1155 Donaldson, 1993).

1156

1157 **4.6.2 Identification**

1158 As outlined above, van Leeuwen (2008) identifies three types of identification that can be
1159 used to describe and refer to social actions, all of which were included in the data analyses. Each
1160 type of identification (classification, relational and physical) is further explained in detail below.

1161 **4.6.2.1 Classification**

1162 Van Leeuwen (2008, p.42) states that “social actors are referred to [classified] in terms of
1163 the major categories through which a given society or institution differentiates between classes
1164 of people... [such as] age, gender, ...race, ethnicity/[nationality], religion, sexual orientation,
1165 and so on.” Twenty-six of the articles included the victim’s age, usually in the first sentence or
1166 paragraph and only 9 articles did not include the victim’s age. The ages of the victims ranged
1167 from the mid to late twenties (count of 3); thirties (count of 10); forties (count of 4); and over
1168 fifty (count of 9), with the 30s and over 50s comprising the greatest age range represented.
1169 Gender was also a prominent feature, sometimes more explicitly than others, however. For
1170 example, most articles paired age with “man” (e.g., “*a 64-year-old man*”) (9) explicitly
1171 identifying the victim as a man. Other articles were less explicit, but used male nouns and
1172 pronouns like boyfriend, husband, he, his, and him to denote the victim’s gender. Nationality
1173 was mentioned in two articles, twice in one article (“*he had grown up in Iran before relocating*
1174 *to Australia... well-liked in the Iranian community*”) (33-35). Sexual orientation was not explicit
1175 in most articles, but given that the gender of the perpetrator was identified in most cases and the
1176 relationship between the victim and perpetrator was identified, it was inferred that most cases
1177 were heterosexual relationships. Two articles, however, did specify a homosexual relationship,
1178 but only one article sensationalised the sexual relationship:

1179 “*My dignity was sold for \$12.99’: Gay pornstar’s ex-boyfriend*” (30) – Headline

1180 *“A Sydney man whose Brazilian ex-boyfriend secretly filmed him for an amateur gay*
1181 *porn site says, “my dignity was sold for \$12.99”* – Opening sentence (the hook) (30).

1182 Race, ethnicity, and religion were not featured in any of the articles.

1183 Gender and age are commonly found in articles, however, the way these details are
1184 presented can convey negative connotations. Identifying a man as older or elderly can be
1185 perceived to mean weak, feeble, and unable to protect himself. In the case of nationality, the
1186 world has certain perceptions of men from Middle Eastern countries, especially in Iran where the
1187 regime and laws there are known to be patriarchal and tyrannical towards women (Fotouhi,
1188 2014; Hanna, 2020). Finally, monopolizing on the vitriol that the gay community experiences
1189 and the attitudes towards gay men (Hill et al., 2020; Rossi, 2016)), the focus on the victim’s
1190 sexuality minimizes his experiences as a victim and casts more focus on his sexuality. It is the
1191 type of narrative that would have individuals suggesting that the victim deserved what happened
1192 to him, simply for being gay and living as a homosexual man.

1193 **4.6.2.2 Relational.**

1194 Relational identification is how social actors are classified according to their relationships
1195 with other social actors; in the context of this project, I was specifically looking at whether the
1196 relationship between the victim and perpetrator was identified in the article. Based on my data
1197 collection criteria, the victim needed to be identified as a male and as a victim of a domestic
1198 incident. The articles selected did not always explicitly identify the relationship between the
1199 social actors, sometimes the relationship could only be inferred from the details (see Framing). It
1200 was found that the relationship link between the victim and perpetrator was not stated explicitly
1201 in 13 of the articles, almost one-third of the data. The relationship had to be inferred in those
1202 articles where the journalist referred to it as a domestic violence incident or the perpetrator was

1203 charged by the police with a domestic charge. The remaining 22 articles made the relationship
1204 between social actors clear by defining the relationship or by using relational nouns, for example,
1205 husband, partner, or boyfriend:

1206 *“the **husband** of a South Coast business woman”*(24)

1207 *“Atkin's **husband** of 30 years”* (24)

1208 *“It is believed the pair were **married for more than 45 years** and were retired.”*(11, 13)

1209 *“police believe the pair **were previously in a relationship**”* (4)

1210 *“her **former partner**”*(4, 28)

1211 One article also referred to the victim as a **“former lover”** and **“ex-flame”** to indicate the
1212 intimate relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (33-35). Familial relationships were
1213 also identified in the articles:

1214 *“It's understood the man killed was **father-of-three** Sean Murray, 32”* (22-23)

1215 *“Wife charged with **dad-of-three**'s murder”* (22-23)

1216 *“Mr Murray's Facebook says he is **a married father** of two young girls and a son”* (22)

1217 *“Mr Phillips' mother, Marlene, said she was lost without **her only child**.”*(21)

1218 Additionally, the relational role to others was not as prominent as one might have
1219 expected, such as that of being a father, only seen in a few articles. Further, there was a lot less
1220 biographizing of the male and his relationships which ignores the role the man played in others'
1221 lives; equally, it ignores the impacts that these incidents would have had on those who were
1222 connected to the male victims.

1223 **4.6.2.3 Physical.**

1224 In the physical identification category, van Leeuwen (2008) refers to physical
1225 characteristics that are used to describe the individual like hair colour, eye colour, height, weight
1226 and so forth. In the context of this project, the physical category was used to explore how the
1227 victim was physically described, as well as how physical injuries were described in the article.
1228 There were only two references to the victim's physical characteristics (other than descriptions
1229 of the injuries), both of which convey a sense of helplessness or weakness on the part of the man:

1230 *"A woman has been charged with murder after the death of an **elderly** man."* (9)

1231 *"A woman, who allegedly attacked her **older** partner during a domestic incident."*(3)

1232 The remaining physical descriptions of the injuries the victim sustained during the DV incidents:

1233 *"Atkins then placed her husband in a headlock, punching him to the stomach and pelvis
1234 in an attempt, her husband believed, to punch his genitals."* (24)

1235 *"Mr Muray died on the side of the road from the alleged stab wounds to his back."* (22)

1236 *"A man... killed in a jealous rage before his body was stuffed in a wheelie bin"* (21)

1237 *"A 49-year-old man was found deceased with stab wounds "to the neck area"* (6)

1238 *"A WOMAN who police allege hit and killed her former lover following a heated
1239 argument was seen calmly walking past his mangled body as he lay helpless in a
1240 carpark."* (5)

1241 *"he was allegedly hit by the Toyota Kluger that knocked over a bollard and pinned him
1242 against a brick wall"* (5, 34, 35)

1243 *"attacked her 60-year-old partner, causing bleeding and scratching on his face"*(3)

1244 *“A woman in her 60s accused of killing her husband in their Brisbane bayside home*
1245 *drugged the man with prescription medication before slitting his wrists, police will*
1246 *allege.” (11)*

1247 **4.6.3 Appraisement**

1248 Appraisement is a description or evaluation of social actors in positive or negative terms
1249 (van Leeuwen, 2008). Several articles had some form of appraisement when reporting about the
1250 victim; eight articles portrayed the victim negatively, five portrayed the victim positively, and
1251 one contained both positive and negative attributions. Negative appraisement often featured an
1252 insinuation that there was a justification for the victimisation.

1253 *“Husband’s \$20k purchase that drove wife to murder... **after he bought a \$20,000 boat***
1254 *in the days before his death.”; (12)*

1255 *“It is understood Mr Venn had **suffered from bipolar** for much of his life.” (12)*

1256 *“a man, who police say had been **ordered not to come within 100 metres of the home in***
1257 *Sydney’s west, died from stab wounds... There was also an **apprehended domestic***
1258 ***violence order in place** and part of those conditions were for the man to not go within*
1259 *100 metres of the Rickard Road unit”; (6)*

1260 *“[the victim] is **significantly affected by alcohol** at the time... it can’t be discerned that*
1261 *he was aware of how he was stabbed”; (31)*

1262 *“A man was stabbed to death in a suspected domestic incident in Bankstown...**after he***
1263 ***apparently breached an AVO order** ... the man had an AVO against him*
1264 *forbidding him from being within 100 metres of the unit prior to the incident on*
1265 *Sunday.” (6)*

1266 Positive appraisal often referenced the victim’s positive characteristics as well as their role
1267 as a friend/family member and work ethic:

1268 *“My father was a **very hard-working man and never let anything beat him,**” Kevin*
1269 *said... He was **a loving father**” (7)*

1270 *“Witnesses tried in vain to save **well-liked Payman “Paul” Thagipur**”(5, 34, 35)*

1271 *“Mr Thagipur (inset), **who was well-liked in the local Iranian community**” (5, 34, 35)*

1272 *“He was **a legend, he was affectionate, kind, a very nice person, he never annoyed***
1273 ***anyone ... he was my best friend, like my brother,**” Mr Zizi said... He was **the***
1274 ***best person ... (he would) open the door for anyone, he was a gentleman. He was***
1275 ***hard working and caring about his family all the time**”(34, 35)*

1276 One article utilised both positive and negative appraisal, *“Mr Phillips also **had drug***
1277 ***problems but was remembered as a kindhearted and friendly “big kid”.**”(21)*

1278 These types of appraisements are extraneous details that influence the reader’s perception
1279 of the crime, the victim and even the perpetrator. This is particularly noticeable in the articles
1280 where the appraisements can be perceived as distributing fault for the victimisation onto the
1281 victim, otherwise known as victim-blaming. Men are not typically seen as a ‘vulnerable
1282 population’ so may seem more socially acceptable to justify why these men were victimised
1283 (where negative appraisal occurs) (Lee & Wong, 2020). As Lee and Wong state, however,
1284 victims that are seen as worthy are more likely to receive news coverage. Where positive
1285 appraisal was identified, some details are usually associated with normative masculinity; in
1286 those articles, the victim was not burdened with fault or victim-blamed.

