

The News Coverage of Honour Killings in Canadian Newspapers

By

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Abstract

The issue of honour killings has become a prominent topic of discussion in the Western discourse of violence against immigrant women. In Canada, particularly, the recent high-profile cases of honour killings have drawn increased attention from the media, academics and the public. The prevalent discussion links these murders to the broader issues of immigration, multiculturalism, and violence against immigrant women. In this thesis, I examine the nature of honour killings, their components, and the discourse of honour killings in its Canadian context. In doing so, I conduct a textual analysis of the representation of three recent honour killings in two major Canadian newspapers; The Toronto Star and The Globe and Mail. Results suggest that honour killings touched a nerve in Canadian media leading to the use of culturalist approaches to understand and represent these killings. This culturalist approach to the debate created serious obstacles for clarifying or explaining this form of violence against women. It further hindered any constructive public debate about ending these killings. The consequences of the culturalist approach to honour killings as well as recommendations for future research and theoretical developments in this area of violence against women are suggested.

Key words: honour, honour killings, media, violence against immigrant women, culture, Islam

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Dua Khalil Asvad, a 17 year-old Kurdish girl who murdered in front of hundreds of men for falling in love with a boy, a murder that is named 'honour killing'.

It is written in solidarity with those who think and work against violence, all over the world.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Literature Review	8
1.1 Definition of Honour Killings.....	8
1.2 The Concept of Honour.....	9
1.2.1 Honour as a Term.....	9
1.2.2 Honour and the Masculine/Feminine Divide	10
1.2.3 Losability of Honour: The Concept of Shame	12
1.2.4 The Role of Reputation within Community.....	14
1.2.5 Honour Codes as Means of Social Control.....	15
1.3 Honour Killings, Origin and Components	16
1.3.1 Honour killings; Origin and the World-Wide Practice	16
1.3.2 Components of Honour Killings	18
1.4 State Interventions in Honour Codes	20
1.5 Honour Killings in the Immigration Context	23
1.6 Honour Killings in the Media	27
1.7 Punishment and Prevention of Honour Killings	30
1.8 Significance of the Current Study.....	32
Chapter 2: Methods.....	35
2.1 Textual Analysis	36
2.2 Studying the Media	37
2.3 Data Collection	40
2.4 Cases of Honour Killings	41
2.4.1 The Case of Aqsa Parvez	41
2.4.2 The Case of Amandeep Kaur Dhillan	43
2.4.3 The Case of the Shafia Family	43
2.5 The Sample	44

2.6 Coding and Method of Analysis	45
Chapter 3: Results	48
3.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Newspapers Coverage.....	49
3.1.1 Space and the Length of Coverage	49
3.1.2 Placement of the Stories.....	51
3.2 Media Frames of the Murders.....	53
3.2.1 The Murder of Aqsa.....	53
3.2.1.1 Culture Clash within Immigrant Families.....	55
3.2.1.2 The Role of Islam.....	58
3.2.1.3 The Hijab Debate	61
3.2.1.4 The Picture of the Victim and the Perpetrators.....	63
3.2.1.5 Elements of Universal Feminist Approaches.....	67
3.2.2 The Murder of Amandeep.....	70
3.2.3 The Murder of the Shafia Family.....	74
3.2.3.1 Images of the Victims and the Perpetrators	77
3.2.3.2 Elements of Universal Feminist Approaches.....	79
Chapter 4: Discussion	81
4.1 The Battle over Bodies of Muslim Women	85
4.2 Portrayal of Victims and Victimiziers of Honour Killings	87
4.3 Veiling.....	88
4.4 Omissions in Representation.....	91
4.5 Consequences and Implications of Honour Killings Coverage	93
4.6 Nature of Honour Killings	99
Conclusion	105
5.1 Recommendations to End Honour Killings	107
5.2 Limitations and Directions for Future Research.....	111
References.....	113

Introduction

On December 10, 2007, Aqsa Parvez a 17 year-old Canadian girl of Pakistani origin was strangled to death by her father and brother, at her home in Mississauga, Ontario. According to the news reports, before her tragic death she had been threatened by her father and her brother several times, as she had not followed the family's wishes and style of living. Aqsa's case was covered extensively by the Canadian media where her murder was condemned as a brutal case of 'honour killing'. Although several similar cases had occurred in Canada before Aqsa's death, hers was the first one that Canadians discussed publically as 'honour killing' and as an allegedly, brutal form of violence that was occurring within immigrant communities. The causes and consequences of such killings were publically debated. The media largely blamed honour killings, 'traditional cultures', patriarchy, and domestic violence. Multiculturalism, its supposed failure to reach its goals, and the costs of such a failure was also a focus of the media. The debate on multiculturalism, honour killings, culture, and patriarchy is continued in Canadian media and academia.

Honour killings are considered to be the severe form of 'honour-based crimes' which refer to a wide range of crimes that are practiced in a variety of cultures and communities (Siddiqui, 2005; Meeto & Mirza, 2007; Gill, 2006). Honour-based crimes vary among different societies and include honour killings, early and forced marriage, rape, acid attacks, genital mutilation, breast ironing, and in some contexts, deprivation from freedom, education and friendship (Gill, 2006; Hussain, 2006). In the media, they are often referred to as the most barbaric and brutal acts which violate the fundamental rights of women (Meeto & Mirza, 2007). Due to their prevalence and severity, honour

killings are the most noticeable form of honour-based crimes and the focus of this research.

Human Rights Watch defines honour killings as “acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are perceived to have brought dishonour upon the family” (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The underlying reason of such killings is always ‘to protect the family’s honour’. As such, women are killed or even forced to commit suicide when they behave in a way that contradicts the family’s values and reputation. In this context, the family’s honour resides in the virginity, modesty and chastity of females (Gill, 2009; Hussain, 2006). All over the world women are being killed because of their behaviours which are regarded dishonourable by their families. Reports of United Nations organizations suggest that honour killings occur in the Middle East, India, Pakistan, the Latin American countries, Italy, Greece, Sweden, the UK, Germany, Netherlands, and North America (UNFPA, 2000).

In recent years, Western countries have witnessed increasing cases of honour killings. In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that up to 12 women are killed in honour killings each year (BBC Report, 2009). In December 2009, the Metropolitan Police of London reported that there had been a huge increase in recorded incidents motivated by honour (BBC Report, 2009). In a famous case, Heshu Yones, a 16 year-old girl was stabbed to death by her father in 2002 in London, because her family heard a love song dedicated to her on a radio station and suspected she had a boyfriend (Peake, 2007). In Canada, there are no clear statistics on honour killings. This is, partly, because of the lack of a formal definition that helps to categorize the murders in the Canadian legal discourse

and also because of the fact that like other parts of the world, there is a possibility that such crimes or the honour motivations behind them are not reported. According to Muhammad's research at Memorial University in Newfoundland, more than a dozen cases have been reported in Canada, in the last ten years (Muhammad, 2011). In one of these cases in 2006 in Ottawa, 20 year-old Khatera Sadiqi and her fiancé were shot to death by Khatera's brother, as she was engaged in a relationship that was not accepted by her family (Ottawa Citizen, 2006). Her brother told the court that he wanted his sister to respect their father (CBC News, 2009).

In spite of the long persistence and the rising number of honour killings all over the world, the killings did not engage the public's attention in the West until the mid-1990s. Since then, many human rights organizations started their efforts to stop the practice of such killings. Today, discussions about honour killings are increasingly visible in the media. Feminist activists, politicians, and scholars in Europe, Asia and North America along with human rights organizations have focused on these crimes as a serious social problem that requires immediate actions.

In academia, over the last two decades, honour killings have been the topic of research investigation (Dodd, 1973; Abu-Odeh, 1997; Baker, Gregware, & Cassidy, 1999; Araji, 2000; Faqir, 2001, Akpinar, 2003; Gill, 2006; Hussain, 2006; Reimers, 2007; Madek, 2005). Scholars attempted to explore the nature of honour killings, the causes and consequences, and the ways to combat such crimes. However, in spite of the increasing efforts, there is still very limited literature on honour killings. Additionally, there is a strong debate on the nature of these crimes and their components. This might be due to the inherent complexity of the issue itself and the fact that many cultural, tribal, social,

religious, and patriarchal factors contribute to shape such practices. However, the literature indicates a broad range of approaches to honour killings. Some researchers have examined the definition and characteristics of honour killings (Hussain, 2006; Akpinar, 2003; Baker et al. 1999; Terman, 2010; Dodd, 1973; Faqir, 2001; Oertner; 1978; Sen, 2005). Others tried to put the phenomenon into a theoretical perspective (Mojab, 2004; Sever & Yurdakul, 2001; Siddiqui, 2005; Wikan, 2008). Some authors focused on the prevalence, international and state responses to these crimes (Tripathi & Yadav, 2004; Madek, 2005; Palo, 2008; Ahmetbeyzade, 2008; Baron, 2006). Fewer studies examined the media and its effects on the discourse of honour killings (Kurteweg & Yurdakul, 2009; Reimers, 2007; Terman, 2010; Hellgren & Hobson, 2008).

In this study, I focus on the representation of honour killings in the Canadian media. While the importance and role of the media in shaping public discourse is undeniable, there has been little research on how the Canadian media cover honour killings (for example see Haque, 2010; Korteweg & Yordakul, 2010). This thesis is an attempt to fill this gap in the academic literature. Nevertheless, studying this topic and advancing the current knowledge on it give me an opportunity to participate in the efforts to understand and stop the practice of such killings in Canada and across the world. The aim of this study, therefore, is to further our understanding of such crimes in a way that encourages future studies on honour killings in Canada and benefits policy makers and public agencies to develop appropriate prevention and intervention policies.

To examine the focus of this research, I have chosen two major national and local newspapers in Canada; *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*; both of which are the

largest and most popular newspapers in the country. The news coverage of three recent cases of honour killings in Canada in these newspapers is explored.

The theoretical framework of my analysis is built upon the current literature on honour killings, and more importantly, on the extensive literature on the discourse of violence against immigrant and Muslim women in the West (see for example Jiwani, 2006; 2009; Razack 2004; 2008; Moghissi and Ghorashi, 2010; Said, 1978, 1997; Fernandez, 2009).

According to the literature, honour-based violence is situated within orientalist frameworks that understand it as a manifestation of the alleged ‘culture clash’ between immigrants’ culture and the West. In particular, in the case of Muslim women it is said that honour killings in the two recent decades in the West, have provided a metaphor for orientalist perspectives (Sen, 2005). In the post 9/11 climate, much like the anti-terror efforts in the Western society, discussions on honour killings have been associated with condemnation of Islam and the backward ‘Other’ (Sen, 2005).

Accordingly, while it is beyond the scope of this study to examine all aspects of the problem, this research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do Canadian newspapers cover cases of honour killings? How do they present the practice of honour killings? (For instance, how much is the amount of covering? When and where in the newspapers are they covered? What is the focus of the news stories?)
2. What are the elements of focus while representing honour killings? Do they consider the cases as a gender-based violence which is rooted in patriarchy

(therefore consider it as a form of domestic violence) or as a cultural, ethnic, or religious problem?

3. How are the victims and the perpetrators in the three honour killings cases presented? What are the elements of focus that could lead to a negative or positive portrayal?
4. What are the differences in the coverage?
5. What are the implications of the findings? And what practical suggestions can this research offer?

To present results of the research, in the first chapter, I explore the current academic literature on honour killings. Through this chapter and drawing upon the literature, I provide a definition of honour, honour killings, the major components of such killings, and suggest ways to prevent such crimes that are identified in the literature. Further, I focus on honour killings in the immigration context and their representation in the Western media. This section provides the framework and the theoretical background that I will later use in the analysis of the results.

In chapter two, I present the methods of the analysis. In this chapter, the focus is on the importance of qualitative textual analysis and media studies. I maintain the idea that the media are not only the representative of social events and public perceptions, but indeed they construct meaning through selected methods of representation (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Van Dijk, 1991). In addition, I provide a brief description of the three cases that I have chosen to examine. The sample and the methods of analysis are also presented.

Chapter three provides the results of the research. In this chapter, I focus on the different coverage of the three cases, with a more extensive coverage devoted to the

murder of Aqsa Parvez. I will provide the results, guided by my research questions. In chapter four and building upon the literature, I present an analysis of the results. Through this analysis, I will show how the media representation and the dominant discourse of honour killings in the West has created senses of Othering, Islamophobia, and difference between the West the rest of world, particularly Muslim world. Although little empirical research is available to prove the extent of the discourse, this research explores how in the Canadian context, the media participates in creating the discourse. Finally, I discuss the limitations of my analysis and give recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Definition of Honour Killings

Definition and characteristics in the field of honour crimes, as it is argued, are highly problematic (Welchman & Hossain, 2005a; Sen, 2005). Scholars have debated the nature and components of honour killings (Welchman & Hossain, 2005a). Moreover, there is a lack of consensus about the term ‘honour killing’ itself. Some authors (Gill, 2009; Madek, 2005) maintain that ‘honour killings’ might not be an appropriate term, since there is no honour involved in these murders and calling them ‘honour killings’ belittles the victims and plays down the severity of these crimes. Some others, in the Western context, criticize the term because it results in stereotyping immigrants and implies that only immigrants have culture and tradition, while the west is modern and post-cultural (Gill, 2011; Razack, 2008; Terman, 2010) . In addition, the term implies that honour crimes are more terrible and horrific than domestic violence homicides that occur among whites (Terman, 2010). It is argued that the term ‘honour killings’ emphasizes male honour and encourages the perpetrators to use it as a moral defence to justify those crimes and discount the widespread incidence of honour-based violence (Gill, 2009). Overall, as Gill (2009) argues; it is vital to remember that the term itself is a symbolic and rhetorical construction, which is subjected to contested meanings.

Despite the disagreement about the term, it is generally accepted that honour killings are crimes which are committed in the name of ‘honour’. Unni Wikan defines honour killing as “a murder carried out in order to restore honour, not just for a single person but a collective” (Wikan, 2008, p. 73). It supposes the approval of a supportive audience who is ready to reward murder with honour (Wikan, 2008).

In a broader definition, Gill (2009) defines honour-based violence as any form of violence perpetrated against females within the framework of patriarchal family structures, communities and societies, where the main justification for the perpetration of violence is the protection of a social construction of honour as a value system, norm, or tradition. According to Sen (2005), honour crimes are actions that remove from a collectivity the stain of dishonour, both gendered and locally defined, by using emotional, social, or physical coercion over the person whose actual or imputed actions have brought that dishonouring. Physical force may involve killing the transgressor of the code of honour. As such, understanding honour killings will not be possible, unless we understand the concept of honour and its components.

1.2 The Concept of Honour

1.2.1 Honour as a Term

What distinguishes honour killings from other types of killing is that honour killings are based on the protection of family's honour. Honour is a cultural notion that conveys various meanings in different contexts and cultures. Furthermore, the words that are translated to English as 'honour' vary in their meanings and connotations, while these meanings get lost in translation (Terman, 2010; Baron, 2006). Hence, the word 'honour' in English does not convey the whole culturally specific meanings in different languages.

In Arabic, honour is defined as high rank, nobility, dignity (*Sharaf*), exaltedness (*uluw*), repute (*'ird*), or glory (*majd*) (Hoyek, Sidawi, & Abou Mrad, 2005; Baron, 2006). These words also have different connotations. *Sharaf* refers to rank and social prestige and should be defended by men; while *'ird* is mostly connected with a woman's body and her sexuality (Baron, 2006; Kressel, 1981; Dodd, 1973). The woman's body, as such, is a

shameful thing (*awra*) that must be guarded by the family and the society to which it belongs (Hoyek et al. 2005; Faqir, 2001). In the Kurdish and Turkish languages, the word honour sometimes is used in the meaning of purity or chastity of women (*namus*), while *sharaf* refers to other norms of morality and reputation in the community including hospitality, courage, and so on (Wikan, 1984; 2008; Akpinar, 2003). *Namus* is generally seen as residing in the bodies of women and their sexual integrity which is regulated by ‘codes of honour’ (Terman, 2010).

In South Asian communities, *izzat* refers to the conduct, and social performances of women by which the families attain honour and prestige (Gill, 2009; Knudsen, 2004). It must always and by any means be preserved. In these countries, the family’s *izzat* takes precedence over individual rights and values (Gill, 2009).

This conception of honour, where it is practiced, is associated with a gender construction under which, women and particularly their sexual activities represent the honour of the family and men are considered the protectors of this honour (Hussain, 2006). For a man, honour is tied most closely to the reputation and sexual behaviour of the women in his family, particularly his mother, sister, wife, and daughter (Araji & Carlson, 2001). Thus, female chastity and modesty are considered to be essential cultural components of honour (Dodd, 1973; Gill, 2009; Hussain, 2006; Ortner, 1978; Sen, 2005).

1.2.2 Honour and the Masculine/Feminine Divide

Scholars maintain that honour as a moral code adheres differentially and unequally to men and women. According to Faqir (2001) the notion of honour conveys different meanings for men and women. It is divided along feminine and masculine lines, with different meanings for each gender. Masculinity is often praised and glorified and

men are considered the guardians of their female relatives and their honour, while women are passive and selfless individuals that follow the honour norms. Sen (2005) argues that codes of honour are not only about what it means to be a woman but are also about what it means to be a man, and therefore, are central to the social meanings of gender.

According to Youssef (1973), Family honour among Latin Americans is symbolized in the idea of two sex-linked characteristics that distinguish the ideal character of man and woman; the manliness of the man and the sexual purity of the woman. While, the concept of family honour is at the highest level of cultural valuation, the defense of it is linked to double obligations; the man is always on his guard against any sexual aggressiveness towards his own women and ready to defend any such offense, while the wives, daughters, mothers must remain pure and protected from any transgression or suggestion of transgression (Youssef, 1973).

It is mentioned that honour is closely tied to the ideas of masculinity (Spierenburg 1998; Rudy, 2008; Knudsen, 2004) so that masculinity largely depends on female chastity (Reddy, 2008). As Wikan states, honour is not a luxury and sideline, but crucial to welfare, status and the position of the men in their society (Wikan, 2008). Honour as a complex notion is closely tied to both men's self-worth and social worth (Araji and Carlson, 2001, Spierenburg, 1998). Men retain masculine self-worth and social-worth not only through regulating the behaviour of their female relatives, but also by protecting them from potential dishonouring by other males.

Likewise, honour is tied to control and regulating women's sexuality by men in their family and community (Sen 2005; Coomaraswamy 2005; Ortner, 1978; Baker et al. 1999; Araji, 2000). In an honour-based society, the family is expected to have exclusive

rights over the sexual capacities of its women (Campbell, 1964). Honour is also connected to policing female behaviour and their objectification (Palo, 2008, Reddy, 2008). Honour codes serve to justify oppressive control on women within the home; furthermore, by defining the public sphere as male territory, they restrict female participation outside the home and in the society (Baker et al. 1999).

Additionally, as Reddy (2008) points out, honour codes are concerned not only with the protection of patriarchal norms in relation to femininity, but also of broader norms of heterosexuality and heteronormativity, which affect both men and women more generally. As a result, gay men are at the risk of being killed due to breaching the roles of sexuality and masculinity.

In short, on the one hand, any challenge or denial of a man's control over his female relatives damages his definition of self and manliness and puts his honour at stake (Ortner, 1978). On the other hand, women are responsible not only for their own honour, but for the honour of their male family members. Women who break the honour codes are punished harshly by the males in their family. As such, through controlling female sexuality, men and women are constituted as complementary contrasts to each other (Akpinar, 2003).

