Mediations of the Québec City Mosque Shooting

in *La Presse* and *The Montreal Gazette*

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Introduction

On January 29, 2017, Québec City resident Alexandre Bissonnette had dinner with his parents and told them he was going to a shooting range afterwards. Instead, he drove to the local mosque at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec, located in the area of the city known as Sainte-Foy[1]. Bissonnette had visited the mosque twice in the week leading up to January 29; some said he was scouting the location[2]. On that Sunday, just before 8pm, he opened fire and started shooting on the ground floor of the mosque where men were in the middle of Sunday evening prayers[3]. Bissonnette killed 6 men and wounded 19. Ibrahima Barry (39), Abdelkrim Hassane (41), Mamadou Tanou Barry (42), Aboubaker Thabti (44), Azzedine Soufiane (57) and Khaled Belkacemi (60) lost their lives. These men, who were originally from Guinea, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, had all immigrated to Québec with prospects of a better future for themselves and their families. Some had lived in the province for decades, others for a few years, when their lives were abruptly and violently ended.

The Québec City mosque shooting marked one of the worst acts of explicit violence against Muslims in the contemporary West and has made a lasting impact in the province's history. For many years, hate crimes against and violence towards ethnic minorities and marginalized people, specifically Muslims, has been on the rise and the West has seen a wave of far-right nationalism and populism emerging in different forms. Two years after the mosque shooting, Islamophobia and racism have not dissipated–quite the contrary, in fact.

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[1] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/accused-gunman-had-dinner-with-parents-night-of-quebec-mosque-shooting-search-warrants-state-1.4376249, accessed April 3, 2019.
[2] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201702/01/01-5065381-le-prevenu-avait-fait-du-reperage-a-deux-reprises-a-la-mosquee.php, accessed April 3, 2019.
[3] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-city-mosque-gun-shots-1.3957686, accessed April 3, 2019.

Many reports have found that Islamophobia in Québec has continued to fester and rise[4] and little seems to have been done about it. The same issues are also arising elsewhere in the world as well: on March 15, 2019, a white supremacist killed 50 Muslims during attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand[5]. Nonetheless, we must remember that the Québec City mosque shooting took place specifically in Québec at a very specific time in history, which serves as the starting point of this study.

This research focuses on the news coverage of the aftermath of the Québec City mosque shooting. Through a case study analysis of two news outlets, I hope to uncover and acquire a deeper understanding of how they portrayed and explained the events that unfolded. This study is by no means exhaustive or statistically accurate. It merely offers some insights into how two representatives of the Québec news media portrayed the mosque shooting. In other words, this study asks the question, how did two Québec news outlets, *La Presse* and the *Montreal Gazette*, make the Québec City mosque shooting intelligible? How were the events explained and made socially meaningful? Following the same line of thought, how were the different actors involved in the events portrayed? Moreover, since the mosque shooting was motivated by racial hatred, how did the news make sense of the different dynamics at play? These are the research questions anchoring the present study.

This study is situated within scholarship that examines the news as an ideological and discursive tool using a cultural studies approach (Zelizer 2004; Hall, 1978; Said, 1997; Hartley, 1982; Cohen and Young, 1973) informed by the post 9/11 era (Zelizer, 2002). This literature is valuable in understanding the contentions between power, hegemonic values and the news. Barbie Zelizer argues that journalists and the news are creators and conveyors of

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[4] http://rabble.ca/columnists/2018/01/islamophobia-continues-fester-wake-quebec-city-mosque-shooting, accessed April 3, 2019
[5] https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/new-zealand-mosque-shooting-victims-1.5059606, accessed April 3, 2019.

world views. The news is not merely reporting on truths and facts objectively. Rather, the news represents particular interpretations of such things as "truth" and "reality". As Stuart Hall contends, the news has the power to define what events are significant but also offer an interpretation of how these events should be understood (1978, 57). The media hold power and embed specific biases that reflect the status quo and benefit the elite. Likewise, given that the Québec City mosque shooting involved a white Québécois male as the perpetrator and Muslim immigrants as the victims, there are specific power relations that need to be examined. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism is significant for this study in terms of how the West sees and understands the Orient and its peoples. Understanding Orientalism, its long and complex history and how it is being reproduced today is vital given the context of this study.