1287 These findings are not unique to male victims. Significant research has investigated
1288 female victim-blaming and identified similar findings to this project, such as justification,

1289 provocation, reasoning, or rationality, all framed in ways that excuse the perpetrator's actions
1290 (Anrows, 2016; Lee & Wong, 2020). So, while there is an issue with how male victims are
1291 represented and framed, the phenomenon is not unique to male victims and reflects a larger issue
1292 with how victims in general are portrayed and represented. This highlights the importance that
1293 language and representation play in news reporting and how specific word choices relay
1294 meanings that can manipulate the reader's perception of the social actors in the story. Finally, it
1295 is argued that how victims are portrayed (victim-blamed), is what leads to public cynicism
1296 towards victims and can lead to re-victimising the victims.

1297 **4.7 Framing**

1298 According to Entman (1993, p. 52, as cited in D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010) "To frame is
1299 to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating
1300 text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral
1301 evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation." Carter (2013) states that frames are socially
1302 constructed, persistent over time, and help organise the world meaningfully; consumers of news
1303 utilise frames as a reference point to understand the salient facts presented to them and which all
1304 other information is assessed. The constructs of *Focus*, *Foregrounding*, *Backgrounding*,
1305 *Omission*, and *Connotations* were investigated to understand how framing was used in news
1306 discourses on domestic violence incidents with male victims.

1307 **4.7.1 Focus**

1308 Focus is a concept developed from utilising content analysis to explore who the main
1309 social actor was in the news articles. This was determined by how often the articles referred to
1310 the victim compared to the perpetrator (Columbia University, 2022). This was achieved through
1311 identifying and counting the nouns, proper nouns, pronouns, and possessive determiners in each

1312 article to get a sense of which social actor was the primary focus of the article (Columbia
 1313 University, 2022). Additionally, it was revealed how male victims are being referred to
 1314 linguistically within these articles. Table 5 shows the top ten words most used words to describe
 1315 the victim. Many of the words are related to the victim in the context of his relationship with
 1316 others, either as a part of the family unit or status as a significant other. The victim was also far
 1317 more likely to be referred to as ‘man’ than by his name.

1318 **Table 5**

1319 *Most common words used to identify male victims in news articles*

1320

Word	Count
man	36
boyfriend	11
victim	7
partner	6
husband	5
brother	3
dad	3
father	3
guy	3
male	3

1321 As highlighted through this thesis, it has been identified that the language used to
 1322 represent an individual is important and carries implications. An interesting finding was that
 1323 there were only seven instances of the man being referred to as a victim. Fohring (2018, p.152)
 1324 states “Socially, the word [victim] is associated with a powerful stigma and may draw blame,
 1325 derogation, weakness and shame.” This has not stopped the media from using the term, or worse,
 1326 referring to victims as ‘alleged victims’ (Anrows, 2016). It is posited that ‘victim’ was used so
 1327 infrequently in this data because the victims were men. As argued previously, masculinity and
 1328 victimhood are seen as incompatible pairs; labelling men as victims, therefore, contravenes
 1329 normative views of masculinity. Further, as identified under nomination, the male victims were
 1330 rarely referred to by their names. In place of their name, they were instead referred to as “a man”
 1331 or “the man.” By reducing a person who has been victimised to a nameless figure, a noun, his
 1332 identity is erased and therefore easily dismissed by readers as insignificant.

1333 Out of the 35 articles, 15 articles referred to the **victim** more than the perpetrator; 17 of
1334 the articles referred to the **perpetrator** more, and 3 of the articles focused equally on both the
1335 victim and perpetrator. Although there was not a large difference in the number of articles
1336 focusing more on the perpetrator, the difference within the articles was stark. Of the 15 that
1337 focused on the victim, only two of them focused on the victim more (each mentioned the victim
1338 12 times more than the perpetrator), the remainder only mentioned the victim between one and
1339 five times more than the perpetrator and these articles were often shorter in length. In contrast,
1340 eight of the 17 articles that focused on the perpetrators, mentioned the perpetrator five times or
1341 more, with the average being 16.75 more words mentioning the perpetrator. In the articles that
1342 had a stronger focus on the perpetrator, the article went more in-depth into the perpetrator’s
1343 history and past deviances, what caused the perpetrator to attack the victim and information
1344 about their charges and court matters. This is not necessarily unique to male victims but this
1345 practice in reporting is problematic because it glamourises the actions of the aggressor instead of
1346 the contributions and loss of the victim (Lee & Wong, 2020)

1347 *4.7.2 Foregrounding*

1348 Huckin (1997) defines foregrounding as how a writer will give textual prominence to
1349 certain details in a discourse; furthermore, Huckin states that news articles will foreground the
1350 most important and salient information in the opening sentences. The information most likely to
1351 be foregrounded in the articles under investigation were generally the details that covered the
1352 5Ws (who, what, when, where, and why). These questions are a framework often used in
1353 journalism, and according to Hart (1996) “answers to these five questions provide enough
1354 information for an audience to understand what happened, and whether and how it will affect
1355 them.” The ‘who’ was often reduced to a noun (a man) rather than a proper noun (their name).
1356 The ‘what’ referred to the domestic violence that took place and often included details about the

1357 police or emergency services attending, and what the perpetrator was charged with. The ‘when’
1358 and ‘where’ were addressed by the dates and locations mentioned. Lastly, the least answered
1359 question was ‘why’ – why the domestic violence incident happened, or why the perpetrator
1360 attacked the victim. A potential explanation for this being excluded is that the journalist could
1361 not obtain this information if the incident was still under police investigation. Some examples of
1362 the 5Ws foregrounded:

1363 *“A 27-year-old woman has been charged with reckless wounding and common assault*
1364 *after stabbing a man in the head overnight. Police and emergency services were*
1365 *called to a home at Luxford Road, Bidwell, about 12.25 am on Saturday.” (1)*

1366 *“A woman in her 60s accused of killing her husband in their Brisbane bayside home*
1367 *drugged the man with prescription medication before slitting his wrists, police*
1368 *will allege. Judith Ann Venn, 66, briefly faced the Cleveland Magistrates Court*
1369 *on Tuesday charged with the domestic violence murder of a 64-year-old Lance*
1370 *Hilton Venn at Alexandra Hills last Friday.” (11)*

1371 *“A man has been stabbed and a woman is in custody after a domestic violence-related*
1372 *incident at a home in South Coogee. Police were called to the home on*
1373 *Elphinstone Road shortly before 3 am on Sunday after a 25-year-old man was*
1374 *stabbed in the shoulder.” (18)*

1375 *“The woman charged with murdering a 50-year-old man north of Brisbane on Sunday*
1376 *remains in custody. Kevin Crumblin, 50, died on Sunday after he was allegedly*
1377 *stabbed. Rachel Maree Smithers, 41, has been charged with his murder occurring*
1378 *in a domestic violence situation.” (7)*

1379 **4.7.3 Backgrounding**

1380 Opposite to foregrounding is backgrounding, otherwise understood as de-emphasising certain
1381 elements; either details are deemed as less important or secondary to the foregrounded details
1382 (Huckin, 1997). According to Kalogeropoulos and Newman (2017), up to 49% of individuals do
1383 not read an entire story to completion. With journalists being aware of this, they organise a paper
1384 according to what they perceive to be the most newsworthy at the beginning of the article and
1385 least newsworthy at the end. The most commonly backgrounded information entailed prior
1386 offences or ‘bad behaviour’, witness and impact statements, court proceedings and charges,
1387 medical-related information, and mental health or substance use. This backgrounded information
1388 was situated within the articles predominantly at the end of the article or middle-to-end of the
1389 article, never included in the beginning of the article. Examples of prior domestic violence
1390 offences or poor behaviour:

1391 *“Police said the man [the victim] had been charged in December last year with domestic*
1392 *violence-related offences. Those charges were due to be heard in court in July,*
1393 *and the man had an AVO against him forbidding him from being within 100*
1394 *metres of the unit before the incident on Sunday.” (17)*

1395 *“Hogan [the perpetrator] became pregnant to another man when Considine [the*
1396 *perpetrator] was previously behind bars. Hogan met Mr Phillips [the victim] in*
1397 *2015 during another of Considine’s stints in custody, Mr Brown said, and they*
1398 *had a sexual relationship until her boyfriend was released.” (21)*

1399 *“On January 10 this year, the couple’s adult daughter, who lives in a smaller flat on the*
1400 *same property, was approached by Atkins [the perpetrator] who told her she had*
1401 *to move out immediately as she was getting a divorce. Her daughter tried to calm*
1402 *her down before Atkins punched her “several” times in the face.” (24)*

1403 *“Police allege the woman [the perpetrator] was involved in an altercation with another*
1404 *patron at a licensed premises at Bidwill earlier and tried to regain entry after*
1405 *being ejected by security.” (2)*

1406 Examples of witness and impact statements:

1407 *“Now Ashley has gone it has left a hole in my family that can never be filled,” cousin Ian*
1408 *Bray, who considered him a little brother, said in a victim impact statement. Mr*
1409 *Phillips’ mother, Marlene, said she was lost without her only child. Her cousin,*
1410 *Dawn Tossell, recalled thinking “no one deserves that” when she saw a news*
1411 *report about the incident and felt sickened and distraught when she learnt who*
1412 *had been dumped in the bin.” (21)*

1413 *“One resident, Pisan Kar, called the events “very frightening”. Mr Kar has lived in the*
1414 *unit block for two years and said he now feared for the safety of his wife and*
1415 *young children. “I was at work all day (on Sunday) and then came back at 3 pm*
1416 *and there were police everywhere,” Mr Kar said. “I don’t know my neighbours at*
1417 *all but it is very scary. My wife and children are here and it makes me worried.”*
1418 *(17)*

1419 *“The judge said the victim was left feeling humiliated, distressed, betrayed and*
1420 *traumatised by his irrational and threatening behaviour and he still feared for*
1421 *himself and his children.” (25)*

1422 Another theme was related to the court proceedings, criminal charges, and the
1423 perpetrator’s eligibility for bail (which was frequently denied or restricted):

1424 *“The 37-year-old woman was refused bail yesterday to appear at Bankstown Local Court*
1425 *today.” (17)*

1426 *“Smithers attempted to apply for bail, but as she is charged with murder can only apply*
1427 *for bail in the Supreme Court.” (7)*

1428 *“The court heard Tawhai, who has been in Australia for 15 years, faces likely*
1429 *deportation to New Zealand after his jail term.”(25)*