1.2.3 Losability of Honour: The Concept of Shame

In the honour-based value systems, the specific feature of honour is that it is socially given and can be lost. Its 'losability' is essential to the notion of honour in honour killings (Stewart, 1994). Losing honour by the breach or suspected breach of the honour-related norms damages the man's reputation within the eyes of the honour group (Sen, 2005) and results in his shame (Baker et al. 1999; Wikan, 1984). As such, honour is

directly correlated with shame. Hence, shame is the dishonouring act that is regarded as unacceptable and problematic (Wikan, 1984). As Reddy (2008) maintains, honour is constructed through dualistic notions of male 'honour' and female 'shame'. Akpınar (2003) argues that the male/female hierarchical dichotomy is completely linked to the honour/shame complex, whereby honour is seen as the attribute of men and shame of women.

According to such value systems, when a woman allegedly is involved in actions that disgrace the family's reputation and are considered as sexually inappropriate, she deserves to be punished in order to 'wash away the shame'. Thus, shame is redressed by punishing the deviant females, the source of the shame (Araji, 2000). In fact, if the men do not attempt to repair the male family honour, they are seen as emasculated (Gilmore, 1987; Abu-Odeh, 1996). According to Hoyek et al. (2005), "washing away the shame" or "bad behaviour of the victim" constituted the motivation of the perpetrators in %78 of the cases they studied.

Loss of virginity, pregnancy as a result of out of wedlock sexual relationships, marriage without consent of the family, being raped or sexually abused, disobeying family's cultural values for example by conversing with a strange man, laughing a lot, not wearing hijab, and seeking divorce are among such alleged disgracing behaviours (Araji, 2000; Hussain, 2006; Sen, 2005). However, in different cultures dishonouring includes different types of behaviours.

The response to such acts in the extreme cases is killing the woman. Nevertheless, decisions depend on the social and political standing of the family in the community (Araji and Carlson, 2001). The killings, therefore, are often accompanied with a form of

execution due to an allegation, suspicion, or proof of sexual impropriety by the victim (Amnesty International, 1999).

1.2.4 The Role of Reputation within Community

In honour-based societies, reputation and the social standing of the family play crucial roles in defining and practicing honour codes. According to Baron (2006), honour is a collective affair that helps define the parameters of the collective. Honour is vital in determining who belongs to the group and who stands outside (Baron, 2006). Baker et al. (1999) maintain that the concept of honour is based on the idea that a person's honour depends on the behaviour of others. Thus, the behaviour of others is an essential component in one's self-esteem and community regard. A family that maintains control of its women benefits from a good reputation in the society (Baker et al. 1999).

Moreover, the public accusations of loss of honour are crucial to the setting in honour crimes and to the decision to kill or not to kill (Baron, 2006). Indeed, dishonouring necessitates publicity as it is a public phenomenon (Terman, 2010). Hence, honour is in the eyes of the beholder, and dealing with dishonouring becomes essential only when it is known in the community (Terman, 2010). In such a situation, not taking action or not moving quickly enough further damages the family's reputation (Campbell, 1964).

As a result, the killing should also be public or publicised, so that it would be obvious to the collective that the family has redeemed its honour (Baron, 2006). Hence, when honour codes are violated, killing the woman is an act of purification for the family that could bring back the previous respect in the community (Campbell, 1964). Faqir (2001) suggests that reputation and rumour play an active role in initiating honour

killings. The significance attached to sexual reputation is a method of policing women's behaviours. Women also police each other through the spreading of rumours (Faqir, 2001).

1.2.5 Honour Codes as Means of Social Control

Honour codes also serve as means of social control over members of the society. According to Baker et al. (1999), in honour-based societies status and acceptance rest on the family's honour as the operative perspective of power-holding groups who rely on the behaviour of others. Women in such societies do not have a claim to honour as individuals, separate from their roles within the family. Their actions as individuals can bring dishonour to others (Baker et al. 1999; Araji, 2000). Thus, the codes of honour guide female behaviour and serve as a mechanism of social control (Baker et al. 1999). It is within this context that the symbolic complex of virginity is shaped and valued as a key social concept (Buitelaar, 2002) that controls women's relationship with men in the society.

Moreover, honour is a fundamental characteristic of the patriarchal order, and honour killings are designed to maintain the patriarchal status quo (Kandiyoti, 1988). Gill (2009) maintains that the notion of honour is embedded in the larger operations of patriarchy based on which men victimize and abuse women to sustain their dominance within the social system.

Ahmetbeyzade (2008) discusses the interrelationship between the community's sense of honour and its social order in both Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures. She suggests that killing in the name of honour serves as a long-lasting necro-political strategy to demonstrate the sovereign power of the tribe (Ahmetbeyzade, 2008). She

maintains that the concept of honour necessarily implies that a woman's body does not belong to her, but to her community and she does not have any claim over her own life and existence. Lacking power over her own existence, a woman's social value lies in her capacity to service and to support the patriarchal order (Ahmetbeyzade, 2008).

Consequently, honour killing is a form of sovereign violence which is capable of suspending the state laws and protecting the patriarchal capital (Ahmetbeyzade, 2008).

According to Faqir (2001), in Arab society, violence is constructed through power relations that constitute hetero-patriarchy. Arab society can be classified as a 'neo-patriarchal' society wherein power relationships are influenced by gender, class, clan, and proximity to the regime (Faqir, 2001). In such a society, sexual violence is used as a way of securing and maintaining the relations of male dominance and female subordination which are central to the patriarchal social order (Faqir, 2001).

1.3 Honour Killings, Origin and Components

1.3.1 Honour killings; Origin and the World-Wide Practice

Scholars dispute the origin and world-wide practice of honour codes. Some authors suggest that honour rationales exist all across the globe, while others consider them as only belonging to some societies in the Middle East and South Asia. Hussain (2006) suggests that honour is a deep-rooted traditional notion that originated in the ancient times and shaped both Western and Islamic family law. One study shows the significance of honour codes among Arab tribes in the pre-Islamic period (Fares, as cited in Dodd, 1973). According to Reddy (2008), historically, including in the European context, masculinity has been linked to ideas of women as the property of their male

relatives which results in attempts to control female behaviour, particularly, female sexual autonomy.

Some researchers discuss socio-political and historical contributing factors that affect honour codes. They suggest that commodification of women play a crucial role in perpetuating honour killings (Hoyek et al. 2005; Tripathi & Yadav, 2004). Women's honour is the property of the male relatives as long as it is valuable as a resource (Gill, 2009). Hoyek et al. (2005) maintain that this comes from the idea of slavery of women, which historically came about with the establishment of private property and the patriarchal order that made the man the owner of everything and his wife and children natural extensions of his property. Therefore, the right to kill in honour killings are rooted in the right to kill slaves by the owner in early times (Hoyek et al. 2005). Goldstein (2002) argues the right to kill unfaithful or disgraced women represents a culture-by-culture expression of a biologically evolved behavioural pathology. As such, its local prevalence is attributable to characteristics of culture, religion, legal system, and the heritable traits that influence individuals' behaviours. Goldstein (2002) explains that these crimes are maladaptive and are products of an evolved male sexual aggression.

Baker et al. (1999) argue that honour rationales are an integral part of women's killing, regardless of where the women are killed. They provide a comparative assessment of honour and shame, control over female behaviour in both honour-based societies and Western countries and conclude that there are clear parallels between traditional family honour killings and the intimate partner killings in the West. The difference is that in honour-based societies, women's sexuality is collectively controlled by the relatives, while in Western societies this control is shifted to their husbands or partners (Baker et al.

1999). However, throughout the world, the underlying honour and shame systems remain the important dimensions of patriarchal ideology of women's killings. Therefore, similar perspectives can be applied to many such killings in English speaking and Middle Eastern countries (Baker et al. 1999).

In spite of the similarities between Western countries and honour-based societies, there might be differences between the level of control and the social meaning that is attributed to women's sexual behaviour and their chastity. As previously mentioned, in an honour-based society, the man is defined as the defender of his family's honour and women effectively function as symbols of honour (Gill, 2009). These rationales, regardless of their origin, remain the specific characteristics of honour-based systems. In this regard, Akpınar (2003) suggests that patriarchy is most apparent in societies where the only accumulation of capital, which is possible and permitted, is the accumulation of symbolic capital. In such societies, women are capital investments to be protected, and men's honour is achieved through control of their women. As a result, the socialization of girls revolves around notions of family honour to control women's sexuality and to warn them of dishonouring their families by any improper sexual conduct (Gill, 2009).

1.3.2 Components of Honour Killings

Despite the disputes about the honour rationales and the worldwide practice of honour killings, it is generally accepted that honour killings have specific characteristics that differentiate them from other forms of intimate partner violence and identify them as specific forms of violence against women.

Based on the notion of honour and its functions, several factors are considered as the characteristics of honour killings. The below-mentioned factors are cited in the

literature. However, it is critical to remember that these features are subjects of disagreement among scholars.

1. Honour killings are based on perceptions of honour which result in the systematic control of women's social and sexual behaviour (Gill, 2009; Welchman & Hossain, 2005; Sen, 2005; Dodd, 1973).
2. They occur within the framework of collective family structures and societies. They usually involve several family members and a larger community involvement (Baker et al. 1999; Gill, 2009; Kressel, 1981; Patel & Gadit, 2008).
3. They involve premeditated acts. Honour killings are planned by family members (Wikan, 2008; Kressel, 1981). Even women may participate in such planning (Chesler, 2009; Sen, 2005). Hence, these crimes are a result of a collective deliberate decision (An-Naim, 2005; Sen, 2005). However, some scholars argue that many honour killings occur without premeditation and this is not an important factor in categorizing honour killings (Phillips, 2007).
4. The victim is generally a woman, related to the perpetrator by blood or by marriage bond (Hoyek et al. 2005). Therefore, women are the primary victims of honour killings (Welchman & Hossain 2005a; Sen 2005; Baron, 2006). Reddy (2008) argues that even where males are killed, they are alleged to ruin females' reputation. Thus, their victimization revolves around attempts to control women sexuality (Reddy, 2008). Studies in Lebanon and Pakistan found that the majority of the victims are young married women (Hoyek et al. 2005; Nasrullah et al. 2009). Also, it is been suggested that homosexual men are killed because of their 'dishonouring' sexual orientations (Reddy, 2008).

5. Most frequently, male family members carry out honour crimes. However, there are known cases where a female family member murders another female in an honour killing (Husseini, 2006). Generally, however, the perpetrators are the father, brother, uncle, and sometimes the mother or sister of the victim.
6. The methods of committing such crimes are mostly severe methods such as firearm, knifing, throwing from the balcony, and strangling (Hoyek et al. 2005; Nasrullah, Haqqi, & Cummings, 2009).
7. The mere perception, suspicion, or rumour that a woman has dishonoured her family is enough to promote the killings (Terman, 2010; Faqir, 2001). It is not required for the killers to prove the dishonouring actions.
8. Perpetrators believe that their actions are forms of honour cleansing. Typically, there is no mourn or feeling of regret after precedence of an honour killing (Knudsen, 2004).

1.4 State Interventions in Honour Codes

During time, the states, through their legal codes, have intervened to regulate honour codes and crimes of honour in different countries. Such interventions have been criticized by researchers for not been effective enough to deter or eradicate the practice of honour killings. According to many researchers (Madek, 2005; Faqir, 2001; Baron, 2006; Palo, 2009; Sen, 2005), such interventions reinforced the honour rationales and supported honour killings. According to Madek (2005) honour killings are subject to culturally influenced laws that provide exceptions to standard ideas of justice based on which the law in many countries ultimately permits honour to be an excuse or justifying factor for murder, allowing perpetrators to go unpunished or receive lighter sentences.

Baron (2006) examines tribal, Islamic, and Ottoman precedents in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries in regulating female sexuality and maintains that the state, along with nationalists, did not seek to challenge the notion of family honour in the last two centuries. Rather, they built a concept of national honour upon the ideal of family honour that was reinforced by state interventions in law, medicine, and criminology. Thus, attacks on family honour have been regarded as attacks on national loyalty, cultural, and religious authority and the sovereignty of the nationalist state (Baron, 2006).

At the same time, reinforcing honour codes has been viewed as a means of standing against the evils of modernization in some countries. According to Faqir (2001) the protection of women's honour was perceived as an important resort against Western influence during the British Mandate in Palestine and Jordan. Hence, women's honour became a symbol of national 'purity' and identity, while resisting globalisation and the new order became synonymous with protecting women's honour (Faqir, 2001).

Furthermore, it has been suggested that inadequate legal systems which allow for partial or complete criminal defence in the cases of honour killings are serious obstacles to prevent these crimes (Knudsen, 2004; Hussain, 2006; Palo, 2008; Baxi, Rai, & Ali, 2006). This problem is mostly obvious in societies where the legal systems are still governed by traditional and religious codes and are mainly ruled by patriarchal norms and values that reinforce privileges of men. Besides that, low level of protection and social services for the victims are mentioned as parts of the legal system's inefficiency (Amnesty International, 1999; Hussain, 2006).

According to Amnesty International's report on Pakistan (1999) the government has failed to take adequate measures to end honour killings and the gender bias in the law.

In most of honour killing cases, due to the lack of adequate legal system, gender bias in the law and among police and judges, and biased interpretation of the law the perpetrators never get punished (Amnesty International, 1999). Thus, the major reason for the prevalence of honour killings in countries like Pakistan is the structure of the justice system (Knudsen, 2004). In Pakistan many aspects of the traditional justice are incorporated in the legal system based on which, killing of women in order to restore the family's honour is justified.

Additionally, Palo (2008) highlights that *Qisas* and *Diyat laws* are a part of the Islamic legal system in Pakistan and suggests that these laws allow discrimination against women in the form of honour killings. *Qisas* is a category of crime in Islamic law that includes all types of murder and all other bodily harm that result in injury (Ammar, 2002). The penalties for *Qisas* are not mandated in the Qur'an, but retaliation, compensation, and reconciliation are prescribed in Islam (Ammar, 2002). Under the *Qisas* laws, killing is a public and private crime against individuals and God. However, retaliation in cases of murder requires the request of the family of the victim. Also, forgiveness is highly encouraged (Ammar, 2002). The family can order the forgiveness and considers compensation under *Diyat* law. Palo (2008) explains that in the cases of honour killings the family usually forgive the perpetrator and do not request for *Diyya* (compensation), since the murderers are either the family members or under protection of the victim's family. As a result, the perpetrators rarely are punished.

In the case of Turkey, Ahmetbeyzade (2008) argues that practices of justice in line with juridico-political interests of the state protect traditional and customary practices such as honour killings. She discusses the ways in which the juridico-political order of the

state contributes to the continuation of honour killings and suspends application of the law in such killings by considering them as exceptions of the law (Ahmetbeyzade, 2008).

1.5 Honour Killings in the Immigration Context

A growing number of studies, particularly in Europe, have focused on honour killings in the immigration context. Several honour killings among immigrant communities in Europe and North America have raised interests and discussions as to how these cases occur, what are the underlying reasons, and how to prevent them.

Authors mention that honour-related beliefs and practices often become stricter within the immigration context (Terman, 2010; Wikan, 2008; Akpinar, 2003). In the immigration context, the role of women as the main transmitters of social values and the primary boundary-makers of cultural and religious identity is highly politicized (Terman, 2010). As such, even within strict families, sons are usually free to adopt a Western lifestyle without being accused of losing their cultural identity, while daughters are expected to follow family rules and values (Terman, 2010).

According to Akpinar (2003), in the immigrant situation, control over women is accelerated, as they are carriers of group identity and honour (Akpinar, 2003). Additionally, immigrant men's vulnerability to unemployment, discrimination, and loss of authority over children sometimes leads to feelings of powerlessness among them. Thus, there is a risk that members of ethnic communities who hold conservative patriarchal values turn to their values and continue exerting pressure on females (Akpinar, 2003). Accordingly, keeping control of 'their space' by controlling 'their women' can compensate for feelings of powerlessness for some immigrant men (Akpinar, 2003).

Furthermore, authors in the West have discussed the nature of honour killings and their possible differences with other types of femicide. Two different theoretical perspectives have emerged in these discussions. Some authors explain honour killings as a dimension of Islamic or Eastern culture that is based on possession of women. This perspective considers the killings as primarily cultural or Islamic practices that are inherently worse than domestic violence murders (Chesler, 2009; Goldstein, 2002). Chesler (2009) differentiates between honour killings and domestic violence arguing that such killings are primarily Muslim-on-Muslim crimes. She suggests that honour killings in North America originate with immigration from majority Muslim countries and may correlate with the numbers of first generation immigrants.

In contrast, other authors discuss honour killings as an aspect of patriarchy. This perspective suggests that honour killings are a worldwide practice that is rooted in patriarchy (Mojab, 2004; Hussain, 2006). The practice cuts across ethnic, class, and religious lines and transcends cultural boundaries (Gill, 2009; Hussain, 2006; Faqir, 2010). As such, the best way to obtain an in-depth understanding of them is a careful application of a feminist perspective without invoking Islam or any other religion (Sever & Yurdakul, 2001). Some authors suggest that considering honour killings as rooted in Islam is misleading, since honour crimes are by no means an Islamic conception (Hussain 2006; Khalili, 2002). It is argued that honour is not the monopoly of Islamic societies; but it predates all monotheistic religions and is a prevalent issue in other societies, including Western societies (Faqir, 2001; Baker et al. 1999). It is suggested that in Western countries male's control over women's sexual behaviour, as the basic component of honour killings, is highly present (Sever & Yurdakul, 2001; Baker et al. 1999).

Some researchers maintain that considering honour killings within the wider category of domestic violence is important in order to prevent racist reactions from the state and the public (Siddiqui, 2005; Dustin & Phillips, 2008). Differentiating honour killing from domestic violence not only downplays domestic violence as something less serious, but singles out immigrants for their human rights abuses (Terman, 2010). Therefore, discussions of honour killings would turn into discussions over multiculturalism, identity conflicts, and the inherent danger of Muslim immigration (Terman, 2010).

In addition, considering honour killings as cultural practices may not be useful for two basic reasons: first, it may lead to stereotyping those cultures as barbaric (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007). Second, these practices might be considered as traditional or cultural practices that require tolerance and respect (Coomaraswamy, 2005; Terman, 2010). According to Dustin and Phillips (2008), there is a danger that this differentiation encourages a false dichotomy between minority and majority communities so that crimes of minorities are explained by reference to ‘culture’, while crimes in the majority communities understood as individual aberration. As a result, the perpetrators and the victims are seen as without agency actors who act according to the unwritten laws of their culture. As a result, culture is seen as the ultimate power which directs and drives behaviour (Dustin & Phillips, 2008).

Meetoo and Mirza (2007) argue that in the UK, honour killings have become “ethnicised” within the British multicultural context and treated as cultural crimes. As a result, immigrant women are caught up in a collision of discourses (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007). On the one hand, these women are at personal risk of patriarchal, cultural, and

religious belief systems of honour that encourage the incidence of honour killings. On the other hand, their personal risk is amplified as they are invisible from protective agencies and social services (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007).

According to several scholars, discussions of honour killings in the West are framed within the discourse of 'clash of civilizations' (Razack, 2008; Terman, 2010; Fernandez, 2009). According to this discourse which is supported by Samuel P. Huntington, the primary source of conflict in the world today is the 'cultural' difference between the 'West' and the 'non-West.' Here, Islam is presented as the biggest opposite to Western civilization and culture (Huntington, as cited in Terman, 2010). Thus, all cultural phenomena in Muslim world are seen as caused by Islam. In this discourse, the 'West' is presented as having values and modernity and seen less as 'culture', while the non-West or Muslim world, has absolute 'culture'. The logic underpins superiority of Western values, including commitment to freedom, dignity, and the rights of women (Razack, 2008; Jiwani, 2006; Terman, 2010). In this way, discussions about honour killings are used to stigmatize Muslim communities and evict them from the political and legal community, especially in the North American and European countries (Razack, 2008).