As mentioned, this research examines two Québec news outlets, *La Presse* and the *Montreal Gazette*, to see how they reported on and covered the Québec city mosque shooting. To do so, I employ content analysis to uncover underlying themes within the news coverage. In the analysis, I also apply Robert Entman's notion of framing, which, in essence, is concerned with the ways in which some aspects of a perceived reality are made more salient, "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (52). Moreover, the ways in which the news outlets employ mediatized rituals, as Cottle defines them, is central for the analysis as well. The corpus consists of all news pieces concerning the mosque shooting from the first week following January 29 in *La Presse* and the *Montreal Gazette*. The analysis is divided according to the five themes that emerged.

In order to further contextualize this study, the first chapter offers some relevant background into the events of January 29, 2017 as well as a short history of Muslim immigration and settlement into Québec. The history of Muslim settlement into the province

is important insofar as it places the mosque shooting within a broader historical and political context of decades of exclusion, marginalization, Othering, racism and Islamophobia. Chapter 2 delves deeper into a cultural studies approach of the news as an ideological discursive tool, which has been deployed to make the mosque shooting intelligible and socially meaningful. Within such a context, Zelizer and Allan present insights into the state of journalism after 9/11 while Tal Morse offers guidance into how the media typically operate in the case of mass death events. This chapter contains relevant literature, concepts and notions that will guide the following section. After introducing and contextualizing *La Presse* and the *Montreal Gazette*, and discussing the methodology, chapter 3 delves into the analysis of the coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting, followed by the concluding chapter.

Chapter 1

History of Muslim Immigration and Settlement into Canada

Daood Hassan Hamdani, a retired statistician from the Ministry of Treasury, Economics, and Intergovernmental affairs is a pioneer in the study of Muslims in Canada (Durrani). Hamdani has written extensively about Muslims in Canada but nonetheless argues that "literature on Canadian Muslims is very scarce" (1984, 7), and further, that, "the early history of the Muslim contact with Canada is not documented" (8). He contends that if one were to write about the history of Muslim immigration into America, it would predate the arrival of Columbus (ibid). In contrast, the first available records of Muslims in Canada date back to the mid-19th century (ibid). The table below depicts the Muslim population in Canada in selected years.

Muslim Population in Canada, Selected Years	
Year	*Population*
1854	3
1871	13
1901	47
1911	797
1921	478
1931	645
1951	1,800
1961	5,800
1971	33,430
1976	69,300
1979	95,000
1981	98,165

(Table 1: Hamdani, 1984:9)

As evident in the table above, the 1854 census identified only three Muslims in all of Canada. As surprising as it may seem, the first Muslims ever in Canada were from Scotland. James and Agnes Love were a young couple who migrated from Scotland and settled in Ontario (Hamdani 1984, 8). They were converts to Islam. Their first child was born in 1854, thus becoming the first Canadian-born Muslim in Canada (8). Therefore, the first Muslims in

Canada predate the Confederation of the country in 1867. Although the specific identities of the first Muslims in Canada are known, the early parts of Muslim history in Canada remain to be explored. Nonetheless, according to Hamdani, "around the mid-19th century all the thirteen Muslims in Canada were living in Ontario, but as the community began to expand it also began to spread, and by 1901 Muslim settlements could be found in all provinces except perhaps the Maritimes" (ibid). According to the following table, the first Muslims in the province of Québec were recorded in 1901 (id. 11), which means that the first Muslims that settled in Québec came sometime around the turn of the century. However, this is mostly speculative since there are no records of early Muslim settlement in Québec other than this table.

Muslim Population in Canada, By Province					
	1854	*1871*	*1901*	*1971*	*1981*
Newfoundland				70	100
Prince Edward Island				60	70
Nova Scotia				570	790
New Brunswick				220	315
Québec			10	8,380	12,115
Ontario	3	13	15	19,375	52,110
Manitoba			1	590	1,925
Saskatchewan				490	1,120
Alberta				2,310	16,865
British Columbia			6	1,335	12,715
Territories			15	30	30
Total	**3**	**13**	**47**	**33,430**	**98,165**

(Table 2: Hamdani, 1984:9)

Throughout the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, Muslim immigration numbers remained relatively low. Migration from the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region was largely led by Christian Arabs. In fact, Patricia Kelly argues, at that time "Muslim Arabs were less likely to immigrate than Christian Arabs" because of the history of contact between Muslim and Western empires, which was marked with rivalry and conflict (86). Said's work on *Orientalism* delves deeper into this subject than perhaps any other.