1430 *“He denied bail and said there was an unacceptable risk of further committing a serious*
1431 *offence and endangering the safety of the community.” (31)*

1432 In the cases where there was not a fatality, the articles often gave some details about the
1433 victim’s medical treatment:

1434 *“The man declined medical treatment for his facial wounds.” (3)*

1435 *“He was transported to the Princess Alexandra Hospital where he required surgery and*
1436 *the insertion of a rod into his leg.” (29)*

1437 *“...the man’s injuries were so bad as he was being taken to the Gold Coast University his*
1438 *heart stopped before he was then stabilised by paramedics. “Without the acts of*
1439 *emergency services, it was looking very grim for the victim about what may have*
1440 *happened to him,” Ms Thom said.” (28)*

1441 *“He was taken to Prince of Wales Hospital where he remains in a stable condition.” (18)*

1442 When either the victim and/or perpetrator had mental health issues or drug and alcohol
1443 use was sometimes backgrounded as well. In some ways, the inclusion of these factors seemed to
1444 point to a rationale for why the incident happened:

1445 *“Defence counsel Anthony Lewis said Considine grew up in Reservoir with 14 siblings in*
1446 *a childhood marred by his father's constant physical abuse until he turned 15 and*
1447 *fought back. His adulthood had been one of instability, failed attempts to gain*

1448 *work, periods of homelessness and constant drug abuse. He was using heroin, ice*
1449 *and cannabis daily when he murdered Mr Phillips.” (perpetrator) (21)*

1450 *“Police allege the woman was involved in an altercation with another patron at a*
1451 *licensed premises at Bidwill earlier.” (perpetrator) (2)*

1452 *“Chief Inspector Sly said police believe she “may have taken some pills or prescription*
1453 *medicine”. ” (perpetrator) (6)*

1454 *“Police attended and found the woman well intoxicated,” a police spokeswoman said.”*
1455 *(perpetrator) (3)*

1456 *“Mr Prasad also said this was the first time his client was in custody and her childhood*
1457 *trauma and mental health issues would make her time in custody more onerous.”*
1458 *(31, 32)*

1459 *“It is understood Mr Venn had suffered from bipolar for much of his life.” (victim) (12)*

1460 *“the court heard that the duo were drinking before an argument.” (victim and*
1461 *perpetrator) (31, 32)*

1462 *“Some of the victim’s family, friends and colleagues cried in court as he described*
1463 *suffering the early signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.” (victim) (30)*

1464 **4.7.4 Omission**

1465 Huckin (1997, p.82) states that omission is the “ultimate form of backgrounding” as well
1466 as the most potent “because if the writer does not mention something, it often does not even enter
1467 the reader’s mind and thus is not subjected to his or her scrutiny.” Six key pieces of information
1468 were frequently omitted across the 35 articles. The omitted information generally pertained to the
1469 who and the why of the 5Ws. It could be argued that at the time of producing the article, the

1470 journalists did not have access to the information that was omitted. Although a few cases did
1471 have follow-up articles (9-13 Venn; 22-23 Murray; 31-32 Twaddell; 5, 33-35 Thagipur), many
1472 incidents were only reported on once; this suggests that the journalists only took a cursory
1473 interest in the story, or it was not deemed newsworthy enough to follow up on with additional
1474 information (Boukes et al., 2022).

1475 As identified in the *Nomination* category, writers often did not identify the victim through
1476 proper nouns. In most cases, the victim was reduced to being called a man with no other
1477 significant information identifying him as a unique individual, yet the perpetrator was generally
1478 named in full. According to Valentine et al., (1996) having a name is a basic human right that
1479 was written into declarations and adopted by the United Nations. Panwar (2022) states that
1480 “names are more than monikers...In some cultures... we’re given names that are deeply rooted
1481 in social and cultural beliefs.” So, when a news article omits the victim’s name from a story
1482 detailing their victimhood, it not only minimises their identity but also their existence and
1483 relevance as an individual. Laws legislate that names cannot be published in articles to protect
1484 the identity of children (*Identification in Criminal Matters and in Court Records*, n.d.); however,
1485 the perpetrators were named in many articles of this dataset. It seems unlikely that was the
1486 reason for omitting the victim’s name in these articles but there may have been other unknown
1487 reasons for why the majority of these news articles did not publish the male victim’s name

1488 Under *Functionalisation*, the victim’s occupation was frequently omitted while the
1489 perpetrator’s occupation was more likely to be included. Of the 35 articles, only two mentioned
1490 an occupation, and one mentioned either an occupation or hobby (it could not be discerned if
1491 “avid fisherman” was occupational or recreational). A big part of the male identity is what he
1492 does as an occupation and is a construct seen across the world, not just in Australia (Gonalons-
1493 Pons & Gangl, 2021). Although gender roles are evolving, humans are still predominantly

1494 socialised to believe that a man’s primary role is that of a provider (Croft et al., 2015; Gonalons-
1495 Pons & Gangl, 2021). This socialisation is derived from not only men themselves and their male
1496 peers, but also demonstrated even in how men are typically paid more than women in the
1497 workforce (Blom & Hewitt, 2020; Croft et al., 2015). Consequently, women are more likely to
1498 be the parent who stays at home with the children (Croft et al., 2015). Although more men are
1499 taking up the role of a stay-at-home parent, this still contravenes conventional gender roles
1500 (Croft et al., 2015). Although men should not be reduced to what they do for a living or their
1501 earning capacity, the reality is that occupation is a fundamental part of how men identify with
1502 themselves and others in the world. Excluding this information erases a fundamental part of who
1503 the victim was in their life; their occupation contributed to their overall identity as an individual
1504 and as a man.

1505 The third item that was omitted regularly was the relationship between the victim and the
1506 perpetrator. In many articles the relationship is implied, either by how police charged the
1507 perpetrator (domestic charges), or by the journalist stating it was a ‘domestic incident’. It was not
1508 always clear what the relationship was between the social actors of the article. For example, one
1509 article reported:

1510 *“A 37-year-old woman, who was known to the man, was later taken to Bankstown*
1511 *Hospital under police guard for treatment,” NSW Police said in a statement. Chief Inspector Sly*
1512 *said police believe she “may have taken some pills or prescription medicine”. Following her*
1513 *release from hospital, the woman was taken to Bankstown police station about 12 pm on Monday*
1514 *and charged with domestic violence-related murder. (6)*

1515 While it seems evident that there was a relationship between them, based on the ‘charged with
1516 domestic violence-related murder’ the article only refers to her as a woman who was known to
1517 the man. Another incident was similarly reported:

1518 *“Police will allege two men and a woman were involved in a physical altercation at the*
1519 *unit, where one of the men sustained stab wounds to his abdomen,” a NSW Police spokesman*
1520 *said... following reports of a domestic-related assault.”*(16)

1521 Incidents are only vaguely referred to as a domestic violence incident but do not elaborate on the
1522 relationship or always explicitly identify who the perpetrator or victim is. It is hard not to
1523 consider how stories about male-perpetrated domestic violence are often relayed in the news. In
1524 the absence of academic research, anecdotal evidence demonstrates that the relational roles
1525 played by the victim and perpetrator are usually explicitly stated and regularly emphasised (i.e.,
1526 husband murders wife, woman battered by boyfriend, and so forth) when men are perpetrators of
1527 DV (Woods, 2023; Davis, 2023; Goodwin et al., 2023). Therefore, it is questioned why the
1528 relationship is downplayed or non-existent when a man is the victim.

1529 Additionally, the articles were not always clear about which social actor in the article was
1530 the victim. At times the identity of the victim was ambiguous, or the story was written in such a
1531 way that created questions about whether the victim was the victim or not. For example, one
1532 article opens the story with:

1533 *“A woman has been charged with murder after a man, who police say had been ordered*
1534 *not to come within 100 metres of the home in Sydney's west, died from stab wounds.”* (6)

1535 And later the article states:

1536 *“... the man had been due to face a hearing at Bankstown Local Court in July after being*
1537 *charged in December "with assault and offences relating to the brandishing of a knife". "There*
1538 *was also an apprehended domestic violence order [DVO] in place and part of those conditions*
1539 *were for the man to not go within 100 metres of the Rickard Road unit.”* (6)

1540 The key points here are that the deceased was previously known to police, had previously
1541 committed domestic violence, and had been ordered to stay away from the residence where his
1542 death took place. A reader could easily conclude that by the man showing up at the residence
1543 despite the DVO, he was there intending to cause harm and becomes the perpetrator in the story.
1544 The reader might also assume that this was a case of self-defence, casting the woman into the
1545 role of victim. Based on these assumptions, naturally, the reader begins to feel sympathy for the
1546 perpetrator, the woman. The narrative seems to imply that the man should not have been there in
1547 the first place and got what he deserved revealing a bias in the reporting. It demonstrates how
1548 language can manipulate and persuade readers in a way that fails to acknowledge that there are
1549 multiple perspectives to a situation. Research has shown that it can be difficult for police to at
1550 times correctly identify who is the person in need of protection and some researchers state that a
1551 proportion of domestic violence is mutually perpetuated (Johnson, 2006; Nancarrow et al.,
1552 2020). The journalist, and subsequently the readers, do not have all the facts about this story.
1553 Writing the story this way, however, detracts from the man's role as the victim and casts a
1554 judgement of fault onto the individual who ended up deceased. When assumptions and value
1555 judgements are produced in the various mediums of news and social media, they influence how
1556 their readers perceive an incident and can cause inappropriate conclusions to be made,
1557 sometimes resulting in what is commonly known as a trial by media (Shiyab, 2021; Surette,
1558 1989).

1559 Precipitating factors that lead to the male victim being attacked in each incident was
1560 another detail that was frequently omitted or subtly implied in the news articles. The journalist
1561 provided the reader with specific details which leads the reader to come to certain conclusions
1562 because of those details. For instance, it would be easy for the reader to conclude that the reason

1563 an incident occurred was due to alcohol, substance use or cheating, based upon the information
1564 selected by the journalist in the story. A few examples:

1565 *“Police attended and found the woman well intoxicated,” a police spokeswoman said.”*

1566 (3)

1567 *“The Ganmain woman appeared via video link for a bail application in which the court*
1568 *heard that the duo were drinking before an argument.” (31, 32)*

1569 *“Police allege the couple were drinking from 3 pm to 7 pm on Monday” (28)*

1570 It is implied, not so subtly, that alcohol played a role in these incidents and was the only detail
1571 given in some cases to indicate why the victim was attacked.