With respect to the proper approach to honour killings, Akipnar (2003) suggests that, because this practice is present in particular cultures and societies around the world, it is important to have a cultural analysis without falling into a cultural reductionist trap. Also, some researchers believe that protection of women from honour killing requires a different procedure and a different set of actions than domestic violence (Terman, 2010). Terman (2010) argues that honour killings present particular challenges to law

enforcement, courts, and agencies working for the protection of women. Appropriate punishment for the perpetrators who often work within the framework of a collective agreement and the need for special protection for the victims are among these challenges (Terman, 2010).

Moreover, there is a consensus that violation of women's human rights in the name of honour could not be tolerated and supporting cultural values in the name of multiculturalism could not be a justification for honour crimes (Gill, 2009; Akpınar, 2003; Meeto & Mirza, 2007). Gill (2009) emphasizes that in the case of honour killings, principles of human rights should not be allowed to support honour-based beliefs. Therefore killing women must never be seen as a cultural matter (Meeto & Mirza, 2007). Hence, in the absence of global social reform of patriarchal cultures, human rights law can be used to develop a culturally realistic perspective toward violence against women (Meeto & Mirza, 2007).

1.6 Honour Killings in the Media

Most of the literature about violence against immigrant women, in general, and honour killings, in particular, demonstrate that immigrants in the Western media are misrepresented within stereotypical frameworks (Said, 1997, Jiwani, 2006; Haque, 2010; Razack, 2004; 2008). Jiwani (2006) discusses that association between immigrants and crime is a common strategy that is used in the media to both racialize crime and criminalize racial groups. In this way, repetitive reports about crimes that were committed in the immigrant communities leads to the strong impression that every member of that community has a proclivity to crime (Jiwani, 2006).

Gill (2006) explains how media representations of honour killings misrepresent ethnic minorities and presuppose the mainstream moral superiority. According to Terman (2010) through discussions of honour killings, Western media give a disproportional amount of attention to domestic violence in immigrant communities. Even though rates of rape, sexual harassment, and inter-family murder are generally high in the West, the media singles out Muslims and other immigrant communities for perpetrating these types of crimes, thereby ignoring the whole truth concerning violence against women (Terman, 2010). Additionally, honour killings have been strongly connoted with Islam by the Western media, While we know that honour killings occurs among non-Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists. Furthermore, there are Muslim countries with no reports of honour killings, for instance Indonesia; the most populous Muslim country (Terman, 2010).

Hellgren and Hobson (2008) reviewed three recent cases of honour killings in Sweden with an emphasis on the role of media in framing the culture-related discussions. They maintain that these cases touched a nerve in Swedish society and evoke a strong cultural meaning (Hellgren & Hobson, 2008). Also, the killings in Sweden opened up cultural dialogues that included feminist groups and immigrant women's voices (Hellgren & Hobson, 2008). Considering the fact that discussions about the politics and policy in Sweden evolve around the notion of "good society", Hellgren and Hobson (2008) explain that the public debate on violence against women among Muslim immigrants has strongly affected the discourse of immigrant integration. As such, bright boundaries between immigrants and the majority society have been drawn.

Korteweg and Yurdakul (2009) studied the newspapers' content in the Netherlands and Germany and examined the extent to which the immigrant-mainstream society boundaries are reinforced in the media. The authors maintain that the European debate on honour killings is associated with drawing boundaries with reference to ethnicity, national origin, religion, and gender (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009). They found that in both countries the newspaper reports reinforce bright boundaries by discussing honour killings as a form of violence against women rooted in Islam, ethnicity, or national origin (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009). However, they found that some articles contained possibilities of boundary blurring; as they discussed honour killings as a form of violence against women similar to other forms of violence, stressed the differences in immigrant communities' approaches toward honour killings, and highlighted immigrants own efforts against honour crimes (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009).

Reimers (2007) provides a discourse analysis of three different Swedish newspapers regarding the murder of Fadime Shahindel; a Kurdish woman who was killed by her father in Sweden in 2002. Reimers found that the lack of integration was a common explanation for honour killings in the media. According to the discourse, the murder was rooted in alien and different cultural values; Shahindel's family was not 'Swedish', but hostile to Swedish values. Reimers (2007) maintains that the coverage of the murder resembles previous media representations of immigrants in Sweden where the media established dichotomous notions of 'Swedish' and 'immigrants' as 'us' and 'the Other'. As such, 'Swedish' is characterized by gender equality, while 'immigrant' is characterized by female subordination. In this way, this discourse ignores the general

aspects of power and inequality and the fact that it is the society that makes male violence against women possible (Reimers, 2007).

1.7 Punishment and Prevention of Honour Killings

Human rights organizations mention several ways to prevent and combat honour killings. These generally include legal amendments to punish the perpetrators, preventive measures to prevent the occurrence of honour crimes, and protective measures to protect the victims (Human Rights Watch, 2004; Amnesty International, 1999). In order to effectively punish the perpetrators, these measures include legal reforms to criminalize honour-based crimes and punish the perpetrators, training police and judges, facilitate the victims' access to the justice system, and assuring fair and quick investigations to detect such crimes. At the preventive level, the measures include public-involved efforts to bring the issue to the public attention and educational programs to educate people to respect human rights and to know their rights. Protective measures include providing shelters for women, protecting human rights activists to work against such crimes, and providing special protection for children and younger victims of honour crimes.

Mojab (2004) suggests short-term and long-term approaches to prevent honour crimes. In the short-term, she suggests that the group nature of honour crimes and the usual early warnings make them easier to anticipate and prevent (Mojab, 2004). In the long-term, she calls for multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary, and radical approaches to change the system of gender-relations which is based on universal patriarchal values (Mojab, 2004). Mojab (2004) maintains that we should go beyond the common discussions of honour killings which reduce the issue to questions of culture and religion and target patriarchy as the main reason of such practices. To achieve such a goal, Mojab

(2004) suggests promoting feminist education at all levels of schooling and adoption of universal human rights.

Knudson (2004) suggests more strict and harsh legal punishments and instituting a national database on honour killings in order to facilitate social research on those crimes. According to Faqir (2001), honour killings are associated with the larger concern of lack of respect for human rights and democracy. As such, they only could be solved by democratizing and the deployment of human rights. Madek (2005) focuses on the application of international legal documents and treaties such as the United Nation's Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, she emphasises that internal legal changes and police reforms are needed to eliminate such killings (Madek, 2005).

Hossain (2006) suggests feminist interpretations of Islamic concepts and comprehensive legal reforms that address the systematic discrimination against women at all levels. Regarding the justice system, Palo (2008) maintains that Qisas and Diyat Ordinance and other traditional legal codes must evolve to correspond to international human rights legal objectives. She calls for alternative interpretations that combine the fundamentals of Islamic laws with principles of human rights (Palo, 2008).

In the immigration context, Gill (2006) emphasizes the state responsibility and application of human rights provisions. Nevertheless, she highlights the dangers of universalism and suggests various ways to reduce violence against women under the scope of relativism, such as including cultural minorities in the governance of practices and giving voice to the most vulnerable members of cultural groups to facilitate the internal contestation of cultural norms (Gill, 2006). In addition, more research, more

investment in safety planning, and training the police forces who encounter honour killings have been suggested (Gill, 2009).

Furthermore, An-Naim (2005) suggests that engaging in an internal discourse within communities where crimes of honour occur, as a useful strategy to combat and prevent such crimes. Within the Islamic communities, An-Naim (2005) suggests discussions of honour killings on radio and television programs, Friday sermons and at local mosques, in songs, in formal and informal education in school, in sports and youth clubs, and in women or other community associations. Development of a community discourse will help address the underlying causes and encourage the state officials to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and to allocate resources to combat crimes of honour (An-Naim, 2005).

1.8 Significance of the Current Study

The above literature review shows that more academic and advocacy work is needed to establish definitions and to better understand the causes and consequences of honour killings and the more effective ways to prevent their practice. There is little empirical research about the prevalence and diversity of this phenomenon. Additionally, more attention and research is required to explore the dichotomy of ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’ cultures in the case of honour killings. The literature suggests that honour killings in third world countries, particularly Middle Eastern countries, are considered less severe crimes than other murders; while in the West, honour killings are regarded as the most brutal crimes that are committed by minorities (Terman, 2010). It is yet to be examined what the nature of honour killings is and how a more accurate understanding of these crimes, their origin and components could be achieved.

Furthermore, in Western countries, a particular dimension of the debate on honour killings has raised new challenges. Questioning the nature of honour killings as a specific form of domestic violence is the centre of these discussions. Future studies are needed in order to examine the specific characteristics of honour killings in the West and to achieve a deeper understanding of the dynamics of honour crimes in the Western context.

There are few academic studies about honour killings in Canada. In fact, although honour killings occur in Canada, particularly in recent years, very little systematic research has been conducted to address the different aspects of such cases. It seems that Canadian Academia needs to draw from similar studies in Europe and the United States. The characteristics of honour killings in the Canadian context, the demographic and social characteristics of the perpetrators and the victims need to be investigated. Also, the criminal justice system and the Canadian society's response to such killings have not been explored.

It is beyond the scope of this study to respond to examine all the above-mentioned aspects. Focusing on the impact of honour killings on Canadian society, this study examines the Canadian discourse of honour killings; particularly, it observes Canadian written media coverage of honour killings. Studying the media as main indicators of public agenda which at the same time have a strong role in shaping the public discourse gives me the opportunity to provide a response for some of the above-mentioned questions. Thus, this study examines the prevalent themes and the basic components of the coverage of honour killings in prominent Canadian newspapers, and the factors that construct the media discourse of honour killings in Canada.

Furthermore, studying the recent incidences of honour killings in Canada provides the opportunity to examine how the discourse is shaped during time. Also, it is helpful to understand how characteristics of the discourse affected and contributed to shape the macro-level policies toward violence within immigrant communities. As a result, this study highlights the major discussions of honour killings and violence against women in the Canadian newspapers and through this examines the advantages and disadvantages of such approaches.

Additionally, As Siddiqui (2005) notes, the question of how to address issues of honour killing remains unanswered and therefore, the state and the justice system have no basis to provide for the specific needs of immigrant women without singling them out for racist or xenophobic treatments (Siddiqui, 2005). This study is a small effort toward providing a reasonable answer for this fundamental question.

Chapter 2: Methods

In the current study, I used qualitative methods to examine the coverage of honour killings cases in Canadian newspapers and to explore the ways that those newspapers represent and narrate honour killings stories. Accordingly, the methodological approach was a qualitative textual analysis of *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*; the largest Canadian newspapers. The goal was to provide an examination of the primary themes in the media narratives when covering honour killings and the social meaning that is conveyed by these news texts in Canada.

Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008: p.4), “is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible...through a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, and material practice.” Nevertheless, it has been described as any social science research which produces results that are not obtained by statistical procedures or other methods of quantification (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995). Qualitative research is designed to provide an interpretive approach to the world that is not numerically focused or statistically bound (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This means that qualitative research is primarily concerned with words and images rather than numbers (Bryman et al. 2009). It cannot answer quantitative questions concerning quantity, the causes, or the strength of relationships; however, it can provide understanding of how official figures are created thorough social processes (Barbour, 2008).

In sum, qualitative research differs from quantitative research in five different ways: using positivism and post positivism approaches together, accepting postmodern sensibilities, capturing the individual’s point of view, examining the constraints of

everyday life, and securing rich description (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It seeks to achieve a better understanding of social realities, processes, meaning patterns, and structural features (Flik, Von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004).

In this study, qualitative research was preferred in order to deeply examine the narratives of the newspaper texts and provide richer description of the media constructions in the case of honour killings. With respect to honour killings and the role of the media, qualitative analysis allows us to understand how the meanings are constructed in the media and how the patterns and processes of such meaning-constructions are shaped. Therefore, the emphasis of this research is on the context in which meanings are constructed and conveyed.

2.1 Textual Analysis

‘Texts’ as forms of social actions are valuable sources for any social analysis (Alat, 2006). Textual analysis is defined as an approach of “empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000). It is a systematic process of analyzing texts that aims to understand the story-telling process present in ‘cultural texts’ and understand the relationships between the texts and society (Altheide, 1996).

This method of analysis emerged between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s and became accepted as a new methodological approach versus classical content analysis (Van Dijk, 1991). It is sometimes referred to as qualitative content analysis (Mckee, 2001). While classical quantitative content analysis examines the number of photographs, stories, words, and other quantitative characteristics of the text, textual analysis aims to

understand the deeper meanings of gender, race, and class that are conveyed through the texts (Kellner, 2010). Textual analysis enables us to discover ongoing social change and how ideologies are resisted through texts (Alat, 2006). It reveals the ideologies present in the media that meld discourses related to gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality into forms before exposing them to the public (Alat, 2006). As such, it is used in news media studies to understand how social structures gain meanings when they make the headlines (Parameswaran, as cited in Alat, 2006). Considering the strong relation between the form and content, any textual analysis will not be complete unless both form and content together are studied (Fairclough, 1995, Hall, 1975). According to Hall (1975), every element of a text; metaphors, similes, allusions, tone, themes, recurring patterns, and omissions create meaning. Thus, textual analysis is an interpretive method that allows the researcher to study all aspects of content, including omissions (Hall, 1975). It reveals not only what is in a text but also what is absent (Fairclough, as cited in Alat, 2006).

In this study, I examined both form and content of the news stories to answer its questions. I attempted to examine how narratives of the incidences were selected and which aspects were omitted. However, I should note that due to the specific nature and difficulties of analyzing photos, this study did not analyze images and their role in shaping the media discourse of honour killings. Yet, to describe the form of the stories in a few cases, references were made to the images that were associated with the news stories about the murders.

2.2 Studying the Media

The media, in today's world, have particular characteristics that make them worth studying. They almost have the exclusive power in deciding what issues are worthy of

publicity (Chermak, as cited in Taylor, 2009). They are believed to have replaced all other social institutions as the single most significant influence on public discourse (Chermak, as cited in Taylor, 2009). Although the media do not influence everyone in the same way, the impacts of their constructions and their role in managing the 'public agenda' are undeniable (Cricher, 2002). The media select which social issues are considered as important social problems and therefore, it is the power of the media to make things visible to the public (McNair, 1998) and to create the social culture (Turow, 1997).

Additionally, it is noted that the media shape public perception, influence public policy, reinforce social control, and initiate necessary change (Surette, 2007). Therefore, they have the power to create, change, or reinforce values. In terms of criminal behaviour, it is generally argued that the media, particularly print media assists in constructing public perceptions of crime and deviance (Davis, 1952; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981; Surette, 2007; Lieberman, 2000). With respect to violence against women, scholars maintain that the media supports the values and norms of the dominant group that holds social, political and economic power (Hall, 1975).

According to Meyers (1994), the media create a common sense of the world and provide ideological support for hegemonic power structures through their particular language and symbolization. Jiwani (2006) notes that the media shape public opinion by defining issues, setting the agenda, framing debates, and providing us with the language by which the public make sense of the issues.

Furthermore, newspapers actively participate in creating and shaping social problems by their selective coverage of specific problems and by focusing on specific

parts of the problems that they cover and ignoring the rest (Cricher, 2002). As such, the media, constantly, serve to perform the ideological work of ‘classifying out the world’ within the discourses of the dominant ideology (Hall, as cited in Meyers, 2004). It is the media that perpetuate myths and stereotypes about victims of violence against women (Meyers, 1994).

The media are not only influential in shaping public perceptions of social problems; they are directly tied to changing the discourse about such problems (Taylor, 2009). As such, the ways the media tell a story have a strong effect on how the society responds to the story (Taylor, 2009). Therefore, analyzing and challenging the media is crucial to understand public perceptions and shaping intervention efforts (Taylor, 2009). With respect to criminology and criminal justice, as Garofalo (1981) suggests by giving attention to the content and effects of the media the discipline of criminology will be largely enhanced.

To explore the role of the media in the case of honour killings, in this study, I read the newspapers’ stories as texts open to qualitative analysis. This allowed me to understand and critique honour killings’ discourse in Canada. The underlying assumption was that by positioning media stories as narrative texts, we as producers of critical work, can hold the media accountable for their narratives (Smolash, 2009). Accordingly, in the subject of my research, I analyzed the newspapers news stories, editorials, and the comments of journalists on the murders. As such, readers’ letters to the editor were excluded. The study was about the media agenda in the case of honour killings and not about public opinion which is highlighted in letters to editor. In addition, the news texts were analyzed chronologically and according to the time of the incidents. Analyzing

several articles from the newspapers, in a long period of time, reveals the possible changes in the language, the patterns, and the contextual meanings.

2.3 Data Collection

The objects of analysis in the current study, as noted, are newspaper articles that were selected from two major Canadian newspapers. Due to their printed nature, newspapers are more accessible than other news sources. However, the main reason to choose newspapers as the objects of this study is the fact that despite the advancement of many other communication and news sources such as the Internet and TV, newspapers are still very significant mediums of communication. In Canada, the newspapers' circulation in 2010 stood at 3.9 million copies on a daily average publishing and 25.7 million copies in an average week. The total circulation, all editions of newspapers in 2010, was almost 14 million copies per week (Newspapers Canada, 2011).

Among the Canadian newspapers, *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* were chosen based on their importance and large distribution compared to other newspapers. *The Toronto Star* is the largest newspaper with an average daily circulation of 292,003 and a weekly circulation of 2,044,024 (Newspapers Canada, 2011). *The Globe and Mail* is the second largest Canadian newspaper with a daily circulation of 317,781 and weekly circulation of 1,906,686, respectively. Both newspapers are printed in Ontario, the province wherein many honour killings have occurred in recent years. Therefore, due to the proximity, these newspapers are more likely to cover honour killings cases and to reflect the society's perceptions. In terms of political orientation, *The Globe and Mail* supports the political centre of Canadian politics and *The Toronto Star* adopts a left-centre side of the ideology (Newspapers Canada, 2011).

The time-frame of the analysis included nine months period, three months of which were after the murders of Aqsa Parvez in 2007, Amandeep Kaur, and the Shafia family, both in 2009. These victims are the three recent victims of honour killings in Canada. In selecting the sample, all the news stories, editorials, and comments that appeared in both newspapers were included. By using articles from popular newspapers with a large number of readers, I attempted to include the most in-depth and significant discussion on the topic.

Key words to find articles included the name of the victims and the word 'honour killings'. To collect the news stories from the newspapers, I utilized Lexis Nexis as the major source of data in which both the newspapers were available. Since the database was limited to the text and did not cover articles' physical layout, I utilized public library resources to obtain the portable document format (pdf) of the newspapers. Although the analysis was primarily on the articles from the first three months after the murders, where necessary, I looked at the later articles about those cases, or general articles about honour killings in both newspapers to supplement information about the murders.

2.4 Cases of Honour Killings

I analysed the coverage of three recent cases of honour killings in Canada. The focus on three different cases enabled identification of patterns in articles and differences and similarities in media approaches to the cases. Below, I provide a brief description of the victims and the cases of the current study.

2.4.1 The Case of Aqsa Parvez

Most of the public discussions about honour killings in Canada started after the murder of Aqsa Parvez in December 2007. Accordingly, I started my study with her

murder and followed two other subsequent cases of honour killings. Aqsa Parvez was a Canadian-Pakistani 17 year-old girl who was murdered by her father and brother on December 10, 2007. On June 15, 2010, the Brampton Court sentenced her father and brother to second degree murder and life in prison (CBC, 2010).

Aqsa, the youngest of eight children, was 11-year-old when her family emigrated from Pakistan to Canada. The father was a taxi driver, with little formal education and little knowledge of English. According to media reports and court records, Aqsa had several arguments with her family over her desire to be independent, and dress and behave in her own way. It was stated in the court records that Aqsa “was experiencing conflict at home over cultural differences between living in Canada and back” in Pakistan (CBC, 2010). Most of the knowledge about her comes from media reports wherein friends said that she had constant arguments with her family over hijab, having certain friends, and her way of dressing. She told her friends that her father was so hard to change, and so she decided to leave the house, stayed in a women shelter, and for some time stayed with a friend in the fall of 2007.