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest conflicts of the 20th century was the First World War in which the Ottoman empire and its Muslim subjects became defined as enemies of the West (85). Consequently, Kelly states that Europe and North America were not considered hospitable lands for Muslims (86).

Even more significant to Muslim settlement was the immigration policy of the time as it did not favor Arab Muslim immigrants–quite the contrary. Kelly describes it as the 'White Canada' immigration policy, which was in effect from 1891 until the early 1960's (86). Siemiatycki argues its purpose was to build a white, British, Christian Canada (225). It was the most important factor in determining migration patterns and demographic characteristics of the Muslim population (Kelly 86). In her article, Kelly explains how white settlers were courted and prioritized whereas Syrians (which served as an ethnic description for the whole Middle Eastern region at the time) were ranked among the lowest priority. When the 'White Canada' policy was abandoned in 1962, Kelly argues,

> […] it was an administrative decision introduced with little fanfare, motivated by the desire to improve Canada's image among the new (and non-European) member states of the United Nations while at the same time drawing profit from the increasingly skilled populations of non-white countries. (Kelly 87)

The 'White Canada' immigration policy explains why the number of Muslim immigrants remained quite low until the 1960's. The biggest change occurred after immigration quotas were abolished, and a more objective points-system for selecting immigrants was introduced in 1967 (Hamdani 2001, 82). The points-system enabled the selection of immigrants based on education, knowledge of one of the two official languages, work experience and other predictors of employment success (Reitz 67). Kelly describes the new immigration system as a non-discriminatory, merit-based policy, which was made law in an amendment to the Immigration Act (Kelly 87). Reitz states the new immigration policy of 1967 has three pillars: immigration selection policy, immigration integration policy and

provincial decentralization (67). He explains, "when Canada removed country-of-origin barriers to immigration in the 1960's, the origins of immigrants shifted to sources outside Europe" (63). These significant changes contributed to an ever-increasing flow of Muslims migrating to Canada. Nonetheless, similar to Kelly, Hamdani also argues that although Canada's immigration policy has mainly been determined by economic considerations, political events around the world also temper it and influence immigration patterns (1999, 204). One such watershed moment was the revolution in Iran in 1979, which, according to Hamdani, served as a catalyst for an increased Muslim immigration to Canada (2001, 68) much like the Gulf War in the early 1990's (1999, 204).

Therefore, rapid expansion of the Canadian Muslim population may have only begun in the 1960's but it has continued to significantly grow to this day. In fact, in the following decades the Muslim population grew exponentially. According to Kelly, "between 1981 and 1991, the Muslim population increased by 158%, the second highest rate of growth among all Canadian religious groups" (Kelly 83). The Muslim population in Québec increased by 270% in the same time frame (ibid). In addition, in 1996 Islam became the largest non-Christian religious group, surpassing the Jewish population (Hamdani 1999, 201) and in 2011 the population passed the one million mark (Hamdani 2015, v). Accordingly, Hamdani notes that between 2001 and 2011 there was an 82% increase in the Muslim population in Canada (id. 5). Many of these new immigrants settled in the francophone province of Québec, which wasn't a coincidence.

Muslims in Québec
Although the immigration policy of 1967 is still largely in place today, Reitz et al. point out that "Québec obtained control over the selection and integration of its newcomers in 1991" (2474). This is known as the Canada-Québec Accord. Rodriguez-Garcia explains, "it grants Québec exclusive jurisdiction over the selection of immigrants to the province, while the

federal government retains sole control over admitting immigrants" (23). Québec is the only province that has the power to determine the number and the composition of immigration to the province (ibid). It also has the jurisdiction to create and implement linguistic and socio-economic programs with the objective of promoting the "francization" of immigrants in Québec (Rodríguez-García 23). Through its relative autonomy in selecting new immigrants, Rodriguez-Garcia argues, "Québec is able to attract and select immigrants from countries where French is a first or second language" (ibid). With its own points-system within the Canadian immigration system, Québec has maintained a French-speaking majority by giving priority to applicants from the international Francophonie (27) consisting of member countries previously colonized by France.