1572 Other articles elude to the perpetrator being a scorned woman and imply a sense that the victim
1573 had been unfaithful:

1574 *“Ms Stevens allegedly got out of her ute and ripped the windscreen wipers from the*
1575 *smashed Honda, using them as a weapon to assault the woman and her male passenger. The*
1576 *male passenger is a previous partner of Ms Stevens, police said” (8)*

1577 *“Police investigators are looking into whether a love triangle was behind the incident*
1578 *and said Musa had arrived at Mr Thagipur’s apartment when another woman was inside.” (5,*
1579 *35)*

1580 The “male passenger is a previous partner of Ms Stevens,” could be perceived as she was
1581 a scorned woman who attacked him and the female out of revenge or jealousy. Again, one can
1582 only speculate because the actual reason is not explicitly stated. With respect to the second
1583 incident, the inclusion of a ‘love triangle’ shifts some of the responsibility of what happened onto
1584 the victim. By suggesting there may have been a love triangle and another woman was inside his
1585 apartment the reader may start to empathise with the perpetrator and admonish the victim. Yet, in

1586 a different article, Musa and Mr Thagipur were described as previously being in a relationship;
1587 meaning the relationship had ended and he was simply moving on with his life, an action that
1588 may have triggered her. The impact of these stories being worded in such a way is that it
1589 potentially shifts the reader’s sympathy from the victim who was attacked, to the perpetrator who
1590 did the attack. This is because it is perceived as ‘justified’ due to how the incident is reported.

1591 Finally, in the cases where the man was attacked but was non-fatal, the articles did not
1592 always indicate if the man received medical treatment for his physical injuries. Not many articles
1593 considered the victim’s mental health or the long-term impacts the incident might have had on
1594 the surviving victim. In the same vein, none of the articles listed any organisations for its readers
1595 about where they could get help if they too are experiencing domestic violence, like
1596 1800RESPECT.

1597 ***4.7.5 Connotations***

1598 Whitmer (2020) defines connotations as “the emotional meaning of a word, or at least the
1599 emotional associations it carries within a particular culture.” In other words, when a writer (or
1600 speaker) chooses certain word choices, there may be an intent to convey meanings beyond what
1601 the literal word means. This may be done in the hopes that the reader (or listener) has the same
1602 cultural understanding as the writer/speaker and can interpret the hidden meaning of what is
1603 being written or said. In some cases, this is not intentional and can lead to miscommunication.
1604 For example, this can easily occur between two individuals from different cultural backgrounds
1605 who understand the meanings of a word or phrase differently; as one can imagine, this can lead
1606 to unintentional misunderstandings and offence. Per van Leeuwen (2008), connotations can be
1607 positive or negative, depending on the word choice and where emphasis on certain words may be
1608 placed. For example, a woman smiling and saying, “Doesn’t she look *amazing*?” would convey
1609 that the speaker genuinely feels that the woman looks attractive. On the other hand, “Doesn’t *she*

1610 look amazing,” said a particular tone and a sour facial expression connotes that the speaker is
1611 not happy about the woman or how she looks.

1612 In news reporting, the inclusion or exclusion of certain pieces of information and
1613 particular word choices can lead the reader to see the article in a certain way, either positively or
1614 negatively. This is often linked to perceived news bias, as the University of Michigan reveals
1615 through examples of how the 2003 Iraqi war was reported on by two different news outlets on
1616 the same situation (*News Bias Explored*, n.d.). Newspaper A claimed, “Iraqi fighter jets
1617 threatened two American U-2 surveillance planes, forcing them to return to abort their mission”,
1618 while Newspaper B reported, “U.N. arms inspectors said Tuesday they had withdrawn two U-2
1619 reconnaissance planes over Iraq for safety reasons.” The first article has greater negative
1620 connotations to it than the second article. The words *threatened* and *forced* are likely to cause the
1621 reader to have a greater negative reaction to the situation in Iraq than Newspaper B, which was
1622 considerably more benign.

1623 A key finding of this project was how fault was conveyed in the articles which were
1624 stated more explicitly in some articles, and merely connotated in others. Despite the men being
1625 subjected to DV, several articles portrayed the victimisation as justified, blaming the victim for
1626 their victimisation due to their actions. These findings match those found by Hanson and Lysova
1627 (2021) who stated, “male victims of female perpetrated IPH tend to be blamed for their
1628 victimization and represented as non-ideal and illegitimate victims in the news media” based on
1629 the findings of their study. In this section, I chose to use headlines to demonstrate this as often
1630 headlines are the only part of a story someone will see. Though headlines are often written with
1631 the intent to intrigue (clickbait), they have the power to influence the reader's perception of an
1632 issue on their own (Kuiken et al., 2017). Some examples of how fault (victim-blaming) is
1633 conveyed in the articles are as follows:

1634 **Headline: *Scorned lover in car park rage (5)***

1635 **Interpretation:** A scorned lover is commonly used for a woman who has been cheated on.

1636 So immediately the headline has readers believing the victim has wronged her, and she has

1637 retaliated against him for it. It would be easy for the reader, therefore, to perceive the victim at

1638 fault for his victimisation because he was unfaithful according to the headline. This perception is

1639 not an uncommon one, for example, a popular song by Carrie Underwood, *Before He Cheats*,

1640 glamorises a woman taking revenge against her boyfriend because she believes he is cheating.

1641 Within the song, the singer describes that he is ‘probably’ with another woman, and so she

1642 slashes his tyres, and keys his car whilst taking a baseball bat to its headlights. This song is

1643 heralded by women and the actions described in the song are deemed entirely appropriate

1644 because she believes he is cheating on her. When a man behaves in such a way it is easily

1645 recognised as domestic abuse.

1646 Another example:

1647 **Headline: *Husband’s \$20k purchase that drove wife to murder (12)***

1648 **Interpretation:** This headline shifts the blame of Mrs Venn’s actions onto her victim,

1649 justifying her behaviour because of what the victim did first. Stating that the wife was driven to

1650 commit murder implies a sense of the wife having no control over her behaviour in the situation

1651 and takes away her responsibility for her actions. This case got significant media coverage and it

1652 was the only case that came up in the data more than twice (for a total of five different articles).

1653 None of the five articles mentioned why the \$20k purchase was so detrimental to Mrs Venn that

1654 would cause her to ‘snap,’ but what seems more important to the journalist here is highlighting

1655 why her actions should be perceived as rational, maybe even reasonable. While Mr Venn’s

1656 behaviour could be grounds for a divorce, it does not justify her murdering him.

1657 Again, another example:

1658 Headline: ***Woman charged with murder of man subject to AVO Bankstown (6)***

1659 Interpretation: This headline is perhaps a little more subtle than the two previous
1660 headlines, but one can ‘read between the lines’. The woman murdered a man whom she has
1661 already been to the police about for his violence against her. As the reader, I immediately saw
1662 that he had an AVO and concluded that her behaviour must be the result of self-defence and
1663 therefore justifiable. Nowhere in the article, however, does it say she acted in self-defence, nor
1664 does it outline any actions or behaviours by the man that would suggest that she was acting in
1665 self-defence. There is a lack of evidence to support this theory in the article, but because the
1666 victim had an AVO against him, he should not have been near her at all. Therefore, it is easy to
1667 conclude that he breached the AVO and was doing something that caused her to murder him.
1668 Once again shifting the responsibility of the victimisation from the perpetrator onto the victim.

1669 The primary significance of these headlines, as demonstrated repeatedly, is that the
1670 burden of responsibility is shifted from the perpetrator, onto the victim. Additionally, the way
1671 these headlines are written does not convey a sense of objectivity on the part of the journalist.
1672 Maybe they are intentionally written to be provocative to generate clicks but the result is blaming
1673 the victim for their victimisation and evoking sympathy for the perpetrator. If a man snapped and
1674 killed his wife for purchasing a \$20k dress the man would be justly crucified in the media; but in
1675 the Venn case, the perpetrator seems to be given a pass because of what *he* [the victim] did.
1676 Accordingly, I conclude that it is problematic how victimisation and perpetration is conveyed
1677 and perceived in the media, and the public more widely.

1678 To conclude, I wanted to provide a more in-depth analysis of a few articles. These were
1679 selected on the basis that they had a decent article length that allowed for a deeper analysis.

1680 These articles, from my analysis and interpretation, connotated specific, underlying meanings
1681 through word or phrase choices. I will denote each article I am addressing with the headline of
1682 the article and then provide a snippet from that article that I have interpreted to have specific
1683 connotations. Subsequently, I will provide my interpretation of those statements as a news reader
1684 and why those connotations are concerning.

1685 ***Drunk woman charged over attack on partner (3)***

1686 *“A woman, who allegedly attacked her older partner during a domestic incident...
1687 Bankstown police will allege an intoxicated 52-year-old woman from Malabar attacked
1688 her 60-year-old partner... “Police attended and found the woman well intoxicated,” ...
1689 “She began thrashing and shouting at police when they attempted to arrest her.” ...The
1690 man declined medical treatment for his facial wounds while the police officers were not
1691 hurt.”*

1692 In the first statement, the article gives a sense that the woman is considerably younger
1693 than her partner by referring to him as *older*, but then their ages are stated, denoting only an
1694 eight-year age difference between them. From reading the first sentence, I expected to see
1695 something like a 15–20-year age gap. By referring to him as older, it conjured a perception of a
1696 feeble, white-haired man possibly too frail to fight off her attack. They refer to the woman as
1697 ‘intoxicated’, then ‘well-intoxicated’. There is an emphasis on alcohol being a significant factor
1698 in the woman’s behaviour. This plays into a typical stereotype of a drunk woman who is acting
1699 belligerent but should not be taken too seriously. It almost somehow detracts from the
1700 seriousness of the incident. This is exacerbated by the article saying that the man declined
1701 medical treatment and the police officers were not hurt. This connotes that whilst she was
1702 drunk and physically aggressive and abusive, she didn’t do any real damage to anyone, so this
1703 incident is not a big deal.