On the day of her death, Aqsa was with her friends at a bus stop, when her brother Wefaq came to her and told her that their father was sick and she should go and see him. Upon her arrival to her home, the family arguments started and in less than one hour the Region police received a phone call from a man who said he has killed his daughter. The court proceeding later revealed that Aqsa was strangled by her brother, while the father ordered the murder. This was contrary to the initial belief that Mohammad Parvez; the father had strangled his daughter (CBC, 2010).

In an interview with police, Aqsa's mother said that her husband had told her he killed his child because "this is my insult. My community will say, you have not been able to control your daughter. This is my insult." Police asked her if things would have been different if the family had stayed in Pakistan and the mother mentioned that he would have killed Aqsa there too (The CBC, 2010).

2.4.2 The Case of Amandeep Kaur Dhillon

Amandeep Kaur Dhillon, a Canadian woman of Indian origin, was stabbed to death in her family's Mississauga grocery store in the first day of January, 2009, by her father-in-law, Kamikar Singh Dhillon (National Post, 2012). She was in an arranged marriage with a Canadian-Indian man and migrated to Canada in 2006. According to the news media, she was abused by her in-laws in Canada and had a sad life since she joined her husband in 2006. At the time of her death, she was 22 and mother of a 22-month-old son. It was also mentioned that her family arranged her marriage so that she could help them immigrate to Canada.

Her father-in-law, who pleaded guilty of her murder, was a Canadian landed immigrant and the owner of the grocery store in which Amandeep was found murdered. Later in the court, he said that he murdered his daughter-in-law to protect his honour and said that he feared she would leave his son for another man with whom she was allegedly having an affair. He also said that he "did the right thing" (Mitchell, *The Star*, 4 June, 2010).

2.4.3 The Case of the Shafia Family

The death of three sisters and their step-mother was a news breaking event in Canada in June 30, 2009. Again this time, the murders conjured heated discussions about

violence against immigrant women in Canada. On the day of the murders, the bodies of Zainab, 19, Sahari, 17, Geeti, 13, and Rona Amir Mohammad, 50 year-old, were discovered in a submerged car in the Rideau Canal, Ontario. Few weeks later the father, brother, and mother of the girls were charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder (Colvin, *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2009). On June 30, the family were returning from a family trip from Niagara Falls when they stopped to spend the night in a Kingston motel. The victims' car was discovered at 9:30 am, June 30. Later at the same day, Mohammad Shafia, his son and wife, reported to police that the girls with the car were missing. They also told the police that Zianab, the oldest daughter might have taken the car to practice driving with her sisters and aunt, while she did not have a driving licence. After few days a woman that was allegedly Rona's sister reported to police that the women might have been murdered for the sake of honour. She revealed to the police that Rona was actually Mohammad's first wife.

According to news Media, the family was dealing with several conflicts over the daughters' behaviour and social attitudes. Zainab had planned to announce her second engagement upon their arrival to Montreal, where the family lived, the next day on July 1st. She secretly had married a Pakistani man a few months before her death. Her relatives said that she "deeply offended her strict Afghan father by marrying a young Pakistani man" (Schliesmann & Tripp, *The Sun*, 2009).

2.5 The Sample

After collecting the data from the data bases, identified on page 42, a total of 59 articles were selected for the analysis. The following table shows the distribution of the articles. As it can be seen, the majority of the articles (66%) were about the murder of

Aqsa Parvez, while the rest of the articles were equally distributed between the other two cases. Also, a larger number of articles (41 articles, 69.5%) were from *The Star*, which generally published more stories about the cases than *The Globe and Mail*. Eighteen articles (30.5%) of the sample were from *The Globe and Mail* of which 13 articles (22%) were about the murder of Aqsa Parvez. Very few articles were published in *The Globe and Mail* about the cases of Amandeep Kaur and the Shafia family.

Table 1: Distribution of the Articles in the Newspapers

The case	The Toronto Star	The Globe and Mail	Total
Aqsa Parvez	26 (44%)	13 (22%)	39 (66%)
Amandeep Kaur	8 (13.5%)	2 (3.5%)	10 (17%)
Shafia Family	7 (12%)	3 (5%)	10 (17%)
Total	41 (69.5%)	18 (30.5%)	59 (100%)

2.6 Coding and Method of Analysis

For the purpose of textual analysis, articles were downloaded and printed in individual files. To analyze the coverage quantitatively, I analyzed and compared the space and length of coverage and the placement of the stories in all three cases.

Qualitatively, the frames of the media stories were analyzed to explore if there was any pattern in the coverage and how the incidences get translated in the texts. Also, in a different file, headlines of all the articles were collected and analyzed. Accordingly, a coding scheme was developed as a means to assess the articles and based on the following criteria:

- 1. Space and length of the coverage.** In this part, the number of newspaper stories for each incidence was explored and compared. Also, I explored the period of time in which the cases were covered.
- 2. Placement of the stories.** Placement of the stories, similar to the space of coverage, provides a sense of the cases importance for the newspapers. To analyze the placement of the articles, I divided the pages of each newspaper into different categories. In doing so, the front page section considered as the most important section of the newspapers. Further, I divided the pages into two sections; first section which was the first 15 pages of the newspapers. In this part, mostly the news is published. Section two considered other pages of the newspapers which are often life pages, advertisements, entertainment pages, and comments and opinions.
- 3. News Frames.** Building upon the literature discussed earlier on media approaches toward violence against immigrant women, I assigned three primary frames for the analysis:
 - The culturalist frame, which views honour killings as a problem rooted in culture and religion and as a result of ‘culture clash’ in Canada.
 - The universal feminist frame that understands honour killings as one of the manifestations of violence against women.
 - The neutral frame that provides no recognizable approach toward the killings.

My analysis later revealed that several articles conveyed both elements of culturalist and feminist approaches toward honour killings. As such a new frame (mixed-approach frame) was developed.

In analyzing the frames, I examined the focus of the stories, headlines, and the primary characteristics of the narratives. I explored how the authors defined and described the problem. For example, I examined whether the story told in a manner that focused on the ethnicity, religion, or immigration status of the victims and their families, or whether it focused on violence against women and its manifestation in honour killings.

In this respect, I also analyzed how the victim and the perpetrators were described and which words were used to introduce them to the reader. In doing this, I examined whether the narratives situated those people as 'different' and 'inassimilable' or as other members of the society who engage in criminal behaviour. I present the results of my study in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Results

Exploring the discussions on honour killings in Canadian newspapers reveals that before the murder of Aqsa Parvez in 2007, little was known about the occurrence and dynamics of such killings. Previous incidences of honour killings (Such as the murders of Amandeep Atwal in 2003 and Khatera Sadiqi in 2005) were only described by the media as murders with no reference to 'honour' (Ishaq, 2010). The murder of Aqsa opened up discussions about honour killings in Canadian newspapers and therefore is the point of departure in this study. Aqsa's name and picture, after four years of her death, are still featuring articles about honour killings and violence against immigrant in the Canadian media.

In this chapter, I provide the results of my analysis of the coverage of the murders of Aqsa and two subsequent murders - the murders of Amandeep Kaur and the Shafia family, both in 2009. The results indicate a considerable difference in coverage between these three cases. As a result, each case required separate analysis. Although I gathered data from the first three months of the murders, I also occasionally referred to the later coverage of the cases. Additionally while the coverage in *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* mostly overlapped in content, there were differences in the amount of coverage between the two newspapers. The details of these differences will be discussed later in this chapter.

Generally, in representing the cases, the newspapers implemented qualities and measures that created a sense of 'difference' between the victims, their family, and others (namely, Canadians). The racialized narrative of immigrants was most apparent in the case of Aqsa Parvez, and was clearly seen in the case of the Shafia family. The case of

Amandeep Kaur, however, showed little signs of Othering and racialization. In the following section, I examine how the newspapers privileged particular representations of each murder to create stereotypical images of the victim and the perpetrators. It is evident that in the cases of Aqsa and the Shafia family the stereotypes particularly focused on religion of the families, Islam.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Newspapers Coverage

Although the descriptive statistics are not significant indicators of the content of the articles, they provide a portrait of the importance and visibility of the murders in both newspapers. These statistics showed a significant difference in the amount of coverage between the murder of Aqsa Parvez and the murders of Amandeep Kaur and the Shafia family. In the case of Amandeep Kaur, this difference in coverage was also accompanied by a crucial difference in the newspapers approach toward her murder and the other murders. Accordingly, I found that the media revealed culturalist interpretations of the murders of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family where strong signs of Otherness were included. In contrast, little attention was paid to the cultural and religious aspects of Amandeep's murder. Particularly, the news accounts made no reference to 'honour killings' in her case. This is further discussed in the section on qualitative analysis.

3.1.1 Space and the Length of Coverage

The newspapers presented different coverage spaces for the cases. For the case of Aqsa Parvez, the coverage was extensive, indicating the importance of the story for the media. From the total of 59 stories that were published on all the three murders, 39 articles (66%) were about Aqsa Parvez, 10 articles (17%) were about Amandeep Kaur, and 10 articles (17%) were about Shafia family.

In the case of Aqsa Parvez, of 39 articles, 28 (71.7%) articles were news stories and 11 (28%) articles were comments, editorials, and columns. I conducted an online search for the later coverage of the murders – beyond the identified time-frame of this study to the time of writing my thesis to explore if any later articles were published on the cases. Results showed that the name of Aqsa appeared in 31 articles in *The Star*, and in 40 articles in *The Globe and Mail*. These results reveal the continuous importance of Aqsa’s murder and name for the media.

For the case of the Shafia family, my research showed that from October 2011 to February 2012; the period in which the trial of the family was in progress, 21 articles in *The Star* and 34 articles in *The Globe and Mail* were published. The murders, as such, received considerable attention from the media beyond the immediate coverage and during the court proceedings. However, for the case of Amandeep Kaur, beyond the period of the research framework, her name was mentioned only in one article in *The Globe and Mail* and in three articles in *The Star*. This little space of coverage indicates that the murder did not receive the attention of either of the newspapers examined in this research.

The results also indicated a major difference in the time of coverage among the three cases. In Aqsa’s case, coverage started from December 11th, 2007, and except of one article that was published in March 2008, an article published in December 29th in *The Star*, and another that was published in December 17th in *The Globe and Mail* were the last published articles on the topic. During the period between December 11th and 29th for *The Star* and December 11th and 17th for *The Globe and Mail*, articles about Aqsa’s murder were published on daily basis with little interruption. In the case of Amandeep,

The Star published seven articles from January 3rd to January 11st, 2009, and one article on January 31st. *The Globe and Mail* published only two articles on January 5th and 7th. The murder of the Shafia family occurred on June 30th, 2009, and the family were charged with murder on July 24th. *The Toronto Star* published one article on July 3rd and six articles between July 24th and August 1st. Three articles about the Shafia family were published in *The Globe and Mail* only on July 24th and 25th. These patterns of coverage can also be seen as indicators of the importance of the cases for the newspapers.

3.1.2 Placement of the Stories

The placement of articles is an indicator that provides a sense of the significance and newsworthiness of the stories for newspapers. Hence, front page stories are often more important than stories in other pages. As shown in the tables on the next page, in the case of Aqsa Parvez in *The Globe and Mail*, of the total of 13 articles, three articles (23%) were published in the front page. One article (8%) was published in the first section, while nine articles (69%) were published in the second section of the newspaper. Of all the articles, nine articles (69%) were news articles and four articles (30.7%) were published as comments and editorials. In *The Star*, two articles (7.7%) were published in the front page. Thirteen articles (50%) were published in the first section, and 11 articles (42%) were published in the second section. Among the 26 articles in *The Star*, 21 articles (80.7%) were news stories and five articles (19.2%) were editorials and comments.

In the case of the Shafia family, three articles in *The Globe and Mail* were published in the first section of the newspaper of which two articles were considered national news and one article appeared as a column. None of these articles published in

the front page. In *The Star*, out of seven articles, five articles (71%) published in the first section and one article appeared in the front page. One of the articles was an editorial and was published in the second section of the newspaper.

In the case of Amandeep, *The Globe and Mail* published two articles both in the first section and in the news section. None of these articles appeared in the front pages and no comments and editorials were published about her murder. In *The Star*, eight articles published about her murder all in the first section. Of all, one article appeared in the front page.

Table 2: Placement of the Articles in The Globe and Mail

The Globe and Mail	Murder of Aqsa Parvez	Murder of the Shafia family	Murder of Amandeep
Front page	3 (23%)	0	0
First section	1 (8%)	3 (100%)	2 (100%)
Second section	9 (69%)	0	0
Total	13 (100%)	3 (100%)	2 (100%)

Table 3: Placement of the Articles in The Star

The Star	Murder of Aqsa Parvez	Murder of Shafia family	Murder of Amandeep
Front page	2 (8%)	1 (14.5%)	1 (12.5%)
First section	13 (50%)	5 (71%)	7 (87.5%)
Second section	11 (42%)	1 (14.5%)	0
Total	26 (100%)	7 (100%)	8 (100%)

Moreover, I found a correlation between the frames and the placement of the articles. On the one hand, articles with universal feminist approaches toward the killings were mostly located in the local pages of the newspapers; in comments, editorials, and

opinions. On the other hand, articles with culturalist frames were mostly located in the front pages and in the news sections of the newspapers.

3.2 Media Frames of the Murders

As I noted earlier, due to the differences in the coverage patterns of the three cases, it is important to assess each case's coverage separately. In the following section, I provide the results of the media framing analysis for the cases in the order of their occurrence.

3.2.1 The Murder of Aqsa

Aqsa's murder gained a great deal of attention in the first days following her murder in both newspapers which are examined in this study. Within few days, the media offered several news stories and comments about the murder and news about her dominated the headlines and front pages of the newspapers. In *The Toronto Star*, a total of 26 articles were published about Aqsa's case. Out of the 26 articles, 16 articles were articles with a culturalist frame, five were articles with mixed-approaches and five were articles with a universal feminist frame. In *The Globe and Mail*, 13 articles were published about the murder. Eight of those articles were culturalist, four were articles with mixed-approaches, one was an article with a universal feminist approach, and one article did not present any elements of these approaches and therefore considered neutral. The variety in approaches to the murder might be seen as a sign of the inclusiveness and openness of the newspapers, while at the same time, it can be interpreted as a sign of confusion about the problem. The important point, however, is the extensive coverage of the story within culturalist frames. Indeed, according to my analysis, 61.5% of the articles focused on the exclusive role of culture and 23% of the articles conveyed signs of

culturalist frames to the problem. This remarkable focus on the role of culture in both newspapers is consistent with the results of similar studies about the representation of violence against Muslim women in the Canadian media (Haque, 2010; Jiwani, 2006; 2009).

In the first articles covering the murder of Aqsa, the question was posed several times that whether the murder was a result of culture clash: “It is unclear if a generational culture clash played a part in the murder of 16-year-old Aqsa Parvez this week, but GTA schools say they do see immigrant kids torn between home and mainstream Canada” (Brown and Girard, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007). The first headlines put the story into culturalist frames in this way: “Teen death highlights cultural tensions”, “Teen tried to leave strict family; Father now faces murder charge”, “A teenage Muslim girl: Why was she killed?; The culture gap in immigrant homes”, “Immigrant teens stuck in middle; Guidance counsellors say culture clashes including abuse affect students”, “Aqsa Parvez’s death lays bare flipside of immigration; Parents want change, but are fearful their children will heed ‘siren call’ of the West”. “Culture clashes tougher in 905”.

Although a number of feminist approaches to explain the murder as a manifestation of violence against women and a form of domestic violence later appeared in the newspapers, mostly in *The Star*, the first news accounts of the incidence created a hegemonic notion of culture clash that reflected in the forms of Othering and stigmatization. Through initial quotes from neighbours and friends, the murder was described as shocking, unbelievable, and unexpected. “I was shocked”; the interviewees several times described the murder as shocking.

Almost in all the articles about Aqsa's murder, the major reason of her death was seen as her clash with her family over hijab and her desire to have a different lifestyle. The first article was published on December 11th in the front page of *The Star* and entitled: "Teen clings to life, dad in custody; Mississauga girl 16, not expected to survive attack, classmates say she argued with family over hijab." The article was accompanied by a colourful picture of Aqsa, a picture that she posted on Facebook, and started with "friends say a clash of cultures led to an attack", "the teen had been arguing with her devout Muslim family for months over her desire to shun the hijab, a traditional shoulder-length head scarf" (Wilkes, *The Star*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1). Subsequent articles continued to frame the murder in the same manner. In the same day (Dec. 11, 2007), a journalist in *The Globe and Mail* wrote: "Some claimed she had clashed with her family after ceasing to wear a hijab and adopting a more Western style of dress" (Wallace, *Globe and Mail*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1). Within the course of few days, articles in both newspapers framed the murder as a result of culture clash between immigrants and the larger society, as rooted in the religious beliefs of the family, and as a result of tensions over hijab.

3.2.1.1 Culture Clash within Immigrant Families

As I mentioned in chapter one, several scholars have pointed out that discussions about violence against immigrant women in the West are shaped within the discourse of 'culture clash' in the immigrant communities (Razack, 2004, 2007; Jiwani, 2006; Haque, 2010). This was also present in the media representation of Aqsa's murder. Following her murder, the news stories discussed that Aqsa's murder reflected the clashes between first and second generations over their culture and styles of life: "The tragedy appears to be an

extreme case of the cultural and religious clashes that roil many families in Canada” (White and Mick, *Globe and Mail*, 12 Dec 2007, p L1).

Korteweg and Yardakul (2010) discuss how descriptions of Aqsa’s murder as the extreme outcome of a culture clash between first and second-generation immigrant homogenizes the immigrant cultures in the Canadian context and creates grounds for the same kind of stigmatizations that is seen in other Western countries. They explain that the descriptions led to juxtaposition of Western culture and Islam. For example, in one of the articles one reporter wrote:

Ms. Parvez’s friends described the Grade 11 student at Applewood Heights Secondary School as someone who was drawn to Western culture even as her family adhered to a devout form of Islam. Friends paint a picture of a hardworking and cheerful girl who loved dancing, fashion and photography—interests that often clashed with her strict home environment (El Akkad and Wallace, *Globe and Mail*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A1).

Another reporter wrote: “Despite the sketchy details, it seemed relatively easy for us to know what to make of this wrenching story - it is about, as one television announcer said, “a girl caught in a culture clash” (Timson, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. L1).

To understand the underlying reasons of the murder, the reports mainly relied on the accounts of Aqsa’s friends. No interview with her family members, school teachers or others was made to explore other aspects of the issue. In this way, both of the newspapers under examination presented very similar accounts of the story that were one-dimensional and blind to other possibilities of the murder’s causes. It is within this discourse that several articles focused on the problems of newcomers to Canada (e.g. Bonoguore, *Globe and Mail*, 15 Dec.; Keung, *The Star*, 13 Dec.; Doolittle & Teotonio, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007). In one article in *The Star* which tried to show a neutral perspective toward the

murders, the reporter noted that when the immigrants go to find jobs after their arrival, they might get unaware of their kids' situation and this leads to the clashes in their families (Keung, *The Star*, 13 Dec. 2007). However, the focus on the "tough culture clashes" within immigrant families and on Aqsa's family as "new comers" created grounds for further stigmatization and supported the hegemonic discourse of the murder in the media.