In their article, Reitz et al. assert that in addition to Québec's autonomy in selecting its immigrants, another significant difference between Québec and the rest of Canada is that they have divergent ideologies concerning the integration of immigrants. They explain, Canada's multiculturalism promotes immigration as a national goal and advocates official recognition of minority cultures whereas Québec's interculturalism values immigration and pluralism within the confines of a common and French-speaking public culture (Reitz et al. 2474). Similarly, in her article *Minimizing and Denying Racial Violence: Insights from the Québec Mosque Shooting*, Gada Mahrouse states,

> As the only Canadian province whose population is mainly francophone, Québec's minority status has resulted in a long-standing feeling that their values, language, and way of life are in danger. For this reason, Québec has its own official immigration policies, which also sets it apart from other Canadian provinces. Unlike Canada's official multiculturalism policy, which, since 1971, seeks to foster a pluralist society through diversity, Québec established a policy of interculturalism in 1981 that explicitly requires the assimilation of immigrant and minority groups in order to preserve Québec's culture. (2018, 475)

Reitz et al. also argue that any discussion of Canadian multiculturalism has to recognize Québec's distinctiveness (2475). Nonetheless, while Québec and the rest of Canada hold different ideologies and somewhat distinct policies pertaining to immigration and integration, Reitz et al. also note that skilled immigrants in both places are viewed generally as economic assets (ibid). Siemiatycki adds that Canada's approach to immigration "has largely been driven by national self-interest" (223).

Québec's interculturalism combined with its relatively autonomous immigration policy, which attributes significance to the French language, has therefore had a particular impact in in terms of the province's immigration demographics. As Hamdani also argues, cultural pluralism and bilingualism played a significant role in attracting new immigrants (2015, 2). Consequently, the province has seen a large number of Francophone Muslim immigration, especially from former French colonies in North Africa (Hamdani 1984, 10). This, as Reitz et al. reason, has resulted in Québec having evolved into 'a nation of immigrants' in its own right, in which they have relative independent control over the selection and integration of immigrants (2474).

The 2017 study Reitz et al. conducted based on the National Household Survey of 2011 is useful in understanding some of the statistics pertaining to Muslims in Canada, and more specifically in Québec. According to the most recent numbers, about 3.2% of both Canada's and Québec's population are Muslim (Reitz et al. 2477). In all of Canada, Muslims represent about 7.6% of all immigrants whereas in Québec the same number is higher: 11.9% (ibid). Of all Muslim immigrants in Québec, 37.9% of them have Maghreb origins, meaning they come from North-Western African states, whereas in the rest of Canada their origins are mostly from elsewhere in the Middle East as well as from South Asia (ibid). The final report of the Survey of Muslims in Canada 2016 adds that seven out of ten Muslims living in Canada are

foreign-born immigrants (7, 13)[6]. Gardee and El-Ghawaby find that providing data reflecting the diversity of Canadian Muslims is important because "it can help all Canadians, and in particular politicians and the media, to gain better understanding about who they are speaking of when they talk about Canadian Muslims" (149).

Although the Muslim community in Canada and in Québec, in particular, has rapidly expanded from the 1960's onwards, they still represent a relatively small minority within the larger population: just over 3%. Canadian Muslims are highly educated: 45% hold a university degree whereas the same number for the rest of Canadians is 33% (Gardee and El-Ghawaby 149). In addition, the overwhelming majority of Muslims (95%) are urban and live in Metropolitan areas such as Montréal (The Environics Institute for Survey Research et al. 13). The Survey found that, "more than eight out of ten [Muslims] are very proud to be Canadian and this sentiment has strengthened over the past decade, especially in Québec" (4, 7) and many also have a strong sense of belonging (9). This is surprising as the same report found that one in three Canadian Muslims reports to having experienced discrimination due to their religion or ethnicity (3, 38). The report also found that many within the Muslim community in Canada are worried about media portrayals of Muslims, underemployment, discrimination and violent extremism (23–24). These are all legitimate concerns, which I will elaborate on in the next section.

Despite marginalization, racism and Islamophobia, Muslims in Québec have also managed to create a relatively strong presence and rich cultural communities. One of the first significant events early on was the inauguration of the Islamic Studies Institute at McGill in Montréal in 1952, which attracted many Muslim scholars and students to Québec (Hamdani

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[6] Reitz et al. also provide statistics for second-generation immigrants (those with at least one foreign-born parent) but for the context of this study these numbers are not relevant, given that the six Muslims killed in Sainte-Foy were all foreign-born immigrants.