1704 **Venn Couple: Shocking allegations as woman charged with husband's murder** (13)
1705 and **Husband's \$20k purchase that drove wife to murder: police** (12)

1706 (13) *"A woman in her 60s accused of killing her husband in their Brisbane bayside*
1707 *home... It is believed the pair were married for more than 45 years and were retired...*
1708 *Police allege she put Mr Venn to sleep with medication before cutting his wrists with a*
1709 *blade... police will allege Venn also took the same medication and had to be*
1710 *resuscitated."*

1711 (12) *"man allegedly drugged and slain by his wife of more than four decades was killed*
1712 *after he bought a \$20,000 boat, police claim... Venn allegedly told officers she killer [sic]*
1713 *her husband after he bought a \$20,000 boat in the days before his death. It is understood*
1714 *Mr Venn had suffered from bipolar for much of his life."*

1715 Both articles were written by the same journalist one day apart; and, both articles were
1716 almost identical with the exceptions I've included. From even these small excerpts, it is easy to
1717 identify the newsworthiness factors that are present, like novelty, oddity, sensationalism, and
1718 interest. I posit that the presence of so many newsworthy factors is why I found five articles
1719 specific to this case, more than any other incident in my data. The first connotation I noticed was
1720 the journalist highlighting the woman's age *"a woman in her 60s"* and revealing her
1721 socioeconomic status straight away by stating *"Brisbane bayside home"*; essentially identifying
1722 the murderer as elderly, well-off and likely retired. Then the journalist goes on to talk about the
1723 pair being married for 45 years. This again emphasises the age of both the husband and wife but
1724 also connotes a sense of oddity. This is largely because it is expected that a couple married that
1725 long would have developed resilience and strategies to get through difficult life situations rather
1726 than resorting to homicide. The article later says, *"she put Mr Venn to sleep with medication*
1727 *before cutting his wrists with a blade."* By phrasing it this way, instead of saying she drugged Mr

1728 Venn, for example, the journalist is telling us that Mrs Venn is not a ‘complete monster’. After
1729 all, she showed him compassion by putting him to sleep first before she murdered him. Then we
1730 are informed that Mrs Venn decided to also end her life by taking “*the same medication and had*
1731 *to be resuscitated.*” As the reader, I immediately began to question why Mrs Venn tried to
1732 suicide; these are the conclusions that came to mind: was it out of guilt for what she had done;
1733 she did not want to spend the rest of her life in prison; or more benignly, maybe she could not
1734 imagine life without her husband. It is never clear if it was always her intention to suicide or a
1735 decision she made after she murdered him but seems relevant to understanding her actions.

1736 In the follow-up article the next day, the above is re-iterated but additional facts have
1737 come to light, such as the precipitating factors. In this article, an attuned reader will immediately
1738 detect a sense of victim-blaming in the headline, “*Husband’s \$20k purchase that drove wife to*
1739 *murder.*” Immediately setting the scene, the wife was driven to murder because he did a naughty
1740 thing, spending \$20k, so his murder is his fault. This is doubled down in the first sentence when
1741 the journalist informs us that the police allege a \$20k boat purchase caused the murder. Then,
1742 once again reinforced by stating the perpetrator admitted to police that she killed him because of
1743 said boat purchase. Additionally, a standalone statement printed on a separate line highlights that
1744 Mr Venn “*suffered from bipolar for much of his life.*” In the context of the article, it seems Mrs
1745 Venn may have also suffered from Mr Venn’s bipolar disorder. Anyone familiar with bipolar
1746 disorder would immediately assume that Mr Venn purchased this boat during a manic phase,
1747 perhaps without consulting her or against her wishes. It is never revealed if the money was his
1748 money, their money, on credit, etc. For the wife to react in such a way, however, it makes the
1749 reader wonder if Mr Venn spent their life savings and jeopardised their future. Oddly, the
1750 journalist never refers to this as a murder-suicide (or an attempted one) which is what it was an
1751 attempt at.

1752 This story is newsworthy, not because the husband is killed per se, but because they lived
1753 in a wealthy area where this kind of thing is more shocking than in a lower socioeconomic area,
1754 the perpetrator is a woman of retirement age, and she killed her bipolar husband of 45 years.
1755 Although it is implied that she killed him with compassion by putting him to sleep first, he had it
1756 coming because he spent \$20k on a boat. Finally, the rationale for why Mrs Venn attempted to
1757 take her own life is never revealed. The majority of this article focuses on the perpetrator and the
1758 victim mostly plays a supporting role in the story.

1759 ***Threesome murder: Man killed in jealous rage, stuffed in wheelie bin (21)***

1760 *“A man invited to be part of a sexual threesome by a Melbourne couple was killed in a jealous*
1761 *rage before his body was stuffed in a wheelie bin and left by the side of the road... Jason*
1762 *Considine agreed for girlfriend Natasha Hogan to invite Ashley Phillips to join them for sex at*
1763 *their Preston unit to ensure "she would not be going behind his back",... Considine, 36, and*
1764 *Hogan, 27, have been in a "toxic" relationship since she was at high school...marred by*
1765 *domestic violence and drug abuse... Considine's hope is that when Hogan is released from jail*
1766 *she can regain custody of her two daughters and they can visit him in prison. He is the father of*
1767 *one of the girls, and Hogan became pregnant to another man when Considine was previously*
1768 *behind bars. Hogan met Mr Phillips in 2015 during another of Considine's stints in custody, Mr*
1769 *Brown said, and they had a sexual relationship until her boyfriend was released. In early 2017*
1770 *the couple discussed inviting another man to take part in a "threesome", the prosecutor said,*
1771 *and Considine agreed so as to prevent Hogan from cheating on him... Mr Phillips also had drug*
1772 *problems but was remembered as a kindhearted and friendly "big kid" who loved tinkering with*
1773 *cars and playing with his cousin's children at family gatherings... Considine grew up in*
1774 *Reservoir with 14 siblings in a childhood marred by his father's constant physical abuse, until he*
1775 *turned 15 and fought back. His adulthood had been one of instability, failed attempts to gain*

1776 *work, periods of homelessness and constant drug abuse. He was using heroin, ice and cannabis*
1777 *daily when he murdered Mr Phillips.”*

1778 This article had a lot to unpack but the above excerpt evidences the main connotations I
1779 intend to highlight. The headline and the first sentence set the scene for what is a highly
1780 scandalous story that is less about the victim, and instead focuses heavily on the perpetrators and
1781 on how outlandish and provocative the story is. While it is an objective fact for the article to state
1782 that Mr Phillips was killed after being invited to participate in a threesome with this couple, it is
1783 the sexual nature of the situation and the novelty of his body being “stuffed in a wheelie bin” that
1784 made this a newsworthy story. Additionally, the couple has a tumultuous history together, and
1785 each had their own issues making this entire story read like a Netflix script. It is argued that
1786 polyamory and non-heterosexual, non-monogamous relationships are rarely portrayed positively
1787 in the media. The way the article is written connotes that these individuals are sexual deviants.
1788 This seems particularly evident of Ms Hogan who, according to the article, was only permitted a
1789 threesome to not cheat on Mr Considine behind his back which she has already done previously:
1790 *“Hogan became pregnant to another man when Considine was previously behind bars. Hogan*
1791 *met Mr Phillips in 2015 during another of Considine's stints in custody, Mr Brown said, and they*
1792 *had a sexual relationship until her boyfriend was released.”* When the article does focus on the
1793 victim, Mr Phillips, he is discredited in one breath and then an ‘okay guy’ in the next: *“Mr*
1794 *Phillips also had drug problems but was remembered as a kindhearted and friendly "big kid"*
1795 *who loved tinkering with cars and playing with his cousin's children at family gatherings.”*
1796 Depending on a reader’s worldview, Mr Phillips is likely to be viewed in one of two ways: the
1797 reader might have some empathy for Mr Phillips who, despite having a drug problem, is a decent
1798 guy who did not deserve this. Alternatively, someone who is strongly conservative may view Mr
1799 Phillips as a drug addict and sexual deviant whose murder is insignificant and move on to the

1800 next article. Finally, it is revealed that during the court proceedings that Mr Considine was the
1801 primary offender, yet the journalist tries to provoke the reader to feel sympathy for him after the
1802 article. This is done by detailing the perpetrator's difficult upbringing and his drug use at the
1803 time of his murdering the victim. So again, this article's primary focus was more on Mr
1804 Considine and Ms Hogan than it was ever on Mr Phillips, the victim.

1805

Chapter 5: Conclusion

1806

1807 The conclusion section will summarise the *Findings and Discussion* and be followed by
1808 Wodak's perspective critique. This critique will detail recommendations for better news
1809 reporting practices regarding male victims of DV. Finally, I will address the limitations of the
1810 study and explore considerations for future research.

1811 **5.1 Summary**

1812 This project aimed to explore how male victims of domestic violence are represented in
1813 news articles in Australia. This was done using critical discourse analysis, specifically by
1814 utilising both Reisigl and Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach with tools derived from van
1815 Leeuwen (2008), specifically Social Actors, to answer the following research questions:

- 1816 1. In news reporting, how are male victims of DV referred to and how is the domestic
1817 violence incident described?
- 1818 2. In news reporting, what characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to male
1819 victims of DV and the domestic violence incident of which they are victims?