In several cases, the problem of violence was generalized to the whole immigrant community. The articles discussed the problems in the immigrant-settled areas and mentioned that those areas "had other troubles lately" (Smith, *The Star*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A6). Look at this statement:

Immigrant neighbourhoods in the Toronto-area communities of Brampton and Mississauga are full of girls who are supposed to dress modestly, go faithfully to the mosque, and be home by 5 p.m. Their brothers, who have far more freedom, are often vigilant in monitoring their behaviour. If a girl is too immodest or defiant, she may be slapped or beaten. If she acquires a Western boyfriend, she may be shipped back home to Pakistan or Bangladesh for marriage (Wente, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. A25).

At the same time, through these reports, the binaries of the 'old' (immigrants) and 'new' (the West) was reproduced in the news accounts. As such, the murder was understood as a result of the "gap between their parents' Old World values and Western teen culture" (Brown and Girard, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007). Immigrants were perceived to be a group of people that belong to the Old world, beat their children, or send kids "back home to be married" (Brown and Girard, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007). In other words, immigrants' problems were seen as a "struggle between old and new." This quotation from Farzana Hassan, president of the Muslim Canadian Congress exemplifies the point very clearly:

The atmosphere is unfortunately there for something like this to happen again. People from back home are coming to Canada with these very rigid notions of religiosity that makes them do these things - that enrages them to ensure compliance to such an extent (White and Mick, *Globe and Mail*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. L1).

Margaret Wente; a famous columnist of *The Globe and Mail*, in her comment on Aqsa's murder (13 Dec. 2007), provided an account that best exemplifies the above-mentioned points. According to her, immigrant communities are caught between "competing cultures":

I've always thought that a residency permit for immigrants to the West should come with a warning label: "DANGER. This culture may be toxic to your daughters and fatal to your self-esteem. DO NOT ENTER if you expect to bring them up the way you did back home." This applies, above all, to families from traditional, patriarchal cultures where young women are supposed to remain sexually pure and do as they're told.

This debate that was present in the majority of the articles covering Aqsa's murder framed within the debate about the struggle between modern Canadians and traditional immigrants. Although several articles attempted to provide a counter-frame and to situate the murder within the framework of domestic violence, the hegemonic frame of 'culture clash' dominated the media and remained impossible to encounter (see Haque, 2010). Further, the explanations developed to understand the murder as the problem of Muslims' culture in Canadian society.

3.2.1.2 The Role of Islam

Following Aqsa's murder, several headlines highlighted the family's Muslim religion and the general clash of Islam and the West: "A teenage Muslim girl: Why was she killed?", "Aqsa's slaying and the clash between religion and culture", "Confronting the threat from people blinded by the light", "Religion, resistance, tragedy; Mississauga father charged in grievous attack on girl; classmates say she argued with family over

hijab”. As such, as said in *The Globe and Mail* (El Akkad & Wallace, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A1) the murder ignited a “public debate about religious extremism in Canada” and was seen as “part of a wider indictment of fundamentalist Islam” and “its place in a liberal society”.

References to Aqsa’s immigrant family, their religion and their collective life created a sense that Islam was the reason for the death and responsible for it. In most of the articles, particularly in the first days following the murder, there was a presumption that these killings -which were rarely referred to as honour killings- are linked to Islam. This approach is embodied in interviews with Aqsa’s friends and with social workers and Muslim activists who discussed the problems and tensions in Muslim immigrant families. The national debate was allegedly a debate about the place of extreme religious belief in a liberal society (Saunders, *Globe and Mail*, 15 Dec. 2007). The following statement best exemplifies the newspapers’ approaches to the murder: “The two reportedly clashed over culture, with the teen shunning the hijab and questioning her father’s traditional Muslim views.” (Doolittle and Teotonio, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A7)

In the following quote of a friend of Aqsa, the family’s religion was seen as the problem: “Another classmate told *The Globe and Mail* her family was really religious and I think her dad was angry because she never wore religious clothing” (Wallace, *Globe and Mail*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1). Muslim immigrants, through interviews, were described as problematic parents who have unrealistic expectations from their children, want everything to be like ‘back home’, and do not seek help and social services. As parents, they were seen as “desperate to hold onto their moral authority, and as the ultimate arbiter

of their children's lives" (Timson, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007), while "liberated Western parents" were seen as parents with little conflicts with their kids.

A prominent feature in the coverage was that the newspapers' stories addressed the murder as an aspect of the wider gender inequality among Muslims. For example, some articles reported that Muslim leaders support the hijab –the alleged root of the problem- or even some Muslim men called Aqsa a slut (Fatah, *Globe and Mail*, 17 Dec. 2007). Furthermore, Aqsa was described as "one of those many conflicted Muslim teens" and several times in the stories, she was referred to as the "Muslim girl". White & Mick wrote: "some said the cultural clashes that reportedly precipitated the killing -a teenager's rebellion against her strict, devout father- are playing out within Muslim families across the country and must be addressed." (*Globe and Mail*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. L1)

In light of these discussions, the articles discussed whether the murder was rooted in religion or culture. Many Muslims were interviewed and their comments played an important role in shaping the discourse. While the Muslim interviewees mostly maintained that the murder is a form of family abuse and has nothing to do with Islam, the hegemonic rhetoric that conceptualized Muslim minorities as the 'Other'; the "inferior Other" was reproduced in the stories. Therefore, although some journalists, mostly in *The Star*, showed an attempt to include Muslims' perspectives and to present a neutral approach to the murder, even in these statements, elements of Otherness and culturalizing were presented when the problem was discussed within the context of Muslim tensions in the West. A counterpart to the arguments was that Muslim culture cannot change. The selection of quotes by newsmakers indicated that Muslim men murder their female relatives and this is a result of their failure to integrate in the Canadian society.

It is noteworthy that in two articles in *The Star*, the reporters put Aqsa's murder into a macro level representation of Muslim societies, terror, and political tensions. Connecting her death to the terror of Binazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan, who was murdered few weeks after Aqsa's murder, one reporter interviewed a Pakistani woman attending Friday sermon in Ontario (Doolittle, *The Star*, 29 Dec. 2007). The report explained that while the Imam in the mosque spoke of Aqsa's murder, the interviewee showed her sorrow for Bhutto's murder and said: "I had hoped he would speak about Bhutto, There are bigger issues affecting Muslims right now than wearing the hijab or not." The reporter then discussed that Bhutto was gone and there is a fear that Al Qaeda will take control of Pakistan.

In another article, the same reporter quoted from an Imam who tied those two murders as the "current issues and incidents" of Muslim communities (Doolittle, *The Star*, 29 Dec. 2007). Linking the murder of Aqsa to terror in Pakistan supports the argument that Muslim woman's body is the battleground to fuel the war against terror. As I will note in the next chapter, Razack (2004) and others have reminded us of the usefulness of Muslim woman's body and the crucial ways in which her body is used to articulate Western superiority.

3.2.1.3 The Hijab Debate

As I noted earlier, the major reason of Aqsa's murder reported in the newspapers was her struggles with her family over the hijab. This reason mentioned in almost all the stories and was also highlighted in the headlines: "Muslim girls living in Canada can reject hijab, leaders say", "It's no sin to shun the hijab", "Hijab can divide families; but

tension can also be caused by girls who chose to adopt headscarf against parents' wish, say some", "Choosing hijab doesn't make me more pious."

In the first day following Aqsa's murder, *The Toronto Star* published a news story featuring a big picture of Aqsa's friends while crying with a big-sized headline noting: "Hijab can divide families" (Smith, *The Star*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A6). The article started with: "The suggestion of violent disputes between a 16-year-old girl in Mississauga and her father over her desire to show her hair and live a 'normal' lifestyle raises questions about tensions between parents and children in the Muslim community." The entire article was about the hijab and the conflicts that it causes within Muslim families.

Many of the news accounts frequently mentioned Aqsa's reluctance to wear the hijab. The coverage also focused on how a large number of Muslim girls do not want to wear it. In this way, discussions on the hijab among Muslim communities increased in the newspapers and a considerable number of articles focused on the practice of the hijab among young girls in Canada. Muslim parents and young ladies were interviewed about whether they want their children to put on hijab. Additionally, by interviewing women who wore hijab and women who did not, the discourse was transformed from focusing on the violence that Aqsa experienced to discussions on wearing the hijab and not wearing it. In this manner, the stories shifted the attention away from violence against women to political debates about the Muslim immigrant community in Canada through the focus on its primary oppressive symbol, the hijab.

In the following statement of Tarek Fatah, a founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, published in *The Globe and Mail* (White and Mick, 12 Dec. 2007, p. L1), this perspective is clearly demonstrated:

I put the blame straight at the feet of people who have made young Muslim girls feel that they are sinners if they don't cover their heads...How many more Muslim girls have to die before the liberal intelligentsia wakes up and the feminists wake up and say the hijab is a symbol of oppression?

According to Hoodfar (1997) and many other scholars, in the West, the veil is seen as a symbol of Muslim women and their oppression by traditional and conservative upholders of Islam. Todd (1998) notes that the hijab is not an innocent 'signifier' in this context, it has come to symbolize everything from Islamic fundamentalism, freedom of religious expression, and women's subordination to women's empowerment and equality (Todd, 1998). Therefore, while the hijab is the symbol of Muslim women's oppression, it underpins the rescue motif (Jiwani, 2006). As such, the mainstream culture seeks to rescue the imperilled woman and save her from her traditional culture (Jiwani, 2009). This approach then separates the Muslim man and woman so that it sees the man as the 'Other' while the woman is civilizable and could be saved (Cooke, 2002; Jiwani, 2006).

The desire to save Muslim woman accompanied by the focus on the hijab as the symbol of oppression allows interventions in the name of liberation and progress (Jiwani, 2006). In the process of this desired reforms, unveiling is seen as an important symbol of modernization and integration (Jiwani, 2006).

3.2.1.4 The Picture of the Victim and the Perpetrators

On December 12th, *The Star* published a big picture of Aqsa, unveiled on the front page of the newspaper entitled: "She wanted freedom, she lived in fear" (Henry & Mitchell, p A1). The subheading was "she wanted to follow her own rules." This is the general picture that represented Aqsa throughout the newspapers' coverage of her murder. We see Aqsa as a girl who just wanted "to be like any other teenage girl", "to hang out

with friends”, and “to listen to rap, hip hop and R & B.” In many of the accounts, it was stated that Aqsa wanted to wear fashionable clothing and loved shopping, while her family did not approve of this behaviour. Through interviews with Aqsa’s friends in the very first days of her murder, Aqsa was portrayed as an innocent “well-liked” girl, interested in fashion and “showing her beauty” and pictures, and willing to wear “colourful clothes and accessories”. This description is exemplified in the following statements: “Vivacious and outgoing, Parvez wanted to dress like a Western woman in tight-fitting clothes and show off her long, dark hair by removing her hijab” (Henry & Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A1). Further, she was depicted as a very kind, nice, popular, bright, happy, and cheerful person that “everybody loved”:

Ms. Parvez’s friends described the Grade 11 student at Applewood Heights Secondary School as someone who was drawn to Western culture even as her family adhered to a devout form of Islam. Friends paint a picture of a hardworking and cheerful girl who loved dancing, fashion and photography - interests that often clashed with her strict home environment. (El Akkad & Wallace, *Globe and Mail*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A1)

At the same time, she was the victim of violence who “didn’t want to go home” and feared for her life: “She said she was always scared of her dad, she was always scared of her brother” (Wilkes, *The Star*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1). While her family did not let her be the way she wanted to be, Aqsa wanted to be herself, and “wanted freedom from her parents”. Also, she was strong and was not shy to speak about her struggles with her family and culture (Henry & Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007). Several articles mentioned that she would change into Western-style clothing after arriving at school and had to change her clothes on the bus to home or put her hijab on whenever she came to see her family members on the street.

It seems that the desired Muslim girl in the eyes of the media is depicted in the descriptions of Aqsa Parvez; a liberated girl who decided to put away the hijab and to join the majority society. Interestingly, the positive description of a strong vivacious Aqsa presented in the newspapers is considerably at odds with portrayal of victims of violence against women in the media. Several scholars, who conducted studies on violence against women in the media, point out that the media, in their stories, usually point the finger at women, and hold them responsible for being victimized (Alat, 2006; Meyers; 2004; Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002). The victim-blaming is said to be rooted in the patriarchy and mostly leads to pardoning perpetrators. However, in the case of Aqsa Parvez and the cases of Amandeep Kaur and the Shafia family, though the murders are still manifestations of violence against women, no signs of victim blaming was evident in the media coverage.

On the other hand, the descriptions of Aqsa's family and father were in contrast to Aqsa's portrayal. The family generally was seen as a mysterious family that nobody knew: "little is known about the dead girl's father and her family" (Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A6). Further, it is said that: "Neighbours said it appeared several different but related families lived in the two-storey home...the family kept to themselves, other than to say hello if they encountered other residents on the street" (Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A6) . "Aqsa's father worked as a driver for Blue & White taxi, but numerous drivers questioned yesterday said they didn't know the man" (Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A6).

Additionally, through quotes from friends, the father was described as a very religious man who "was hard to deal with" and -repeatedly stated- was a "devout

Muslim”. On December 13th, *The Star* published an article about the court proceeding of Aqsa’s murder; with a large title saying: “Father shows no emotion” (Wilkes, 13 Dec. 2007). The story also featured the picture of Muhammad Shan; Aqsa’s brother, who was surrounded by journalists and his face showed almost no emotion as well.

Moreover, the collective life of the family was seen as strange and implicitly problematic: “Neighbours described the family as very private and said several members from three generations have lived in the two-storey home...for just over two years” (Wilkes, *The Star*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1). Several quotes from neighbours focused on how “there were people always coming and going from that house” (Wallance, *Globe and Mail*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1).

In this way and while questioning the collective life of the family and its pre-assumed patriarchal structure, culturalist explanations were suggested to make sense of the murder. In this discourse, individualism, as Razack (2004) notes, becomes a marker of superiority that designates the West as a place without culture but with values and locates Westerns within modernity and on the terrain of the universal. But, individualism has only recently become hegemonic in the West (Gullestad, as cited in Razack, 2004). Razack (2004) suggests that if the language of individual rights is stronger today, it is likely because of its compatibility with racial and capitalist projects in the West.

In addition to the portrayal of a mysterious and out of the normal family, some articles covered the changes that occurred in Aqsa’s funeral plan also to depict the family as devious, immoral, and not caring. These articles report that Aqsa’s funeral was scheduled for 1:30 pm on December 16th, but when the friends got to the place by 1:30pm, they realized that the funeral had happened few hours before and they lost their

chance to participate in saying goodbye to Aqsa. Following this incident, *The Star* headlined: “Friends ‘cheated’ out of teen’s funeral” (Chung, *The Star*, 16 Dec. 2007). In this article and an article published in *The Globe and Mail* on the same day, the reporters reflected on the friends’ anger and their feelings of being tricked: “They just tend to see the family as the perpetrator” (Bascaramurty, *Globe and Mail*, 17 Dec. 2007, p. A9). “They’re ridiculous, they have no respect for what other people think...” (Chung, *The Star*, 16 Dec. 2007, p. A3)

By focusing on emotional descriptions of Aqsa’s funeral and the changes in plan, the coverage provided a cruel image of the family as not caring about others involved in Aqsa’s life and murder, trying to involve emotions of the reader. Through quotes from Aqsa’s friends who were devastated by the change in plan, the family’s image was further demonised.

In short, the news stories placed Aqsa in stark contrast to her family in style of living and dressing. However, the contrast was not value-neutral. The depiction of the victim desperately seeking to live by the mainstream norms was normal, while the perpetrators actions were cast as ‘strict’ and unacceptable: “she just wanted to dress like **us**, just like a **normal** person” (my highlight) (Wilkes, *The Star*, 11 Dec. 2007, p. A1). In this way, the accounts cast a value judgment that naturalizes and normalizes the Western way of life and depicts the Muslim culture of her family as the deviant that implicitly could not be understood or accepted.

3.2.1.5 Elements of Universal Feminist Approaches

In several cases, however, the journalists’ accounts of Aqsa’s murder conveyed elements of feminist approaches toward the murder. Notably in *The Star*, the articles

included counter perspectives to the murder very clearly: “Others say it is important to view the tragedy through the broader lens of domestic violence. We would never say that if it was a young white Canadian woman...we would say that this is unacceptable domestic violence –that’s it,” (Wilkes, *The Star*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. A6).

Through these accounts, the murder was seen as a result of broader ranges of reasons, notably power, control, and patriarchy. In some accounts Aqsa’s murder was categorized as a murder similar to domestic violence homicides in the West and was considered to be rooted in patriarchy and power imbalances. It was also stated that violence between parents and children happens irrespective of race, religion, or culture . This approach was evident in the statements made by Muslim activists who were interviewed and in editorials. For instance one article noted that: “there’s no such thing as a violent culture, a violent religion...It’s about abuse, power and control” (Brown & Girard, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A07). In the following statements, the authors see the murder as an instance of regular femicides in the larger society:

And so, like so many other female victims, Aqsa Parvez was failed by the same society that politely ignores black eyes and broken jaws and expressions of fear. Too many women cower under their husband’s or father’s thumbs, afraid to make friends or go anywhere without their permission (Zerbisias, *The Star*, 14 Dec. 2007, p. L7).

All these cases should give us pause. All these vulnerable women, were killed by men committing the ultimate abuse of power...both Ms. Dupont and Ms. Parvez were struggling to break away from situations each considered suffocating. It is not easy to do so, especially in a relationship based on an imbalance of power...In the last decade alone, more than 200 Canadian women have been murdered as a result of domestic abuse. Violence against women knows no particular ethnicity, religion or class. (Khan, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. A25)

Also, it was mentioned that Muslims themselves expressed outrage about the slaying and showed “zero tolerance” of the murder. Muslims’ efforts to end honour killings,

acknowledge the violence and draw attention to it, and provide public forums about domestic violence were also covered in the news stories (El Akkad, *Globe and Mail*, 15 Dec. 2007; Javed, *The Star*, 30 Dec. 2007). In fact, even though several Muslim social workers and social service consultants were interviewed about Aqsa Parvez, the newspapers still situated the issue as an Islamic problem. However, at the same time, the interviews gave the interviewees the opportunity to express their ideas. In many cases, the interviewees mentioned that Aqsa's murder was not about religion, but was an issue of control, power imbalances, or "parenting and anger management" (El Akkad & Bascarmurty, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007).

Also, few articles focused on the intergenerational clashes between parents and children. Although the role of immigration as a strong mediating factor was highlighted in these discussions, the emphasis on the generational clashes took the attention away from the religious and cultural aspects and situated the issue into universal grounds of the life cycle. Thus, Aqsa's behaviour in changing clothes on the way to school was seen as a general trait of teenagers:

Aqsa Parvez was not the first 16-year-old girl to leave the house in one outfit and change into another bolder, more revealing set of clothes on her way to school: Teenaged girls have done it for years, defying their dismayed parents to make a statement about their burgeoning sexuality and independence (Timson, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. L1).

Consequently, Aqsa's behaviour was seen as an effort "to be cool, to be noticed, and above all to morph into the object of desire they so desperately want to be"; something that is common among all teenagers (Timson, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. L1).

Furthermore, few articles acknowledged the racist reactions and the hateful calls against Muslim immigrants: "rumours that the girl clashed with her family over her

objection to wearing the hijab have generated headlines from Germany to Pakistan, and fuelled a fierce - and at times arguably racist - debate about Islam and Canadian values” (El Akkad & Bascaramurty, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Dec. 2007, p. A1).

Moreover, it was discussed that there is not enough social service for immigrants to overcome the generational conflicts that they have with their kids. One article focused on the services for immigrants, lack of ‘soft services such as family counselling and suggested more attention to their problems instead of one-dimensional interest in helping newcomers with employment and language skills (Keung, *The Star*, 13 Dec. 2007).