1984, 9). In the last decade or so, many prominent Islamic community organizations have emerged.[7] They generally serve to advance the rights of Muslim Canadians and help community members with issues they might be facing. Notable ones include the Canadian Muslim Forum, the Canadian Collective Anti-Islamophobia / Colléctif Canadien Anti-Islamophobie, and the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec which is where the mosque shooting took place on January 29, 2017. The first mosque in Canada, the Al Rashid mosque, was inaugurated in 1938 in Edmonton (Gardee and El-Ghawaby 148). In 2015, there about around 140 mosques throughout the country (Siddiqui 24) with seven operating Mosques in Québec[8] as well as one Islamic cemetery and several Islamic sections within multi-confessional cemeteries (Belkhodja 136).

The Socio-Political Landscape of Muslims in Québec

In her 2018 article, Mahrouse relies on Sherene Razack's exhaustive work on anti-Muslim racism in Canada in *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics,* which Mahrouse argues "offers some fundamental background understanding what led to the mosque massacre" (2018, 474). In order to understand how Muslims were (and still are) defined in the current socio-political landscape in Québec leading up to the Québec City mosque shooting, a few precursor events must first be discussed. It is clear that for well over a decade now, the relationship between the Muslim community and the white secular francophone majority has been tense. In her article *Islamophobia in Canada: Measuring the Realities of Negative Attitudes Toward Muslims and Religious Discrimination,* Wilkins-Laflamme argues that in Québec specifically, Islam and Muslims are perceived and represented as a "special threat to the religious neutrality and secularity of the public sphere

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[7] For a non-exhaustive list, see https://muslimlink.ca/directory/montreal/community/organizations/ , accessed Feb. 3, 2019.
[8] https://www.salatomatic.com/sub/Canada/Quebec/Quebec-City/yPNsIlo5Ir, accessed Feb. 3, 2019.

and the State" (92). It is worth noting that in her study, Wilkins-Laflamme used data from the 2011 Canadian Election Study (CES) and found "Québec respondents showing on average more negative attitudes toward Muslims than respondents in the rest of Canada […]" (97). These issues have been prominent ever since the debates around reasonable accommodation and assimilation pivoting on cultural and religious differences entered the political arena and the media at large in 2006.

Consequently, in 2007, in response to ongoing public discontent concerning reasonable accommodation, the Québec Premier Jean Charest announced the establishment of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences, convened by Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard. They commissioned research projects from different Québec universities on the topic and also held several public consultations around the province (Bouchard and Taylor 17). Ultimately, the report stated: "After a year of research and consultation, we have come to the conclusion that the foundations of collective life in Québec are not in a critical situation" (18). The issues investigated by the Commission proved to stem from a crisis of perception, not too dissimilar from Stuart Hall's findings in his work *Policing the Crisis,* in which he studied the public perception of muggings occurring throughout the UK as a moral panic.

The Reasonable Accommodation debates, as Mahrouse explains in her article on the subject, involved a number of contentious cases concerning the extent to which immigrant and minority practices ought to be accommodated (2010, 86). She adds:

> Perhaps the most notorious case of all occurred in January 2007 when a small Québec town called Hérouxville adopted a 'life standards' code of conduct for immigrants, which banned its residents from practicing female circumcision, stoning and immolation–all practices associated with a perception of Muslim barbarianism. (ibid)

In addition, the municipal councilor of Hérouxville asked the Québec premier to declare a state of emergency believing that Québec culture needed to be protected from those asking for

accommodation for non-Christian beliefs and practices (ibid). The response to these highly publicized events not only fueled the belief that Québec's identity and way of life were in danger, as Mahrouse explains, but they also strongly reinforced the racist and Islamophobic views that many people had of Islam and Muslims.

In a similar vein, in their research on how the press covered the Hérouxville incident and the Bouchard-Taylor Commission hearings, Gagnon and Jiwani found that the Québec media in fact "amplified the discord and disgruntlement that were apparently extant in the population at large" (130). They argue that the Québec press "conflated democratic processes with populist sentiments" (139), naturalized and normalized hate in the process (142) as well as stroked the "pre-existing anxieties and fanned the moral panic against religious and racialized groups" (148). Writing on the same subject, Alan Wong states that the news media and politicians forged a symbiotic relationship, in which they took advantage of the situation brought forward by the Reasonable Accommodation hearings for both of their benefits (147). Wong argues that in the Québec context, reasonable accommodation has "been twisted into something that is now perceived as menacing and harmful to the white, francophone majority" (148). Therefore, according to Wong reasonable accommodation became a social discourse of domination (151). Ultimately, as Mahrouse's contends, the Commission "ended up reinforcing the racialized hierarchies and exclusions that it wanted to address" (id. 85).