1820 These questions were answered in the following analysis of the captured data which will
1821 be summarised herein.

1822 The data were taken from the top six most subscribed newspapers in Australia over 3
1823 years from 2018-2021 with three of the papers located in Sydney, two in Melbourne and one in
1824 Brisbane. The locations of these newspapers meant that the data were restricted to those greater
1825 areas encompassed within these three major capital cities. That being said, a significant
1826 proportion of the data were recorded from Sydney, and only one article came out of Melbourne
1827 while Brisbane fell in the middle. This was curious considering Melbourne is considerably more
1828 populated than Brisbane, therefore surely the incident rates of domestic violence should be

1829 higher for a more populated city. The median income of the locations are on par with previous
1830 research that demonstrates lower-income areas are more likely to experience domestic violence,
1831 but higher-income areas are not immune to cases of domestic violence either (Davies et al.,
1832 2015; Rennison & Planty, 2003). Three of the papers are classified as tabloid papers which are
1833 known to intrigue readers with provocative writing styles (Skovsgaard, 2014). These papers were
1834 also identified as primarily right-leaning, politically, which may influence the reporting style
1835 used to report these incidents (Freedon, 2001). Political ideologies influence the construction of
1836 new values and ultimately newsworthiness (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). From a critical discourse
1837 analysis perspective, political ideologies do not always allow for objective truths to be presented
1838 (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Dijk, 1998). Although it is impossible to be completely objective,
1839 certain political ideologies can prevent individuals from considering an issue from a perspective
1840 that deeply contrasts with their own beliefs. This in turn makes it unlikely that a differing
1841 narrative will be presented equally or at all. Furthermore, while right-leaning papers may have
1842 been influenced by their news values to report these stories in a certain way, the left-leaning
1843 papers only produced a handful of articles on the matter. Left-leaning papers are typically
1844 synonymous with a liberal/socialist ideology that places a greater focus on equality, social
1845 matters, and egalitarianism (Samochowiec et al., 2010) but male victimisation was
1846 predominantly absent from the left-leaning newspapers used for this thesis. This suggests that
1847 male victimisation is not recognised as an important social matter for the left, possibly as it
1848 clashes with other leftist issues, and the cases of male victimisation are more likely to be
1849 downplayed and minimised on the right. As such, neither side is taking on a role of advocacy for
1850 male victims which prevents the narratives on male victimisation from evolving socially and
1851 culturally.

1852 The headlines for the articles mostly entailed what type of incident took place and what
1853 kind of weapon was used to facilitate the incident, as well as relational details between victim
1854 and perpetrator and where the incident took place geographically. The use of the terminology,
1855 ‘domestic violence’, was almost non-existent in headlines which supported prior research
1856 findings that revealed these words were less likely to be used when the victim was a male (Hines
1857 & Douglas, Emily, 2010). Three-quarters of the articles had an article-length of less than 500
1858 words, and half of those were less than 250 words. Prior research has also identified that articles
1859 that are considered the most newsworthy have longer word lengths than those that are considered
1860 less newsworthy yet at the same time, stories with conflict and crime are overreported
1861 disproportionately (Boukes et al., 2022; Masini et al., 2018).

1862 With respect to Incident Type, the primary incident type did not exclude male perpetrated
1863 DV against male victims, but the data were primarily comprised of female perpetrated DV.
1864 Accordingly, it was found that stabbing was the most common type of incident reported on. This
1865 mirrored prior findings that women are most likely to use a knife against their DV victims
1866 (Boxall et al., 2020). There was seldom any reporting of non-physical violence or abuse,
1867 however, which begs to question why coercive control and other types of abuse are not
1868 considered newsworthy. It is posited that with 54% of the stories being fatal, it is only the most
1869 novel, shocking, gruesome, or horrific of incidents that are considered newsworthy enough to
1870 make it to print and therefore, it is concluded that non-physical violence is less newsworthy
1871 (Leung, 2019) and less entertaining. The news can be classified as what van Dijk (1993) would
1872 refer to as an elite group or institution which has the power to enact, legitimatise and reproduce
1873 inequality through the influence that newspapers have over society. By ignoring other types of
1874 abuse, or by requiring most instances to be fatal before being reported, news organisations are

1875 doing nothing to improve the awareness around male victimisation; even worse, they are putting
1876 male victims in a box where only the most shocking cases are coming to light.

1877 The way men are referred to in the articles was analysed using van Leeuwen (2008) via
1878 the *Nomination* category and sub-categories. The majority of articles did not refer to the victim
1879 by name at all. Those that were named were treated respectfully and referred to as a “Mr” but
1880 that was only 12 articles (and only five unique cases/incidents) and in the same vein, the same
1881 articles plus one extra were the only articles to refer to the man by his last name as well. The
1882 victims were never referred to directly by first name, outside of a quote from a family member
1883 once and there were no instances of kinship titles or pseudo-titles used in the data. Van Leeuwen
1884 (2008, p. 40) says “In stories, for instance, nameless characters fulfill only passing, functional
1885 roles and do not become points of identification for the reader or listener. In press “stories,”
1886 something similar occurs.” By not referring to victims by name, van Leeuwen would argue these
1887 men are not relevant in their own stories which just highlights how marginalised this group of
1888 victims are within the domestic violence awareness sphere.

1889 Again, using van Leeuwen (2008), *Categorisation* and its sub-categories were included to
1890 identify how men were represented by their relationships and functions with others. In terms of
1891 occupation and hobbies, they were rarely mentioned, but when they were, the results would
1892 easily be identified as typically masculine (“hard-working painter” or “avid fisherman”). This
1893 aligns with the theory of hegemonic masculinity, where certain normative masculine traits are
1894 idealised and upheld as the standard for men to be legitimised as men (Street & Dardis, 2018).
1895 Regarding identity, gender and age were the most commonly included details. Nationality was
1896 included if the individual was non-Australian and sexuality was included when it could be seen
1897 as deviant (“Gay pornstar’s ex-boyfriend” or “threesome murder”), which could be viewed as an
1898 ‘Us vs Them’ mechanism to justify the fate that befell them (van Dijk, 1998). Relationally, the

1899 link between the victim and perpetrator was not always clear nor explicitly stated, and a few
1900 articles included other relationships like the perpetrator's role as a father or as a son. Physically,
1901 not many articles detailed the victim's physical attributes, only highlighting when the victim was
1902 'older' or 'elderly.' The remaining physical features related to the injuries that were sustained
1903 during the domestic violence incident some of which were frequently phrased in a
1904 sensationalised way ("his mangled body", "his body stuffed in a wheelie bin"). Finally, when
1905 assessing how the victim was appraised, there was a concerning trend of portraying the victim
1906 negatively, often insinuating some form of responsibility to be owned by the victim for their
1907 victimisation ("after he bought a \$20,000 boat" or "significantly affected by alcohol"). Some
1908 articles did appraise the victim positively though, but typically those were associated with the
1909 victims that portrayed normative masculinity through their occupation or relationships with
1910 others. This finding aligned with previous research, but the research that was carried out with
1911 female victims (Anrows, 2016). As such, it became apparent that this phenomenon of victim-
1912 blaming is not unique to male victims per se, but rather a serious flaw in journalistic practice. It
1913 would appear that faulting the victim for their victimisation, rather than holding the perpetrator
1914 accountable, is a common occurrence in the news media.

1915 *Framing* was the final category, which was comprised of several sub-categories as well,
1916 used to understand the 'bigger picture' of reporting DV stories with male victims. Focus not only
1917 looked at how men are referred to within the articles but also quantified the articles in a way to
1918 determine which social actor was the primary focus in the article. The victim was most referred
1919 to as 'man' above all other nouns or pronouns but was only referred to as a 'victim' 7 times in
1920 total. By excluding the men's names from the discourse, their essence as a person, their
1921 humanity, is removed (van Leeuwen, 2008). There is an element of power taken away from these
1922 men by keeping their identity hidden and reducing them to just a 'man.' It is easier to ignore and

1923 dismiss the story of an unknown; a man who has an identity, a background, and a family is much
1924 easier to relate to, emphasise with, and feel outraged for.

1925 Although the victim was the primary focus in roughly half of the articles, those articles
1926 were often considerably shorter than the articles that focussed on the perpetrator which often
1927 went into significant detail about the perpetrator’s backstory. The *Foregrounded* information
1928 primarily focused on the 5Ws of journalism, although the “why” of the “Who, what, when,
1929 where, and why” was less prevalent than the other Was but it is posited that the journalist may
1930 have been unable to ascertain that information at the time of writing the article. Regarding
1931 *Backgrounded* information, it was found that the following details made up the remainder of the
1932 article: prior offences, witness and impact statements, medical treatment of the victim, substance
1933 use and finally the charges and related court proceedings for the perpetrator. Omission, the
1934 ultimate form of backgrounded was the exclusion of information that one would otherwise
1935 expect to be included. As already identified, the victim’s name, occupation, and relationship to
1936 the perpetrator were often absent from the articles. Additionally, in some cases, the articles were
1937 written in a way that did not reveal whom the actual victim was out of the included social actors,
1938 nor were the factors that led to the victimisation. Lastly, information related to the medical
1939 treatment of the victim was not always included, especially not mental health. To finish,
1940 *Connotations* was the final subcategory of *Framing* that was investigated, and the findings
1941 explored the meanings of words and phrases; this section looked at what was being insinuated. A
1942 significant finding was how fault was conveyed in the articles which equated often to a certain
1943 amount of victim-blaming, rather than the perpetrator being held accountable for their actions.
1944 Additionally, several articles tried to rationalise or justify the perpetrator’s behaviour and actions
1945 due to various reasons or circumstances. These reasons ranged from implied infidelity of the
1946 victim, impairment due to substance use, mental health, and sexual deviance. Leung (2019, p.

1947 2228) states “In newspaper reports, DV is often portrayed as a problem induced by the victim,
1948 which limits the public’s understanding of DV. Therefore, the media have an unshakable
1949 responsibility for shaping the public’s knowledge about DV.” This was said in a paper published
1950 about news representations in Hong Kong about female victims, yet also applies to male victims
1951 in Australia. As previously suggested, this propensity for victim-blaming points to (global)
1952 problematic journalistic practice when reporting on victims of domestic violence.

1953 **5.2 Prospective Critique (Recommendations for News Reporting)**

1954 The final critique outlined by the DHA is the prospective critique. Its purpose is to enable
1955 the development of discursive guidelines and incite change to existing language to improve
1956 communication; and, ultimately to minimise the reproduction of inequality and discrimination
1957 (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). Newspapers hold the power to influence and modify the narratives and
1958 ideologies that society has around a specific issue. By ignoring, downplaying, and minimising
1959 the phenomenon of male DV victimisation, this issue does not get the attention needed to bring
1960 awareness nor incite changes in policy-making and help-providing services. There are a few
1961 recommendations that can be made as a result of this project that would go a considerable way to
1962 reduce the marginalisation of male DV victims.