Although, these universal and feminist sub-accounts of the murder were considerable in the news stories, they still were unable to counter the dominant themes of ‘Othering’ and remained partial and minor in the construction of the media’s approach to honour killings as a ‘cultural anomaly’.

3.2.2 The Murder of Amandeep

Amandeep Kaur’s murder in January 2009 was not extensively covered in the newspapers. However, similar to the cases of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family, the coverage of the murder was more extensive in *The Star* compared to *The Globe and Mail*. *The Globe and Mail* covered the murder very briefly and only in two articles, both of which were in the local news (Toronto news) section. In *The Star* eight articles were published about the murder. All the articles were published in the news section, four of which were published in the first four pages of the newspaper. The headlines of the articles were neutral and conveyed no signs of Othering and culturalist approaches.

Although Amandeep was killed on January 1st of 2009, the first news account about the murder in *The Globe and Mail* appeared on January 5th and in an article which

was about first homicides in the New Year in the Toronto area (Appleby, *Globe and Mail*, p. A6). A short part of the article was devoted to Amandeep murder in which it was reported that Amandeep Kaur Dhillan, 22, found slain at Airport Foods, where she worked. Her father-in-law was taken to the hospital because of his stab wounds. The coverage provided no details and did not probe further into the murder or the way that the young woman was killed. The headline and the photos were devoted to the other homicides that took place in the region.

Two days later, a short news story was published in the brief section of the news and reported that father-in-law was arrested for killing Amandeep Kaur (Wingrove, *Globe and Mail*, 7 Jan. 2009, p. A10). Similar to the previous story, the reporter paid little attention to the murder, the victim, and the father-in-law, who was charged with first degree murder. No details of the victim and the accused's ethnicity or motive for the death were published. My search for Amandeep's name after the first three months (the time frame of this study) and during the court proceedings showed that her name appeared only once in *The Globe and Mail* and in an article about honour killings, in which her name was mentioned as a victim of honour killings in Canada (Hui, *Globe and Mail*, 13 July 2010).

In *The Star*, the first four articles that mentioned Amandeep's name, focused on the high rate of homicide in the region in recent years. Among these articles, two articles focused on the security cameras in the mall -where Amandeep and another man were killed- and their importance in the two homicides in the New Year (Chai & Morrow, *The Star*, 4 Jan. 2009; n.a. *The Star*, 5 Jan. 2009). Particularly, the name of Amandeep came as another victim of homicides in the area and with no actual attention to the

circumstances of her murder. In the other two articles, there was little attempt to explain the murder or any motive behind it. Yet, it was mentioned that Amandeep was from India; the Punjab region. She had an unhappy marriage in Canada, where her husband and father-in-law did not allow her to be free and independent, even to visit her relatives in Canada or making phone calls to her family in India (Loriggio, *The Star*, 3 Jan. 2009; Stancu & Morrow, *The Star*, 6 Jan. 2009).

In subsequent four articles, however, a more in-depth coverage of the murder was analyzed. In interviews with Amandeep's sister, mother and relatives, she was represented as a smiling, quiet, friendly, well-mannered, helpful, and hardworking woman who was in a troubled marriage. Involved in an arranged marriage, Amadeep was isolated from people and her life was on "extreme hardship". As such, Amandeep was seen as an unhappy woman who always "had tears in her eyes" (Aulakh, *The Star*, 11 Jan. 2009, p. A2).

In an article titled "she was the ticket for a better life" that was published a month after Amandeep's murder and was the most important article about the murder (Aulakh, *The Star*, 31 Jan. 2009), the reporter discussed Amandeep's forced marriage as an investment from her family to immigrate to Canada. As such, Amandeep was seen as the bridge to the world of happiness and welfare that could help her family to join her in Canada. The article provided a pleasant picture of her family as they "just wanted Aman to be happy". However, her in-laws left little freedom for Amandeep, always were following her and did not let her contact her relatives. Even when Amandeep had a baby, they did not let her take care of the child and sent the baby back to India to be brought up by Amandeep's parents.

The article presented a sad story of immigrant women who come to Canada in arranged marriages for the hope of a better life. Instead, they got stuck in a violent domestic situation with their in-laws, with no social support and few contacts. The article brought up Amandeep's arranged marriage as a reason for her murder. However, as Jiwani (2006) suggests, the (little) focus on arranged marriage as the possible reason of a sad life and murder fails to account for the endemic violence in relationships that are supposed to be based on love.

Still, apart from the focus on Amandeep's unhappiness because of her in-laws extreme control, the article had no focus on Amandeep's husband. Little was said about the father-in-law, his character, occupation, knowledge of English, wealth and so on. In addition, the article rejected that honour played any role in the murder. This depiction of the story, which seems to be neutral, left little space for assumptions of culture clash. The article, interestingly, ended with Amandeep's parents' statement that they did not want to stay in Canada: "I don't want to stay long in the country where my daughter was killed" (Aulakh, *The Star*, 31 Jan. 2009, p. A1).

In my search for later-coverage of the murder in *The Star*, Amandeep's name appeared in only three articles. One of the articles was about general incidences of honour killings in Canada and Amandeep's name was mentioned as a victim of honour killings (n.a. *The Star*, 13 July 2010, p. A13). The other two articles covered the court proceedings, where the father-in-law admitted that he killed his daughter-in-law to save his family's honour and pride (n.a. *The Star*, 5 June 2010, p. GT1; n.a. *The Star*, 10 June 2010, p. GT4). Although according to the father-in-law's statements in the court, the murder could clearly be categorized as honour killings and while the newspapers regarded

Amandeep as a victim of honour killings in few reports, there was no discussion or comments on the murder and the newspapers showed little interests in covering the murder. The little attention and brief coverage of the case, suggests an opposite approach to the other cases of honour killings examined in this research.

3.2.3 The Murder of the Shafia Family

In the case of the Shafia family, results revealed that in the first three months of the incidence, the space of coverage was comparatively low. Although the murders were committed on June 30th, it was not until July 24th that the newspapers published news stories about the murders. On July 24th after three weeks of investigation, police charged the father, brother, and mother with first degree murder of the three sisters and their step-mother.

Before this time, *The Toronto Star* published an article about the discovery of four bodies in a mysterious car in the Rideau Canal, Kingston (Chung, 3 July 2009, p. A2). The article reflected the initial thoughts about the killings and reported that the bodies of three sisters with their aunt were found in a submerged car in a Rideau Canal near Kingston. The reporter interviewed the victims; brother about their funeral. However, it was also mentioned that police were suspicious and were still investigating. The initial story of the murder revealed no sign of Othering and did not provide the reader with the background of the family or any similar information. After July 24th, the coverage started discussing the case as murder and as possible honour killings.

In six articles later published in *The Star*, all written by two journalists, strong signs of Othering and Culturalist explanations of the murders were evident. All the articles referred to the notion of honour killings, particularly in the headlines. The same

approach was obvious in *The Globe and Mail*'s coverage of the incidence and the three articles that were published on July 24th and 25th, conveyed similar explanations and details about the murders. Indeed, the murders gained attention after the police explored the possibility that they were honour killings. The media's approach toward the murders is best exemplified in the following statement:

We are shocked, naturally, when it is alleged that honour killings have occurred in Canada. They seem alien, inaccessible, at odds with everything we know about our country. How could a primitive thing like that happen in a progressive place like this? Curiously, the very cultural permissiveness that makes such crimes so jarring may help explain what leads to their occasional perpetration in North America and Europe. (Dale, *The Star*, 25 July 2009, p. A6)

A similar statement from *The Globe and Mail* (Blatchford, 24 July 2009, p. A2) conveyed the same notions of Otherness:

Here is the clash that the great Canadian tolerance is faced with...Here we tolerate a partial and some would say a negligible assimilation or even acceptance of our Canadian norms, beliefs, fundamental principles And what seems to underlie these murders, what appears to be the real bottom-line context, is the belief that men are superior to women. Canadians don't believe that, do not accept the core belief of many ethnic groups that women aren't equal to men and are less valuable a creature.

One reporter interviewed a relative of the family (Chung, *The Star*, 24 July 2009) who strongly suggested that the incident was not honour killings and supported the family and the father. In the interview, the relative, interestingly a female, said that the deaths were a result of suicide on the oldest girl's part that "was not normal" and "kept saying my life is boring". While the relative referred to the father "as a very honest man" and referred to the mother as a woman "who is not this kind of person". Through this interview, the story conveyed a sense that the father's behaviour was accepted by the larger family and community.

Similar to Aqsa's murder, the cause of the murders in the newspaper coverage was largely seen as the clash between the girls' life style and the family's strict culture. In an article in *The Globe and Mail* (Calvin, 24 July 2009, A2), the journalist quoted a police statement that stated: "while the girls were Canadian teenagers, the family may have held different values, and 'different sets of view'." The reporters explained that Zainab; the oldest daughter fell in love with a boy from a different community, and this was not approved by her family.

In one article titled "tragic love story emerges after Kingston death" the author interviews zianab's lover providing more details on the love story. According to the article, they were planning to announce their engagement upon the family's arrival from the trip to Niagara Falls.

Furthermore, the journalists discussed the possibility of the murders being honour killings. In reports from the police that were quoted several times in the articles, the police mentioned that the possibility of the murders being honour killings was under investigation and said that "cultural issues were at play" in the murders (Chung, *The Star*, 25 July 2009; p. A6). Police also said that they faced "unique and unbelievable challenges" in the investigation. Similar to the case of Aqsa Parvez, the reporters provided an analysis of honour killings, and highlighted the role of Islam in the killings:

Young Muslim men behaving badly may not be encouraged, but even in the most backward parts of the Islamic world, they aren't killed for dating a blonde or drinking a beer. Girls and women are punished for even more minor offences (disobeying, not marrying the old bag of bones daddy chose, appearing in public unveiled, etc.), often with death. In these parts of the planet, women don't matter; they are less than men; they don't really count: Thus, as a man, you can do with them as you like (Blatchford, *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2009, p. A2)

3.2.3.1 Images of the Victims and the Perpetrators

Similar to the other two cases, the victims of the Shafia family's honour killings were portrayed in positive ways. Through quotations from neighbours and friends the articles gave a sense that the victims were beautiful "angles" and modern fashion-dressed girls who "did not wear head scarves". Zainab, who assumed to be the reason of the family's anger and the murders, ran away from home previously. This news that was repeatedly mentioned in the articles portrayed Zainab as a rebellious girl who was against the family's culture and wanted to leave them. This image, as noted by Jiwani (2009) reminds us of the image of innocent victims requiring rescue which is widely recognized in the case of Muslim women, particularly, Afghans.

Similarly, Rona, the first wife of Muhammad Shafia was seen as an oppressed woman who had experienced harsh violence at the hands of her husband and Tooba, the second wife, because she could not bear children. She was portrayed as having "been passing off for decades, when need be, as his (Muhammad's) cousin" (Blatchford, *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2009). Quotes from Rona's sister indicated that Rona and the sisters had received several death threats for "social, cultural, and family reasons" (Blatchford, *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2009, p. A2). In other word, Rona was portrayed as a woman who feared for her life, forced to stay in an abusive relationship, and hated. At the same time, quotes from the police noted how 'Canada' expected the women to have every right to live in Canadian society. In one article (Chung & Dale, *The Star*, 24 July 2009, p. A1) the police was quoted saying: "They all shared the rights within our great country to live without fear, to enjoy safety and security, and to exercise freedom of choice and expression and yet had their lives cut short by members of their own family."

On the other hand, the perpetrators, the father and the brother, were portrayed as having lashed out in anger, authoritarian, and violent. The father was seen as a well-to-do businessman who was the “master” in the household. The second marriage of the father was highlighted almost in all the articles. The articles depicted him as a violent man, involved in a polygamous marriage, whose first wife was abused and finally killed by him. The father’s polygamy is of central focus in the articles. The *Globe and Mail* interviewed the family’s lawyer who said: “Children, no children: In Afghanistan, you can have two, three, four wives. It doesn’t matter. But that’s Afghanistan; this is Canada.” (Blatchford, *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2009, p. A2)

Hamed Mohammad Shafia, the brother, was portrayed as harsh and authoritarian with his sisters. He was also depicted as having “an icy stare” in the court sessions (Chung and Dale, *The Star*, 24 July 2009). In most of the articles, it was mentioned that the family were from Kabul, Afghanistan and just moved to Canada two years ago. Several times the coverage described the family as “Afghan-born”. By this explanation, the articles conveyed the sense that the family were newcomers and also were from Kabul, a place that is generally linked to the Taliban and terror. This approach was also clear in the case of Aqsa Parvez, where it was repeatedly mentioned in the reports that the family of these victims recently came to Canada. Jiwani (2006) discusses how labelling people as newcomers to the nation conveys the sense that they are never ‘real Canadians’. She also explains how the representation of Afghan women in Canadian press, creates the invisible grounds to support the war on the Taliban in Afghanistan (Jiwani, 2009).

It is noteworthy that the depiction of the mother, who was also charged with murder, was different from the father and the brother. She was depicted the best in the following statement:

Slight and pale, wearing a modest black tunic top over matching pants, cuffed at the wrist and ankle, her small chin quivered now and then, but she held it together - she is an Afghan, after all, tough and proud - until, as part of a court procedure, the prosecutor read aloud the names of her four surviving children. At the naming of the last, a girl, the 39-year-old Ms. Yahya began to sob, quite uncontrollably. (Blatchford, *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2009).

This image gives a sense of how the media understood Muslim minority women as victims in the hands of men who are worthy of rescuing, although they may participate in perpetrating the violence. According to Jiwani (2009), through the rescue mission supported in the media (that legitimize military intervention) Afghan women are rendered more like 'us.' They demonstrate their embracing of Western ways, their deservedness as victims worthy of saving and, in line with that, as potential consumers for Western goods. In the next chapter, I further discuss these images and how they function to serve the interests of the dominant society.

3.2.3.2 Elements of Universal Feminist Approaches

Elements of universal approaches toward the murders in the Shafia family's coverage were also observed in the newspapers accounts, although those elements were not commonly present. For example in the following quotations, journalists acknowledge that applying the phrase 'honour killings' might not be appropriate: "The application of the phrase 'honour killing' can be contentious, particularly for minority communities that fear being collectively tarred by the violence of a small number of people" (Chung & Dale, *The Star*, 24 July 2009; A1).

Also, examples provided from non-Muslim honour killings and the possible role of other factors such as mental illness was considered. However, the dominant discourse in the articles, as shown above, framed the problem within the Othering and Islamophobia discourse. Providing details that portrayed the family as newcomers, as foreigners, and as ‘different’ people supports the implicit idea of the Muslim communities’ unequal status within the larger discourse of immigration in Canadian society.

The above results showed how two Canadian newspapers, *The Star* and *The Globe and Mail*, covered three recent cases of so-called ‘honour killings’ in Canada. The timing, placement, and focus of the articles were explored. The articles interpretations of the events/cases in terms of cultural values, gender relations, depictions of the victims and perpetrators as well as the overall placement within the debate about immigrant communities and violence were presented. The coverage of the two newspapers was also compared.

The following chapter, synthesizes the results with the objective of understanding the implications of such coverage and searching for further suggestions both practical and research focused.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The results of this study showed different trends in the newspapers coverage of honour killings in Canada. The media implemented culutralist approaches to understand the murders of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family, while the coverage of Amandeep Kaur's murder did not include strong signs of Othering. Indeed, the story of Amandeep was of little interest to the newspapers; therefore, gendered or racialized interpretations were not considerably reflected in the news accounts about her murder. Also, the difference was considerable in the space and length of coverage between the murder of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family. Hence, the newspapers widely and consistently covered Aqsa's murder immediately following the murder, while in the case of the Shafia family coverage was not extensive and remained limited to the first week after charging the perpetrators with murder.

Moreover, in the cases of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family, the sense was both implicit and explicit throughout the newspaper stories that these murders are results of culture clash, and unresolvable problems within the Muslim immigrant community in Canada. Consistent references to the family backgrounds, ethnicity, and immigrant status supported the assumption of Othering. Provocative headlines and sensational coverage also constructed honour killings as a Muslim phenomenon that is threatening to Canadian society and dangerously problematic. Through the wide focus on the role of Islam, the hijab, cultural backwardness of parents, and immigrants' problems in Canada, honour killings were understood as cultural and religious problems of immigrants who do not belong to Canadian society. The newspapers coverage rarely presented honour killings as a gender-based practice which is rooted in patriarchy.

Also, the results showed that the newspaper stories portrayed binary positive-negative images of the victims and the victimizers. While the victims were seen as innocent females willing to Western culture and life-style, the victimizers portrayed as cruel, backward, and blinded by religion. As a result, the victims were praised and the perpetrators were condemned.

However, several signs of feminist approaches to the murders were observed in the newspapers coverage. As I earlier showed, these accounts included several measures of feminist approaches and by situating honour killings as a form of violence against women, highlighting immigrants' efforts to end honour crimes, and by acknowledging racist reactions to the violence constituted small but visible counter-arguments to the dominant approach toward the murders. Yet, the dominant culturalist interpretation remained the strongest approach in the newspaper stories.

These findings resemble previous research about the discourse of violence against immigrant women in the West which has been a metaphor for orientalist perspectives (Sen, 2005). Honour killings are recent examples of those perspectives which embed senses of backwardness of oriental cultures (Sen, 2005). Consequently, as Razack (2004) argues, the social and political responses to the violence, specifically among Muslim communities have been mainly culturalist. This means that the violence is understood as originating in culture. Razack (2008) explains that discussions of honour killings, as a result, function to stigmatize Muslim communities and evict them from the political and legal community. In this regard, the notion of culture clash conceals anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim agendas evident in Western states (Razack, 2004).

According to Hall (1997), it is important to ask which of the many meanings that could contribute to an event or a photo, is the 'preferred meaning' in the media. He explains that through the process of Othering in the Western media, people who are in any way significantly different than the majority society - 'them' rather than 'us' - are frequently subject to sharply opposed, polarized and binary extreme images- good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling/compelling- (Hall, 1997). This representation of 'difference' becomes more complicated when we add sexuality and gender to race as a new dimension. The binaries which have been evident in the case of black women in the West (Hall, 1997) create mentalities that intervene in the public understanding of the 'different' groups and provide little help to understand problems and issues of those groups. This is very problematic when the public commonly relies on the media, as having neutral agendas that provide unbiased information about the world.

Murder as a result of Islamic intolerance is the preferred meaning that the media conveyed in the case of Aqsa Parvez. In the case of the Shafia family, the murders were understood as honour killings that were rooted in the culture and religion of the Muslim family which is not only 'different' but is also at odds with the Canadian values.

Fernandez (2009) and others (Razack, 2004; 2008; Karim, 2000) suggest that anti-Muslim prejudice is increasingly hidden behind a concern for women's rights. According to Fernandez (2009, p. 269):

The effect of this is two-fold. First, it unquestioningly reinforces the idea that Islam is oppressive to women, homogenizing and generalizing such oppression as representative of the whole rather than as specific to the few. Second, it allows for the silencing of the voices of Muslim women while simultaneously proclaiming a desire to free them from such silencing.

Said (1997) argues that the coverage of Muslims in the media represents Islam as a monolithic religion that resists the development efforts of the West. In this way, as indicated in the case of Aqsa Parvez, a divide has been made between Western autonomous individuals who make decisions without the influence of community and immigrants who live within communities (Razack, 2004). This divide then serves to illustrate the unbridgeable cultural divide between the West and non-West and indicate that the non-West is a place of danger for women (Razack, 2004). Any factors that might complicate the picture, for example, immigration as a condition that immigrants are forced to negotiate, or racism that drives immigrants into themselves, remain outside the cultural frame and Westerners people, imagined as living autonomously and outside culture remain privileged in this formulation (Razack, 2004). This duality between Westerners and immigrants, as a result, facilitates institutionalization of Islamophobic norms (Fernandez, 2009).