Following the Bouchard-Taylor Commission report, several pieces of legislature have been passed or proposed in Québec that prove that the concerns about members of religious and cultural communities posing a threat to Québec's secular values have not gone away or even changed whatsoever. Bill 94, which bans face coverings in public services inherently targets Muslim women. Similarly, Bill 62 passed in October 2017, requires the uncovering of faces when giving or receiving public service (Mahrouse 2018, 476). At the time of writing this, the Québec government lead by Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) has tabled a secularism

bill, which, according to the *CBC* "would ban public workers in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols"[9], as in, notably, the veil. Mahrouse points out that these bills in fact re-enact the three figures Razack identifies as icons in the contemporary political landscape: the imperiled Muslim woman, the 'dangerous' Muslim man, and the civilized Westerner who is there to save the Muslim woman from the Muslim man (475). Moreover, as Deepa Kumar argues in her book *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, this is the modus operandi of the liberal left, which rejects Islam-bashing but then proceeds to institute proposals that target Muslims (196), such as the ones identified above. The way in which this "benevolent supremacy" remains unquestioned (133), Kumar identifies as liberal Islamophobia.

Consequently, it is clear that despite its efforts, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission did not help in changing the negative perceptions many hold of the Muslim community in Québec and things have arguably become worse. Years later in 2013, Gardee and El-Ghawaby write, the Parti Québecois led by Pauline Marois proposed Bill 60, also known as the Québec Charter of Values, which "would have erased most religious clothing or "ostentatious religious symbols" from the public sector" (142). According to Wong, the "values talk" serves to "define the Québécois as a coherent subject while simultaneously constructing a dialectical other […]" (152). Although the Parti Québecois was defeated in that year's provincial elections and Bill 60 did not pass, the Charter of Values debacle proves that years after the Bouchard-Taylor Commission the socio-political climate concerning racialized Others has not changed. Moreover, as Mahrouse reminds us, "the year before the mosque massacre, police-reported hate-crimes in Québec City more than doubled" (2018, 492). In 2017, *Global News* reported that hate crimes against Muslims more than tripled between 2012

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[9] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-laicity-secularism-bill-1.5075547, accessed April 5, 2019.

and 2015, representing an increase of 253%[10]. Two years after the mosque killings, on January 31, 2019, the *CBC* reported the Québec Premier Francois Legault said, "I don't think there is Islamophobia in Québec, so I don't see why there would be a day dedicated to Islamophobia."[11]

Although the focus of this research is geographically limited to Québec, the anti-Muslim discourse in the United States, specifically since Donald Trump became president, also constitutes the larger context, which will become apparent in the subsequent analysis. Mahrouse explains, "While anti-Muslim attitudes in Québec predate the presidential campaign and subsequent election of US President Donald Trump, his rhetoric and policies have emboldened anti-Muslim attitudes in Québec and around the Western world" (2018, 477). One such clear parallel and consequence, which Mahrouse also discusses, is chilling: when President Trump issued an executive order otherwise known as "the Muslim ban" on January 27, 2017,[12] Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau responded by tweeting the following:

Mahrouse argues, "This view of Canada's "open-door" policies heightened the panic, fear and frustration of Canadians who regard the presence of Muslims as a threat" (2018,

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[10] https://globalnews.ca/news/3523535/hate-crimes-canada-muslim/, accessed February 2, 2019.
[11] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-mosque-shooting-islamophobia-1.5000950, accessed February 2, 2019.
[12] https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states/, accessed February 2, 2019

478). These are all reminiscent of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission report. What is even more alarming is that Trudeau's stance has been directly linked with Alexandre Bissonnette's decision to murder Muslims. On April 13, 2018, the *CBC* reported Bissonnette's fear and anxiety over Muslims in Québec peaked "when he saw reports the Canadian government was going to allow more refugees into the country."[13] In a three-hour conversation with Québec City police sergeant Steve Girard, Bissonnette said "The Canadian government was, you know, going to take in more refugees, you know, those who couldn't go to the United States would end up here." Bissonnette had become obsessed over the idea that there was a looming terrorist attack coming and that his family was not safe, which prompted his decision to attack the mosque.