1963 First and foremost, there needs to be more media coverage of male victimisation in
1964 domestic violence incidents, and not limited to physical ones but cases of psychological,
1965 financial, and sexual abuse as well. Moreover, more efforts should be made to balance out
1966 information provided about both, victim and perpetrator, and more weight should be given to the
1967 victim as the ‘main character’ in the reports. This means ensuring that victims’ names are given
1968 unless a reason is given for why this is not possible (to protect children or an investigation is
1969 ongoing, for example). If a backstory is going to be provided on the perpetrator, equal
1970 information should be given to the victim. In the same vein, the information given about the

1971 victim should be objectively conveyed and where possible avoid using appraisement. Meaning,
1972 avoiding language and wording that incites victim-blaming or conveys a degree of fault and/or
1973 responsibility on behalf of the victim. There should be better language used to ensure that
1974 accountability and responsibility are placed on the perpetrator and their actions rather than
1975 justifying them.

1976 Further, the identification of who the victim is, who the perpetrator is and what their
1977 relationship is to each other should be clearly and explicitly outlined, regardless of each social
1978 actor's gender. Likewise, a standard format could be developed for reporting these stories to
1979 ensure that stories about men and women are reported on in measurably, similar ways. This
1980 would entail using consistent language and outlining specific details regardless of the gender of
1981 the victim and perpetrator. While not entirely necessary, acknowledging the contributions of the
1982 deceased victims and the impact that their loss will have on their family and friends could be an
1983 aspect of this standard format. Again, although not necessary, it could be included to remind
1984 people of the very real and negative impact that domestic violence has on communities and raise
1985 awareness.

1986 An awareness of the difference between types of domestic violence and their
1987 corresponding terminology would improve the way these phenomena are communicated about
1988 and represented. Instead of referring to all incidents as a domestic violence incident, it would be
1989 better to refer to these incidents as intimate partner violence incidents. Lastly, papers should do
1990 more to inform readers and raise awareness on the issue more broadly. This means including
1991 information to the reader about where they can get help if they are also experiencing domestic
1992 violence, either generic or gender-specific, as long as both are included. Finally, reinforce the
1993 narrative that violence is violence, and no one should have to experience DV, regardless of
1994 gender.

1995 Australian researchers, Easteal et al., (2015), identified that representations of DV often
1996 carry themes of mutual blame shared by both victim and perpetrator in news reporting. They also
1997 suggest reforms to how domestic violence is reported and reframing representations to present
1998 more realistic narratives, education, and information for women. These recommendations align
1999 with DV activists' efforts across the globe. In the UK, Level Up activists have influenced
2000 changes to media guidelines on how UK press report fatal domestic abuse of women ('Media
2001 Guidelines', n.d.). Their guidelines state that reports should hold perpetrators' accountable for
2002 their actions, not frame the murder because of the victim' actions. The guidelines also state that
2003 the crime should be clearly labelled as domestic abuse and helpline numbers should be included
2004 at the end of each article. Sutherland et al. (2015) identified there are up to 23 media guidelines
2005 on how to improve reporting of violence against women, six of which are in Australia. What is
2006 missing from these guidelines are recognition of male victims and their lived experiences.
2007 Despite that, most of the guidelines would apply to reporting DV against men as well as women.
2008 For example, Sutherland et al. found that eighteen guidelines recommend the use of domestic
2009 abuse or domestic violence rather than terms like domestic dispute or incident. Most guidelines
2010 also advise to avoid any form of victim-blaming, directly or indirectly. Finally, most guidelines
2011 recommend the inclusion of hotline numbers or other support services for victims.

2012 **5.3 Limitations**

2013 This project was not without its limitations which will be outlined here accordingly. The
2014 newspapers selected were concentrated on the east coast of Australia (New South Wales,
2015 Queensland, and Victoria). Additionally, the newspapers that were most subscribed to were
2016 metropolitan-based newspapers, which meant that regional news reporting and incidents
2017 occurring in regional areas were not analysed in the study. According to Shaughnessy et al.,
2018 (2015), there are two types of bias, selective deposit and selective survival, to be aware of when

2019 using archival data as were used in this project. Selective deposit refers to a bias in how archival
2020 data are selected to be stored in an archive, whereas selective survival bias is a result of
2021 incomplete or records missing entirely. In context, the data of this project were sourced
2022 exclusively from the UniSQ Factiva subscription, therefore, articles that were not made available
2023 to Factiva were unable to be included in the study, or if any articles had been removed before my
2024 collection, this would have impacted the articles included.

2025 An additional factor is that articles were exclusively sourced from online versions of the
2026 newspapers; so, whether reporting practices differ between print and digital was not investigated.
2027 If there is a difference, then some of the criticisms laid may be addressed in print versions. For
2028 example, online articles may be shorter in length as a result, not of gender bias, but due to the
2029 current trend of keeping articles short in a fast-paced digital world. Additionally, the
2030 positionality of a story in a hardcopy printed paper often demonstrates the value placed on that
2031 story in terms of newsworthiness. The deeper into the physical newspaper, the less newsworthy
2032 an article is generally and therefore shorter in length inherently. This piece of contextual
2033 information is not ascertainable based on the way the data were collected for this project.

2034 A high proportion of the articles did not explicitly identify the relationship between the
2035 victim and the perpetrator. It is possible, therefore, that some articles were included but should
2036 not have been because the social actors were not current or former intimate partners. In the same
2037 vein, articles may have been excluded even if they did meet the criteria because the relationship
2038 was not explicit or implied well enough. The stories that were included were included on the
2039 basis that the relationship could be inferred with reasonable confidence based on other details in
2040 the article. A sample size of 35 for a qualitative study is not insignificant but the findings are not
2041 representative of all articles that have been published on male victims of DV. Given the

2042 methodology, the small sample size and even the sampling method, generalisations cannot be
2043 made based on this research.

2044 Another limitation of the critical discourse analysis approach is that the researcher cannot
2045 be wholly objective, and one would argue that is even the point of this type of analysis. As I
2046 came into this project with a certain set of experiences that motivated me to undertake this
2047 particular project which may have influenced my interpretation of the texts. Thus, another
2048 researcher with different life experiences may interpret the articles in a different way than I did.
2049 That being said, the analysis and interpretation of each article was reviewed by the principal
2050 supervisor and problematic or bias-laden judgements were discussed and re-considered as part of
2051 a triangulation process.

2052 The search for data was narrow and prescriptive to keep the data within a manageable
2053 scope for a Master's project. This would have significantly narrowed the articles that were
2054 available for selection. A search that entailed only the keywords of 'domestic violence' might
2055 have resulted in more articles that were relevant to the project. An analysis of news
2056 representations of female victims of domestic violence would have offered greater insights into
2057 how these two groups are represented, both alike and differently. It also may have been able to
2058 highlight gender bias better than investigating male representations alone.

2059 **5.4 Future Research**

2060 The area of male victimisation within a domestic violence context has been identified as
2061 under-researched. This project addressed how male DV victims are represented in a small
2062 selection of online news articles, but a larger project would consider looking at other types of
2063 media representations of male victims, be it social media, television, or movies. Better yet, a
2064 larger-scale study that looked at all newspapers in Australia would allow for different analyses

2065 and comparisons such as stories produced in rural areas versus urban regions. Additionally,
2066 another study investigating how male victims are represented in the news compared to female
2067 victims would yield interesting findings. It would also be intriguing to isolate newspapers based
2068 on political leanings and news values to determine if there are any differences between left and
2069 right-wing media reporting of DV and male victimisation. Given that the male victim's
2070 occupation was included in some cases but not all, an opportunity for future research might
2071 explore this construct in news reporting more in-depth. For example, future research might
2072 identify what contextual factors are most likely to be included in journalism across different
2073 crimes and genders of victims and perpetrators. This would identify how relevant the omission
2074 was to representations of men. Finally, an investigation into news reporting of male violence in
2075 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and LGBTIQ+ should be considered as well.
2076

2077

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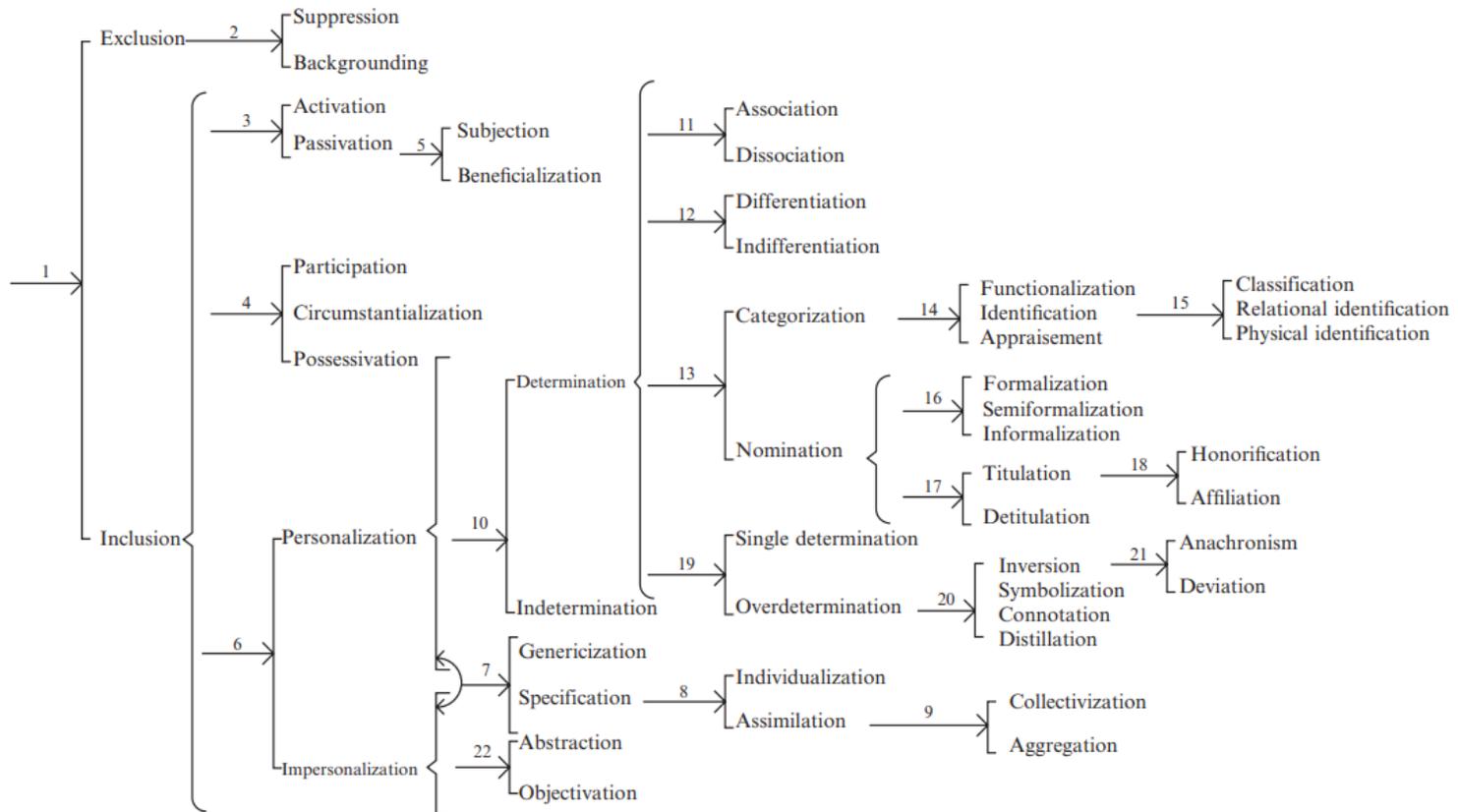
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Appendix A