In the case of honour killings in Canada, I suppose that the media mark Muslim immigrants as Others who are recognized and positioned as dangerous outsiders marginal to the 'us' of Canadian identity. The media stories mobilize signs of Otherness that legitimize and naturalize the unresolvable differences between Muslims and the West. As Moallem (2005) argues, such representations invent new religious identities by attributing barbarism and Otherness to Muslims. Therefore, a battle between two civilizations or one civilization against a un-civilization is imagined (Fernandez, 2009). In this war, consequently, the universal goods of the West -freedom, equality, and tolerance- are hailed by the West in the fight for moral supremacy against the evils of Islam -barbarism, savagery, oppression and subordination (Fernandez, 2009).

4.1 The Battle over Bodies of Muslim Women

Several scholars have pointed out that the post 9/11 era has put Muslim groups at greater risk for discrimination at the hand of larger society (Razack, 2004; 2008, Moghissi & Chorashi, 2010; Jiwani, 2006; 2009; Sen, 2005). They have also pointed out that policing Muslim community in the name of gender equality has become more pronounced after September 2001 (Razack, 2004). Thus, Islam has been the focus of Western knowing via a superior orientalist eye (Sen, 2005). Alvi et al. (2003) assert that the war on terror after 9/11 has intensified the West's scrutiny of Muslim women in terms of veiling and created what they call the 'post-Cold war reality of the demonization of Islam and Muslims'.

According to Razack (2004), Islamic nations are targeted as 'culture' when the West wishes to address issues of violence against women and honour crimes. As such, the culture clash is seen as irreconcilable clash between West and Islam wherein Muslims are seen as fundamentally inassimilable and culturally inferior (Razack, 2004). She writes (2004, p 130):

They are tribal and stuck in pre-modernity, the argument goes, possessing neither a commitment to human rights, women's rights nor to democracy. It is the West's obligation to defend itself from these values and to assist Muslims into modernity, by force if necessary, as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq both underline. The body of the Muslim woman, a body fixed in the Western imaginary as confined, mutilated, and sometimes murdered in the name of culture, serves to reinforce the threat that the Muslim man is said to pose to the West and is used to justify the extraordinary measures of violence and surveillance required to discipline him and Muslim communities.

This focus on violence against women, according to Razack (2004), serves not only to mask the violence Muslim communities experience from the outside but provides fuel for the 'War on Terror'. In other words, 'violence against Muslim women' is a principal

weapon in the 'War on Terror' (Razack, 2008). This violence, then become the justification for the "crusade over the bodies of women and against illiberal Muslims" (Fernandez, 2009).

From this perspective, honour is a motive that propels men to kill their women for petty and unreasonable reasons and therefore, is barbaric and backward (Sen, 2005). Sen (2005) argues that this gaze could be understood in light of the colonial adventure of the West that judges 'Other' gender relations from its colonial perspective. Hence, the treatment of women in the non-West world has been the marker of the judgment in the West (Sen, 2005). As a result, any practice such as polygyny in Africa, child marriage in India, and veiling in North Africa and the Middle East was considered as a problematic tradition that became battlegrounds wherein moral superiority of the West was asserted (Sen, 2005).

The newspapers coverage of the honour killings murders in Canada, employed similar perspectives to understand and cover the murders. Accordingly, it was conveyed in the stories, particularly in the case of Aqsa Parvez, that all the victims were victims of barbaric traditions that belong to the old world, are strange and at odds with Canadian morality and social order. As such it is said that "parents who want their children to remain faithful to old world ways are often at odds with kids growing up in Western society" (Henry & Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A1). In the following quote the reporter provides an image of the 'Muslim world' that conveys the above mentioned points: "in the world of Islam... millions of Muslim girls are told very early in life by their mothers that their place in society is one of submission; submission, not to God, but to Man" (Fatah, *Globe and Mail*, 17 Dec. 2007, p. A17). Although this picture of

women's submission is present in all patriarchal societies in the world and is seen as a feature of patriarchy, this account situates women's submission as rooted in Islam; a monolithic religion with no variations.

4.2 Portrayal of Victims and Victimizer of Honour Killings

According to Jiwani (2006), in the media discourse of violence against women, the Other is generally defined as being excessively sexual, physically different, inferior in mental and social capacities, threatening, alien, dirty, ignorant, primitive and beyond the pale of civilization, while the colonizers constructed an image of themselves as intelligent, rational, superior, moral, and controlled. However, in constructing the picture of the Other, the image of the victims and the victimizers -the woman and the man- are crucially different in the coverage of honour killings in the Canadian newspapers. Results of my research provide evidence for the colonial images of Muslim women and Muslim men in the Canadian media as the 'voiceless Muslim woman' and the 'brutal Muslim man'. Several scholars have also identified such portrayals (Moallem, 2005; Fernandez, 2009; Reimers, 2007; Razack, 2008; Jiwani, 2006). These images situate Muslim women as with forever lack of agency, autonomy and the capability or ability to make free and informed choices (Fernandez, 2009). At the same time, images of violent Muslim fathers that murder their innocent daughters justify blaming Muslim culture for the bad behaviour of Muslim men (Volpp, 2000).

According to Fernandez (2009), the image of a helpless woman who needs to be saved from her barbaric culture and a brutal and powerful group of men is constantly reproduced in discussions of Islam and violence against Muslim women, entrenching it deeper in the public consciousness, so that it can be used to justify interventions to save

brown women from brown men. In this way, the “Western trope of the Muslim woman as the ultimate victim of a timeless patriarchy defined by the barbarism of the Islamic religion, which is in need of civilizing, has become a very important component of Western regimes of knowledge’ (Moallem, 2005, p. 20).

In a Swedish study, Brune (as cited in Reimers, 2007) identified Swedish media images of immigrant men and women as based on two stereotypes: problem and victim. The immigrant man is represented as the problem that is governed by a misogynist culture, while immigrant woman is represented as the victim, subordinated and oppressed. Furthermore, Brune identifies two different stereotypes of immigrant women; one is the threatened woman, the victim that is locked in her patriarchal culture, and the other is the positive image of a woman who aspires to be like ‘us’, who cherishes ‘our’ values and ‘our’ way of living (Brune, as cited in Reimers, 2007).

Similar images of the victims of honour killings were reproduced in the newspapers construction of honour killings in Canada. As I earlier discussed, the media portrayed Aqsa Parvez, the Shafia sisters, and Amandeep Kaur as voiceless victims who were abused by their abusive male relatives. The coverage, at the same time, provided positive portrayal of the victims as courageous women who wanted to be free and needed to be saved. The following image of Aqsa Parvez best exemplifies the point:

Vivacious and outgoing, Parvez wanted to dress like a Western woman in tight-fitting clothes and show off her long, dark hair by removing her hijab. She wanted to be ‘free’ and independent of her family’s devout Muslim beliefs. But that was a problem. (Henry & Mitchell, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007, p. A1)

4.3 Veiling

The increasing focus on violence against immigrant Muslim women is nowhere more obvious than in the responses to the hijab or the veil (Fernandez, 2009; Martino &

Rezai-Rashti, 2008; Alvi et al. 2003; Hoodfar, 1997). Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) explain how discourses about veiling have functioned to confirm particular beliefs or Orientalist perceptions about Muslim women's oppression and Islam in Canada. The extensive anxiety about veiling, as a signifier of oppression, is presented as an exemplary instance of what Said (1997) has identified as the political enterprise of Orientalism (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008).

It is through the focus on the hijab that Islamic fundamentalism becomes a common signifier that is persistently used to single out the Muslims in their irrational, morally inferior, and barbaric masculinity and their passive, victimized, and submissive femininity (Moallem, as cited in Martio & Rezai-Rashti, 2008).

Apparent in the case of Aqsa Parvez, the media reports put high importance on the role of the hijab in her murder and many of the reports assumed that Aqsa's willingness to wear Western clothing and to put away hijab was the reason of her father's action to kill her. Parallel to this reasoning, boundaries were made between Aqsa's behaviour as Western, new, and normal and her father's beliefs about hijab as different, old, worthless, and strange. In this way, and similar to the results of other studies on the portrayal of the hijab, the reports presented a negative image of veiling and Muslim dressing, while at the same time, held it responsible for the violence and the murder. Obvious in the positive picture of Aqsa, unveiling is seen 'as a symbol of the success of Western interventionism' (McDonald, 2006, p. 11).

However, this negative attitude towards the hijab, as a symbol of oppression conveyed in the coverage about Aqsa Parvez, ignores the socio-cultural and historical contexts and the complex multifaceted motives for the hijab (Fernandez, 2009). It ignores

that the veil has a history far more complex and multilayered than its current meaning as the symbol of oppression or Islamic fundamentalism (Najmabadi, 2006; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008). Previous studies on Muslim's willingness or reluctance to wear the hijab has shown the complexity and demonstrated several factors that affect such dynamics. In her study, Hoodfar (2003) asserts that many of her participants chose to wear hijab, despite objections from their parents who did not associate the practice of veiling with Islam. Besides, Zine's research (as cited in Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008) highlights that for some participants, hijab was adopted as a feminist protest against the objectification of the female body and the tyranny of beauty that has been further intensified by the commodification of women.

Furthermore, the image of oppression that is embodied in the veil ignores agency and autonomy of Muslim women and presupposes them as passive victims of Islamic moral system. However, the failure to recognize the autonomy and agency of Muslim women reinforces oriental gender and cultural assumptions (Fernandez, 2009). It further establishes "notions of a monolithic victim group who are all similarly oppressed" and continues the representation of Muslim women as voiceless victims (Fernandez, 2009). Challenging this understanding of hijab, as Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) suggest requires a particular knowledge about Islam, other Eastern religions, and the historical evolution of practices of veiling and unveiling. What is essential in this regard is that bodies should be understood within racialized and gendered frameworks of historically specific systems of knowledge/power relations (Foucault, as cited Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008). To this end, it is important to avoid "casting agency in binary terms as caught between the poles of oppressive patriarchal structures of subordination and the promise

afforded by feminism of liberation from such structures” (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008; p 421).

4.4 Omissions in Representation

Omissions in the media coverage of social events are as important as the content of coverage in the news stories. Indeed, the decision as to what to publish and what to ignore is not a neutral decision in any sense. In the coverage of the honour killings cases under study, the media ignored several aspects of the murders in order to privilege the desired interpretation of the events.

In the coverage of the three cases, little was said about how the lack of social help contributed to the killings. In particular, in the case of Aqsa Parvez, it was ignored that how lack of social services when she had to stay away from home and be with friends, contributed to her death. One reporter wrote: “something would have been done if anybody knew the teen had been threatened or had reason to believe she was in any danger” (Mitchell & Henry, *The Star*, 12 Dec. 2007). The journalists ignored that Aqsa needed help when she stayed away from her family for several weeks prior to her death and did not receive social services.

At the same time, the newspapers interpretations of Aqsa’s murder ignored the possible stigma that Aqsa had faced in school due to her hijab or her cultural clothing. The conflicts in Aqsa’s home to impose the families preferences of clothing and behaving were extensively covered in the newspapers, however, no attention was paid to the larger society’s pressure on Aqsa to impose hegemonic preferences. Indeed, those pressures were naturalized and were represented as general figures of modernity and the ‘new’

world. The conflicts, oppression, and dehumanizing process of such 'modern' impositions were silenced in the coverage.

To a lower extent, the media discourse also ignored how intergenerational conflicts in the context of immigration, create problems that could lead to honour killings or other manifestations of violence. Although several articles referred to the role of immigration in intensifying conflicts between parents and children, the conflicts were seen not as natural outcomes of immigration as a challenging process, but as manifestations of the immigrants 'culture clash' with the host society. In this sense, immigration was not a neutral word and conveyed notions of difference, danger, and problem. No doubt that honour killings are means to control women's sexuality, but it is important to consider how such controls are exacerbated in the context where the families (the only remaining units of the heritage culture) feel a loss of control; a source of anxiety and stress in the immigration context (Razack, 2004). In other words, we must consider how the patriarchal norms of the ethnic immigrant groups find ways to manifest themselves in different contexts and under varying pressures that provides such opportunities. As Razack (2004) puts it, we need to understand these communities' struggles of survival in an increasingly racist context. In such a situation, members of these communities understand themselves within community, although the communities' practices are often contested internally (Razack, 2004).

My suspicion is that Aqsa Parvez was dealing with her identity as a Muslim woman, more in school than at home, where the pressures of larger society and friends created the grounds for her struggles. The media ignored the possible challenges that Aqsa faced in her attempts as a 16 year-old girl to 'fit in' and acquire the sense of

'belonging' in school. Clothing, the most discussed aspect of Aqsa's trouble, is perceived to be a major signifier of acceptance in Canadian society (Jiwani, 2006). The complexity of the pressure on her to conform with Western-style dressing, and be 'normal' were simplified in the newspapers coverage within the duality of 'them' versus 'us'. The 'possible' marginalization of Aqsa and the structural violence that she experienced due to her appearance in school and finally led her putting away her cultural clothing is neglected and again reduced to demonizing Islam. Further, institutionalizing racism in a multicultural society such as Canada within this dynamic of 'belonging' was never mentioned and the consequences of this form of 'macro' bullying in Canadian schools was overlooked.

4.5 Consequences and Implications of Honour Killings Coverage

The results of my research, as I earlier discussed, showed that honour killings of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family were framed within culturalist ethnocentric frames in the two major Canadian newspapers. Hence, honour killing is seen as a cultural phenomenon that belongs to the 'old' world, has no familiarity with Canadian society, and is practiced by primitive immigrant people. The culturalist frame has multiple critical consequences and implications.

First, this perspective embodies elements of racism and presumes Western's superiority. According to Benhabib (2002) this approach toward immigrant communities is dangerously close to a form of cultural racism that sees Western people as less bound by culture and more morally mature than 'primitive others'. Martino & Rezai-Rashti (2008) assert that most of the stories in the media about Muslim's problems represent the aggression as coming from Islam because of the inherent nature of the religion. In other

words, covering Islam is a one-sided representation that obscures what Westerns do and highlights what Muslims by their flawed nature are (Said, as cited in Martino & Rezaei-Rashti, 2008). Jiwani (2006) points out that media in the West, act as crucial agents in safeguarding the dominant culture's values, biases, and expectations. Contemporary media coverage of minority immigrants is rooted in colonial inscribed filters. She writes (2006. P xxi):

As with official government discourse, the media tend to identify culture as that which is visible and different from the norm. The norm remains invisible in the background but nevertheless is a benchmark by which to assess and evaluate the differences of those whose cultures are considered to be Other.

Jiwani (2006) refers to this type of violence as “symbolic violence” which is critical in reproducing common notions of ‘difference’. Difference, therefore, is constructed as that which deviates from the normalized, and taken for granted background of white dominance. Hall (1990) refers to this as the “white eye” which is outside the frame, but everything is positioned within it. In this respect, the duality of *us* and *them* is essential to the media representations of minorities (Jiwani, 2006). As such, violence in the immigrant families is usually perceived to be rooted in geographic traits or collective cultural norms of the immigrants, while Western violence is understood in terms of individual social and psychological traits (Reimers, 2007, Razack, 2004). In Canada, images of the violence in immigrant families, for example in the case of Aqsa Parvez, has provided the metaphor for the ‘free’ Canadian society and therefore has given Canadians opportunities to demonstrate their superiority over others (Razack, 2004).

Considering the socio-political role of honour killings in this discourse has led some scholars to argue that the term ‘honour killings’ should be abandoned (Gill, 2011). Some suggest that there is no such thing as ‘honour killing’ and it is only domestic

violence within particular ethnic groups (Terman, 2010). According to Gill (2011), honour killings have been a means to establish boundaries between the gendered codes in local communities and values of dominant society. In other words, most of the discussions convey the idea that honour killings are worse than regular domestic violence murders in the West and need more attention and serious actions (Terman, 2010). Explicit and specific mentions of the perpetrators and victims' ethnic origin or immigrant status that is underscored to the reader, as well as the extensive sensationalist reports on the severity and brutality of the violence create and support the grounds for such dualities.

Second, this approach creates grounds for inappropriate and sometimes oppressive interventions allegedly to save the abused Other woman and can lead to drastic national policies on macro-levels. According to Jiwani (2006) if particular groups of people are constantly represented as abnormal and unassimilable Others and those who do not belong to the nation, this gives the ruling powers the justifications for their actions in imposing harsh immigrant policies and measures that restrict the rights of these groups (Jiwani, 2006). Covering honour killings in culturalist perspectives, as a result, can lead to increasing scrutiny of the communities and creating a space wherein any criminal action of an individual is seen as the larger community's fault. According to Razack (2004) unassimilable Muslim communities, in this discourse, require the force of law to bring them into modernity. Thus, rescuing Muslim women from the oppressive cultures is considered a political and educational issue wherein several measures are undertaken to educate young Muslims about the dangers their cultures pose for them (Razack, 2004). Needless to say that if the violence is seen as entirely cultural and a result of inflexible

cultural practices, then the appropriate response is only to engage in border control and criminalising (Razack, 2004).

Third, the Media's culturalist focus on immigrant Muslim woman's body and her oppression, as several scholars suggest, ignores the universal oppression of women in the Western culture (Fernandez, 2009; Reimers, 2007; Razack, 2008; Jiwani, 2009). More importantly, it demarcate Other cultures as "*inherently* more patriarchal, rather than *differently so*", behind a concern for gender equality (Fernandez, 2009). In this way, these representations reinforce the problem of violence by reinforcing stereotypes through the use of essentialist conceptions of culture and religion that obscure dynamics of patriarchy in majority as well as minority contexts (Fernandez, 2009).

In a study about honour killings in Sweden, Reimers (2007) maintains that in talking and action against forms of violence against women, we need to be aware of how the discourse can divide 'Western' women and women from other cultures, positioning the later outside of the 'modern world'. In addition, such a discourse has the strong potential to conceal other forms of male violence that are practiced in 'Western' societies and by 'Western' people. Conceptualizing the murders as 'traditional' and belonging to 'pre-modern' cultures that are timeless and static, could make us ignore dimensions of control, shame, and honour that are parts of the patriarchal social order in the 'Western' world as well (Reimers, 2007). My research showed that in the coverage of honour killings in the two Canadian newspapers, there is little willingness in the newspapers reports to recognize parallel forms of violence against women in Canadian society.

Fourth, by reproducing the marginalization of immigrants, this approach toward the violence fails to contribute to efforts against the violence wherein internal protests

against the violence within communities could rise. According to Razack (2004) producing the images of a civilised Western and a stigmatised and closely-watched non-Western, the law and policies do not foster a positive climate in which Muslims can internally contest patriarchal narratives. Besides, the stigmatization, exclusion, and lack of the sense of belonging that result from these strategies contribute to the vulnerability of immigrants and their marginalization where they are constantly attempting to fit in (Jiwani, 2006).

In addition, this approach creates a sense of being under attack in the Muslim world. It masks heterogeneity and reinforces the subordinate position of immigrants (Sen, 2005). It is with considering these facts that Muslim communities often act to distance themselves from honour killing (Terman, 2010). Through the media interviews with Muslim leaders, I also noticed how the xenophobic reactions led the leaders to focus on ‘the image of Muslim community’ rather than on the actual reasons of the death. As such, the media stereotypes, first, lead Muslim men to almost ignore the chance to be helpful in reducing the violence. Second, they have important implications for women of the Muslim community, since avoiding further destroying the image of Muslims, might force these women not to report the abuses that they experience in their own home (Ishaq, 2010).

Fifth, this approach creates grounds for simplifying lives of immigrants and Muslim women. Indeed, the complex reality of ethnic groups’ identities is often overlooked by the outsider (Ammar, 2000). This approach is taken in the newspapers coverage of honour killings in the cases of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family where the multi-dimensional nature of honour killings is simplified as a religious or cultural

problem. The news accounts mostly ignored the fact that diverse factors –including geography, technological acquisition, education, socio-economic status, and political involvement- strongly contribute to variations in the Muslims’ ways of life and practices (Ammar, 1995). Such representations of Muslims ignore ‘the actual variations in the way Islam has been and is being practiced’ (Hoodfar, 2003, p. 11).

In addition, through their strong emphasis on culture as the source of the violence, these approaches obscure the multiple factors that produce and sustain the violence (Razack, 2004). Hall (1997) argues that stereotypes become very dangerous when they reduce, essentialize, naturalize, and fix differences. In this way, they emphasis on the few simple characteristics about a group and reduce everything to those traits, exaggerate them and fix them without any changes.

The result of this approach, therefore, is that neither gender violence nor racism can be fully understood. As such, gender violence is seen as a problem of pre-modern cultures and of little relevance to women in the West, while at the same time, the racism and discrimination that Others are often experience in this process, is overlooked (Fernandez, 2009). According to Razack (2004) the culturalist responses to problems of Muslims have historically depended on the idea that Muslims come to the West because of its superior wealth. They bring with them a traditional culture and must either be stopped altogether or be forcibly ‘deculturalised’ before they contaminate the superior civilisation into which they have migrated. She adds (P. 132):

“Acknowledging little or no responsibility for the conditions in which Muslim migrants in the West live, and indulging in the fantasy of a superior nation who must discipline and instruct culturally inferior peoples, Western states pursue policies of surveillance and control that heighten the level of racism those

communities experience and that exacerbate the conditions under which Muslim communities become even more patriarchal and violent towards women.”

As a result, Middle Eastern women in the West are caught up in racist practices and policies such as border controls, specially targeting Middle Eastern migrants. At the same time, these women are pressured by members of their communities, who see women’s challenges to traditional male-centered cultural and religious values and practices as misguided, and in the service of imperialism (Moghissi, 2003). Considering this, Moghissi (2003, p 595) notes that “the celebrated national narratives of Western democracies—the rule of law, tolerance, and respect for democratic rights—have proved deeply flawed, partial, and superficial”.

In sum, little effort has been made to locate honour killings within their socio-cultural context in the newspapers coverage of honour killings in Canada. Instead of considering honour killings as examples of violence against women with particularities, these practices were understood as examples of the barbarism of Muslim men and the subordination of Muslim women. In this way, the Muslim woman’s body is a key battle site of cultural imperialism that continues to inform Western responses to the problems of Muslims (Fernandez, 2009; Haque, 2010). In an attempt to provide an alternative understanding of honour crimes with a focus on the multilayered nature of the violence, I discuss the nature of honour killings in the following.

4.6 Nature of Honour Killings

My research shows that the newspapers coverage of honour killings portrayed the crime as a religious problem rooted in the culture of immigrants (Muslims). Through a more extensive focus on the two Muslim incidences of honour killings in Canada, the

murder of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family, the newspapers created a national narrative of ‘Islamic honour killings’. Nonetheless, it is important to note that while religion may provide the justification for the violence, it is by no means the sole source of the problem. In fact, although even some defenders of honour crimes may attribute them to Islamic thought (Ruggi, 1998), the killings are not Islamic and nothing in the Qur’an or other major sources of Islam promotes or condones this practice (Khalili, 2002) and murder in Islam is considered a crime (Ammar, 2002).

Several scholars have pointed out that honour killings not only occur in Islamic societies, but they also occur in a variety of cultures and societies (Wikan, 2008; Coomaraswamy, 2005; Sen, 2005; Sever & Yurdakul, 2001; Abdo, 2004). Bettiga-Boukerbout (2005) discusses how honour codes historically developed in the Italian society and eventually were embedded in the criminal law. She maintains that the concept of honour is deep-rooted in the Mediterranean area. In Italy, women who were deemed ‘dishonoured’ by the society needed to be protected first by their fathers and brothers and then by husbands. Crimes of honour therefore, were prevalent in Italy (Bettiga-Boukerbout, 2005). According to Bettiga-Boukerbout, it was not until 1981 that the references to the “cause of honour” were repealed from the Italian penal code.

Sen (2005) suggests that honour as a motif, has been operated in Europe, in particular, in southern Europe. In this context, honour is a moral framework for behaviour and norms that provides the basis for acceptance in a collective life (Sen, 2005). While the concept of honour conveys meanings of backwardness, crime, and otherness in the Western discussions of honour killings, Sen argues that in the West, even in recent time, it has been a symbol of recognition and reward (Sen, 2005).

Several other scholars have mentioned that historically honour codes evolved in pre-Islamic era. Baron (2006) asserts that a code of honour evolved among the tribes of pre-Islamic Arabia, was imbedded in the customary law of the tribes, and was followed by the Arabs. Islamic law that evolved later tried to temper the practices, prohibiting rumours and making it difficult to prove out-of-marriage sexual relationships. In practice, judges were flexible and the harshest punishments were often avoided. In this situation, customary law persisted, sometimes conflated with Islam and at other times at odds with it (Baron, 2006). As a result, various systems overlapped and at different moments and places, tribal, religious, or state codes dominated (Baron, 2006).

Ortner (1978) found patterns of family honour in Latin American and Mediterranean societies, among societies in the Middle East, southwest Asia, different Indian castes, and Chinese elites. According to Ortner (1978, p.19), “the pattern does not seem to be confined to any particular type of society or to any consistent stratum.”

It is noteworthy that several scholars suggest that ‘honour’ is indeed a global phenomenon that is rooted in patriarchy and is a manifestation of violence against women which is present in all societies. In other words, honour can be understood as the ideology of the power holding groups which struggle to define and protect their patrimony in a competitive arena (Schneider, 1971). As Fernandez (2009) notes, while Western understanding of honour killings renders them as a part of the racial and religious savagery of the Other, these crimes are examples of the cross-cultural sites of male violence against women. Indeed, “what appears to be a cultural divide is nothing more than a synthetic segregation of the same phenomenon: violence against women based on an underlying belief in male ownership of the female body” (Fernandez, 2009; p 280).

It is within this context that Baker et al. (1999) suggest that the fact that honour is not an overt rationale for many femicides in the West does not negate its significance as a possible explanatory factor. Indeed, the kinds of behaviour that violate codes of honour - marital infidelity, refusing an arranged marriage, demanding divorce, receiving phone calls from men, failing to serve a meal on time and etc. - are familiar to anyone studying the patterns of domestic violence in the West (Razack, 2004).

In addition, it is critical to recognize that codes of honour intersect with several other social and economic factors, such as race and class and their severity and practice are affected by those factors. In other words, honour codes in honour-based societies derive their power from different sources, including patriarchy, education, class and the legal system of the societies. Therefore, the normative claim of honour often is mixed with social, economic, or political motives in different social contexts (Araji, 2000) and the honour is tied to social standing, mobility, and economic opportunities of families (Welchman & Hossain, 2005b). For example, Youssef (1973) shows how cultural values of families in Latin America present themselves in different structural frameworks based on the location of the families in the social structure. Sever and Yurdakul (2001) suggest that honour killings in Turkey are localized in the most socioeconomically poor areas wherein due to lack of wealth, education, and upward mobility patriarchy is widely present.

In the immigration context, the immigrant status and the immigrant vulnerabilities as well as systematic discriminations are added to this complex set of factors. In several instances, survivors of honour killings said that their families felt marginalized, foreign, and attacked in the new country (Akpinar, 2003). Fadime Sahindal, a known victim of

honour killings in the Sweden, in her speech in Swedish parliament prior to her death said that: “If society had accepted its responsibility and helped my parents to feel that they had a greater stake in Swedish society, then perhaps this might have been avoided” (Wikan, as cited in Terman, 2010). The marginalization and lack of social support for immigrant communities could reinforce patriarchal values and norms of behaviour causing immigrants to impose stricter rules in their communities, including the practice of honour codes (Terman, 2010).

It is also important that honour killings are not always related to sexual behaviour of the victim and the violation of sexual norms that define the ‘family honour’. Murder, sometimes, is a result of not following the social rules or the gender norms in the family, for example when the woman does not make dinner ready on time, or goes out without permission. In such social dynamics, manliness relies upon women’s obedience, and when they disobey, the men act to preserve their reputation. In other words, as suggested (Welchman & Hossain, 2005b), there are several instances in which the primary motivation for honour crimes is something other than honour -a brother’s argument with his sister over inheritance, for example, or a husband’s desire to get rid of a wife. Research in Lebanon suggests that the greater number of husbands as perpetrators in honour crimes may reflect ‘a change in the conceptualization of family honour’ (Foster, as cited in Welchamn & Hossain, 2005b).

The Western media coverage labels particular crimes as honour killings for solely the reason that they have occurred in Middle Eastern and South Asian communities. However, not all types of killing of women could be categorized as honour killings. It

would be unfair for both the communities and the individual women to cast all the killings as honour killings.

To summarize, the coverage of honour killings in Canadian newspapers conveyed strong culturalist approaches to the murders through which the murders understood as shocking, not understandable, and not acceptable. Indeed, it was conveyed that the people (immigrants) who commit these crimes are not understandable, are inherently different than Canadians, and are required to be modernized. This approach is more evident in the cases of Aqsa Parvez and the Shafia family where the focus on the role of hijab and Islam created the grounds for xenophobic reactions to the religion.

The consequences and implications of this trend of understanding within the larger discourse of violence against immigrant women and the universal patriarchy were also discussed and five major implications were recognized. I maintain that culturalist and racialized interpretations of honour killings create obstacles in the way of better understandings of violence in the larger society as well as among immigrants.

I provide recommendations to understand and to end honour killings in the conclusion. Limitations and directions for future research are also discussed.

Conclusion

In the current study, I conducted a textual analysis of the representation of three recent honour killings in Canada in two major newspapers; *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*. The goal of this research, therefore, was to uncover the discourses of media representations of honour killings in Canada. In doing so, I conducted a textual analysis of the coverage of the three cases of honour killings in the first three months after their incidence. The focus was to understand how the media represented the murders and how the murders were framed in the newspaper stories.

The results showed that little effort was done in the newspapers coverage to depict and place honour killings in immigrant communities in context. The different and uneven coverage of the three cases of honour makes any systematic conclusions difficult to make. However, the wider focus on the murder of Aqsa Parvez supports an argument that the murder was understood as a clear case of Islamic fundamentalism and hence it was easier to cover it from the preferred understanding of 'blaming Islam'. It seems that the newspapers focused on incidences of honour killings because of the perpetrators' and victims' religion and therefore, the nature and dynamics of honour killings was rarely given appropriate attention. The media's failure to contextualize the murders confused the reader about the nature of honour killings.

The media stories not only ignored the context of honour killings but also created strong signs of Othering that supports the cultural divide between immigrants (Muslim) and the majority Canadians. Through this, the media created and supported an ideal invisible picture of "imaginary Canadian" -a word that Jiwani uses- which serves the feelings of the superiority of the dominant. However, the actual conditions of any

patriarchal practices as well as internal opposition to those practices remain completely unexamined when engaging in culturalist frameworks of understanding (Razack, 2008).

In criticizing the culturalist explanations of the murders on the basis of their implications that I earlier discussed, I am not denying any possible effects of culture, religion, or immigrant status in the murders. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, violence against women, in particular, minority women, would not be understood unless we recognize the multiple factors that intersects to create the violence. However, as Jiwani (2006) suggests, culture is fluid and changes across time and space. Which cultural interpretations are selected to explain different incidences of violence is a matter of context and the power structures (Jiwani, 2006). Also, talking of culture is acute when it is the dominate group that controls the interpretations of culture and its role (Razack, as cited in Jiwani, 2006).

The idea of ‘culture clash’ is based on the assumptions of homogeneity and equal standing of those cultures (Jiwani, 2006). However, given the diversity of the cultures, such approach seems to be problematic, since no culture is static and monolithic (Hall, as cited in Jiwani, 2006). In short, as Razack (2004, p 134) suggests “how anti-immigrant positions limit our capacity to understand and confront patriarchal violence in minority communities and how they are racist, are questions that we must all ask”. When Muslims clash with the ‘Canadians’, the clash is a cultural one in the sense that one cultural characteristic is seen as a universal with a commitment to equality and the Other culture is seen as the particular with a commitment to patriarchy and violence. It is important to denaturalise these dualities and to ask what they produce (Razack, 2004).

Since the main goal of my research was to explore the discourse of honour killings in Canadian newspapers and to examine their coverage frameworks, my purpose was not to provide strategies and present ways to protect women from violence in the name of honour. Therefore, although, through the analysis I explored ways to prevent and end honour-based violence, my purpose in conducting this research was to reveal the ways in which the binary opposite images of immigrant/Western created serious obstacles to understand and end violence against immigrants generally and Muslim women in particular. In the next section, I provide few recommendations regarding to honour killings, particularly within the context of immigration.

5.1 Recommendations to End Honour Killings

The above analysis of newspapers content on honour killings in Canada and the persistent misrepresentation of immigrants and violence within their communities, which leads to the systematic discrimination against those communities, cannot be ignored in studies about violence. Indeed, understanding violence against women in those communities require an understanding of dimensions of racism and marginalization. In doing so, in addition to focusing on the gender-based violence in those communities, an understanding of the racialized meanings that has been attributed to the Other in these contexts is required (Fernandez, 2009).

According to Fernandez (2009), it is necessary to re-consider the gender-based cultural practices and to dismantle the underlying racism in the approaches toward violence against women, so that the violence be explained beyond the lenses of racism and Islamophobia. Such a “de-racialization of discursive frameworks”, as she suggests, for example would help to view the hijab in some circumstances as a form of resistance to

the global forces of homogenization, and even as a form of feminism that resists notions of female sexuality as centred on the body. To end violence in the name of honour strategies are required that are free from biases and through which culture could be seen as fluid and ever-changing (Fernandez, 2009). We need to unpack and acknowledge the stereotypes behind the representations that are examined in this study. Doing so requires a space in which all voices could be heard, and all cultures could be neutrally critiqued (Fernandez, 2009).

To understand honour killings, we need to consider the multiple sources of oppression and think of their intersections and how they affect each other and are intertwined. In this respect, identifying one factor as having the most important role in the violence fails us to explain the dynamics of violence in its specific context. As Mojab and Hassanpour (2002) suggest, a host of factors ranging from religion to public policy, media, and academic theories play role in the perpetuation of honour killing. The point is the violence that immigrant women experience is not only coming from their religion or culture and cannot all be attributed to those factors. Indeed, Immigrants suffer from social and economic vulnerability, racism, lack of occupation opportunities, language difficulty and absence of extended family (Haque, 2010; Dossa, 2009). These factors intersect, work together, and contribute to create and support the space in which honour-based violence is experienced.

Razack (2004) has warned us about the culturalist approaches to violence against women in Muslim community and how they obscures the multiple factors that give rise to and sustain the violence. Within this framework, there is a strong need for a contextualised approach to honour killings in the law and policy making. Honour killings

are not understood as illustrations of a generic violence against women, a violence that majority and minority cultures often fail to condemn (Razack, 2004). The attempts to understand Western society as free of violence and barbarism are visible in the newspapers coverage of honour killings in Canada that distinguished those killings from other instances of violence against women and femicide.

It should be noted that women in the honour-based societies have long worked against the practices themselves. But, the colonial interventions on gender norms have raised critics against the activists as Western influenced, untrue to their cultural tradition and agents of a post-colonial project (Sen, 2005). Ironically, such efforts have rarely been recognized in the Western world that has tended to ignore the variety of voices and approaches in Islamic world (Sen, 2005). This history is highly important when seeking to understand and to engage in issue about violence against minority women. Also acknowledging the minority women's efforts as a common framework for practice (as Sen suggests) helps us to end the violence.

Honour killings exist and the problem requires interventions, however, there is a violence that is interwoven in the media representations of these killings. To understand honour killings, however, acknowledging the universal general dimensions of gender-based violence are as important as addressing the particularity of the historical and societal context of each types of its manifestation. As suggested, we should understand honour killings, like any other global phenomenon, in its specificity as well as its generality (Kurkiala, 2003). As such, unpacking the racist logic that underpins contemporary responses to honour killings is a necessary first step towards confronting the violence (Razack, 2004).

To protect minority women from violence there is also a strong need to provide the space for immigrant women themselves to work against violence. It is important to consider that very little research has been devoted to providing the space for Muslims themselves to voice their own concerns, issues, and priorities (Alvi et al. 2003).

Additionally, it is crucial that immigrants be included in the educational curriculums and in the media agencies. Social service providers, in turn, need to be educated in how immigrant women are differentiated by class, education, gender, etc (Ammar, 2000). Muslims are noticeably absent from ranks of power and thus are less able to challenge the negative images by which they are portrayed in the larger culture. Hence, both sides of this challenge need to collaborate to create an atmosphere of mutual trust to end violence against women (Ammar, 2000).

Many Muslim immigrant women live with abuse in the name of cultural unity against the mainstream society. Breaking the silence requires that social services become culturally sensitive and respectful of the immigrants cultures. Hence, unless a clear commitment is made to include immigrants and to eliminate existing stereotypes, attempts to end violence within these communities will be ineffective (Ammar, 2000).

I would like to end this section of the thesis by a quote from the International Campaign against Honour Killings that is about the murder of Aqsa Parvez and suggests an alternative approach to the murder:

The most important question that Toronto should be asking itself is not about hijab, or about whether “honor” killing is Islamic, but why was Aqsa Parvez not under proper protection. Aqsa Parvez made contact with youth services: if these youth services had had proper training in the particular situations pertaining to the lives of young Pakistani women, they could have detected the risk she was under and applied protection procedures (ICAHK, 2008).

5.2 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It is critical to consider the limitations of this research in interpreting the findings. First of all, my analysis was limited to two comparatively un-conservative newspapers for a period of three months following the murders. Future research on other newspapers coverage or on the later coverage of the murders may provide different results. Particularly, as I earlier mentioned, the murders of the Shafia family gained a large portion of coverage after the time-frame of this study and during the court proceedings in the fall of 2011 and the winter of 2012. Further research on the news coverage of the murders beyond my time frame may uncover different components and characteristics of the media construction of honour killings. In addition, my analysis was confined to the narrative text and did not include photos and visual elements. Analyzing the picture and the visual elements of the newspapers coverage may result in more in-depth understanding of the media discourse.

Moreover, it may be more beneficial to study the representation of honour killings in televised news broadcasts and TV channels, whose coverage is distributed across a greater percentage of people. My choice of medium in this study was limited by my limitations of time and accessibility.

In addition, similar to any other social scientist, I came to conduct this study with my own biases. As Hall (1975) notes, even the most “objective” texts are subject to different interpretations by different readers. The intersection of the producers’ intentions and the audience’s interpretations creates a space that he describes as the “margin of understanding.” Although, I implanted several measures to avoid biases, this study, like any other, could be seen within this margin of understanding.

In chapter 1, I noted that scholars maintain that in the immigration context honour rationales often become stricter and concerns for identity and recognition contribute to increase limitations for women (Akpinar, 2003; Wikan, 2008; Terman, 2010). However, the level and conditions of such affects has remained unexamined. Future research might explore the interplay between honour and immigrant status and give insights as to how the conditions that immigrants experience in the diaspora leads to more or less restrict practices of honour.

As Sen (2005) argues, colonial judgment cast a long shadow on the naming of any gendered practices as culturally specific to any society, in particular, when there is no reflexivity in this process. The challenge of future research in this area is to provide an understanding of honour killings and its components that does not suffer the same traits of the Western orientalist perspectives that was discussed in this research. In doing so, I suggest that honour like any other forms of violence against women, has its own particularities that is required to be recognized. Still, honour ought to be seen within the framework of patriarchy that is evident in all societies irrespective of culture, religion, or social structure.

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