2629

van Leeuwen (2008, p.52) Social Actor Network



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Appendix B

Framework and spreadsheet used to analyse each article, with examples included.

		Why is the journalist telling me this?	6. Woman charged with murder of man subject to AVO Bankstown	
			Perpetrator	Male Victim
Newspaper		The Sydney Morning Herald		
Word Count		334		
Incident	What type of DV incident was it? (Type of abuse, modality)	Stabbing; fatal		
	Location(s) mentioned	Bankstown, Sydney's West, 'Rickard Road, Bankstown', 'Rickard Road unit',		
Nomination	Formalisation Last name only (w/ or w/o honorifics)	No Name	No Name	
	Semi-formalisation First & last name			
	Informalisation First name only			
	Titulation (Honorifics, Kinships)			
	Pseudo-titles controversial cancer therapist			
Categorisation	Functionalisation when the social roles are named based on their occupations such as 'the teacher', 'the schoolgirl', and 'the prostitute'.	-	-	
	Appraisalment The social actors can also be labelled "in terms which evaluate them, as good or bad, loved or hated, admired or pitied. be achieved by "the set of nouns, adjectives and idioms that denote such appraisal. Can be negative or positive	...she "may have taken some pills or prescription medicine"	"a man who Police say had been ordered not to come within 100 metres of the home"	
	Identification social roles are characterised or classified in relation to their "age, gender, provenance, class, wealth, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on"	a woman (age not mentioned at first); a 37-year-old woman	a 49-year-old-man	

		<p>Relational Identification social actors are identified by using "their personal, kinship or work relation to each other"</p>	<p>"A 37-year-old woman, who was known to the man..." "charged with domestic violence-related murder"</p> <p>""There was also an apprehended domestic violence order in place and part of those conditions were for the man to not go within 100 metres of the Rickard Road unit," he said."</p> <p>The relationship is never explicitly disclosed, but can be inferred that they were at least previously in a relationship</p>	
		<p>Physical Identification the social roles are categorized based on physical traits which "uniquely identify them in a given context" (p. 57). Nouns and adjectives indicating physical characteristics</p>		<p>"died from stab wounds" "deceased with stab wounds "to the neck area""</p>
Framing	<p>Focus How frequently is the victim mentioned; how frequently is the perpetrator mentioned? Who is the article really focusing on?</p>	Perpetrator is mentioned 7 times (woman, her, she)	Victim is mentioned 6 times (man)	
	What is foregrounded?	A woman murders a man who had been ordered by Police (DVO) to stay away from her/her home while children were potentially present and may have witnessed it, and certainly saw enough to make the call to 000.		
	What is backgrounded?	<p>Whilst the first sentence says "who police say had been ordered not to come within 100 metres of the home" – the first time I read this I interpreted as the woman had been ordered. It was not until I got to the end of the article where I read that the man was facing a hearing for being charged with assault and brandishing a knife and had a DVO in place ordering him not to go to the unit, that I realised the first sentence was talking about HIM, not her. It's my fault for reading it wrong, but sort of seems like it was written in a way that could be easily misinterpreted.</p> <p>I wonder why his past crimes are put at the end? Do we want to make her the complete villain because, after all, she killed him and in front of two kids... But, was it in self-defence?</p>		
	What is omitted?	Their exact relationship, the relationship of the kids to both of them, if there was a history of him abusing her, was there a history of mutual abuse? Was it kill or be killed for the woman?		
	Are there connotations?	<p>Well, certainly saying police believe she "may have taken some pills or prescription medicine" leaves a certain taste in your mouth. She very well could have been attacked and reacted in self-defence, but this statement almost undoes the speculation that she was maybe a victim herself.</p> <p>Also, there's a connotation around the first sentence - referring to the Order, that this guy was no good to begin with and got what was coming to him for breaking the order.</p>		

Reflexivity	Thoughts	<p>This one is so interesting. The lead sentence is written in such a way that unless you're really paying attention, you can easily assume it was the woman ordered to stay away from the house, and after all, she did the murdering so she's the villain in the story.</p> <p>But then when you go back and read it again with fresh eyes, you then see a man who was ordered not to go to this house, got what he deserved. By adding that "Police say had been ordered not to come to the home", you place this guy in the "baddie" column, and suddenly his death no longer seems as tragic, nor should we be so sympathetic about it.</p> <p>So it really does depend on how you interpret the first sentence as to how you view the article the first time around. Once you get to the end though, you definitely come to realise he was the one who was ordered not to go on to the property where the murder took place.</p> <p>This article 'eludes' to him battering the woman and perhaps lets you question if this was in self-defence on the part of the woman sort of, though never explicitly stated...</p> <p>But then the quote by the Police "she may have taken some pills or ..medicine" throws you.. should we be sympathetic for her or not? She murdered him, but was it in self-defence? Or was she high as a kite? And, after all, she did murder him in front of two children. So now she's the villain? Despite his past behaviour warranting a DVO?</p>
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Appendix C

<p style="text-align: center;">Search terms used to explore existing literature on phenomena</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Search Strategies</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male victims of domestic violence in the media • Male victims of domestic violence in news/news reporting • Media representations of male victims of domestic violence • Male victims, domestic violence, news • Male victims, domestic violence, media 	<p>The search terms presented on the left were used to search Google Scholar, Research Gate and the databases that University of Southern Queensland (USQ) currently have access to, namely EBSCOhost. In most cases, Google Scholar and Research Gate were searched initially to locate source material. Then, those sources were searched for via the USQ Library to gain access to the articles that were not open source. Peer-reviewed, online articles were preferred.</p>

Appendix D

1	Sydney woman charged after domestic violence stabbing	Sydney Morning Herald - Online	2019
2	Woman charged over alleged head stabbing	The Daily Telegraph - Online	2019
3	Drunk woman charged over attack on partner	Daily Telegraph - Online	2019
4	Woman charged with murder after deliberately hitting man with car	The Sydney Morning Herald - Online	2020
5	'SCORNED' LOVER IN CAR PARK 'RAGE'	The Daily Telegraph	2020
6	Woman charged with murder of man subject to AVO Bankstown	The Sydney Morning Herald	2021
7	Woman faces court charged with DV murder of partner	The Courier Mail	2020
8	Woman charged after allegedly ramming car, using windscreen wipers in assault	The Sydney Morning Herald	2021
9	Woman charged with murder after death in bayside suburb	The Courier Mail	2020
10	Woman charged with husband's murder	The Courier Mail	2020
11	Wife, 66 drugged husband, put him to bed, slit his wrists	The Courier Mail	2020
12	Husbands 20k purchase that drove wife to murder, police	The Courier Mail	2020
13	Shocking allegations as woman charged with husbands murder	The Courier Mail	2020
14	Mt Druitt - Man stabbed, woman injured in Mount Druitt domestic	The Daily Telegraph	2019
15	Mt Druitt - Man stabbed in Mt Druitt home	The Daily Telegraph	2019
16	Man stabbed during western Sydney assault	The Daily Telegraph	2020
17	Kids in unit as man stabbed to death	The Daily Telegraph	2021
18	Man stabbed, woman in custody in South Coogee	The Sydney Morning Herald	2018
19	Man stabbed in St Marys	The Daily Telegraph	2019
20	Man stabbed, woman injured in domestic violence assault	The Daily Telegraph	2019
21	Threesome murder - Man killed in jealous rage, stuffed in wheelie bin	The Age	2019
22	Wife charged with dad-of-threes murder	The Courier Mail	2020
23	Wife charged with dad-of-threes murder	The Courier Mail	2020
24	Gym owner put husband in headlock after video binge	The Daily Telegraph	2021
25	How dumped lover terrorised ex	The Courier Mail	2020
26	Man dies in fourth Sydney stabbing in 24 hours	The Sydney Morning Herald	2018
27	I'll f*** your life up': Radiochemist told to seek anger management	The Daily Telegraph	2021
28	Woman allegedly stabbed partner	The Daily Telegraph	2020
29	What drove girlfriend to bash her man with a metal pole	The Courier Mail	2021
30	My dignity was sold for 12.99 - Gay pornstar's ex-boyfriend	The Daily Telegraph	2020
31	Woman accused of stabbing man, puncturing his lung	The Daily Telegraph	2020
32	Woman accused of puncturing lung during night of drinking	The Daily Telegraph	2020
33	Woman accused of killing ex-boyfriend with car after argument	The Daily Telegraph	2020
34	Woman accused of killing ex-boyfriend allegedly strolls past body	The Daily Telegraph	2020

35	Love triangle probe for man fatally run over in car park	The Daily Telegraph	2020
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