Summary

Tracing the history of Muslims in Canada from its beginning shows that until 1967, Canada's racist immigration policy blocked Muslim immigration into the country. With the implementation of the 1967 amendment to the Immigration Act, things changed considerably. The points-based system saw the Muslim community of Canada grow from an initial small number to the largest non-Christian religious group. Québec's autonomy in selecting and integrating its immigrants also influenced the Muslim demographic in the province. Most of the new arrivals from the 1960's onwards come from North Africa and are francophones due to their countries' colonial pasts. This shift has been unique to Québec because of its autonomy from the Canadian immigration policy and its ideology of interculturalism pertaining to integration and assimilation. However, it is clear that the socio-political landscape in Québec does not favor Muslims. Events from the last 10-15 years, such as the

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[13] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-city-mosque-shooting-bissonnette-sentencing-1.4618414, accessed February 2, 2019.

Bouchard-Taylor Commission, the Hérouxville incident and several recurrent pieces of legislation illustrate how the path to the Québec City mosque shooting was paved. The next chapter delves deeper into news as an ideological and discursive tool, through which the coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting was made intelligible and socially meaningful. I focus on how two specific news outlets portrayed and explained the events that took place in Sainte-Foy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

News from a Cultural Studies Approach

In *Covering Islam,* Edward Said contends, "all knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation" (162). When it comes to media, and news specifically, for several decades now, many have argued for a perspective that requires it to be regarded as not an objective conveyor of truth but rather a reflection and manifestation of power and social hierarchy. In *Policing the Crisis*, Stuart Hall makes the argument that the news does not simply report on events that are implicitly newsworthy. Rather, news is "the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories" (53).

Many others within cultural studies have made the same argument. Said states that such aims of the press as objectivity, factuality, realistic coverage, and accuracy are highly relative terms, which express intentions, not realizable goals (1997, 50). Nonetheless, in her article, Barbie Zelizer finds that the predilection in journalism of making truth claims still largely perseveres:

> Journalism's presumed legitimacy depends on its declared ability to provide an indexical and referential presentation of the world at hand. Insisting on the centrality of reality, and on facts as its carrier, for maintaining a clear distinction between itself and other domains of public discourse, journalists claim a capacity to narrativize the events in the real world that distinguishes them from other cultural voices, retaining an attentiveness to how things "really" happened as the premise by which journalism makes its name. (103)

The following section elaborate on a cultural studies approach to and understanding of the news and journalism in the post 9/11 era. Drawing from Hall, Said, Zelizer, Hartley, and others, I focus on the meaning and making of the news from a cultural studies perspective, which regards it as a product of discourse and conveyor of specific ideologies serving to

uphold hegemonic values in the interest of dominant powers. First, I examine the structure of the news as an institution and the role it plays in society. As Zelizer contends, a cultural studies approach to journalism recognizes that news plays an instrumental role in circulating powerful ideas about how the world works (110). According to Hall, the news has the power to define for the majority population *what* significant events are taking place but they also offer powerful interpretations of *how* to understand these events (1978, 57). Consequently, the convergence of the news and the power it holds open up questions of the ideological role the news has (id. 59).

In *The Manufacture of News,* Stanley Cohen and Jock Young explain that journalists manufacture news by interpreting and selecting events to fit pre-existing categories. These categories are themselves a product of the bureaucratic exigencies of news organizations and the particular concentration of media control and ownership (97). It is important to note that what is omitted from the news (in other words, the stories that don't make it) is equally or perhaps even more significant than what is selected to be part of the news cycle. Robert Cirino calls this omission "bias through selection", which largely favors the status quo (40). Robert Entman understands the same phenomenon as agenda-setting or framing, the process of defining problems worthy of public and government attention (2007, 164), which I deal with in more detail in the following chapter. Therefore, as John Hartley summarizes in his seminal book *Understanding News*, the stories told in the news are part of a preexisting discourse of an impersonal social institution, which is also an (economically driven) industry (5).

Going back to the notion of the news as a manifestation of power and social hierarchy, Hall argues that news is a *product*, a result of human construction–"a staple of that system of 'cultural production' we call the mass media" (1973, 86). Buozis and Creech also assert news is not objective insofar as it does not convey reality as it happened but rather as an observed

documentation–a representation–of that reality (1431). The news provides the audience a sort

of orientation, conveying "social meaning" more than merely information (1434).

Consequently, the news reproduces dominant ideological discourses (Hartley 62), and

behaves "as a structuring agent of mediation between the discursive self and the

social/physical world" (id. 138). When viewed as cultural artifacts, news texts and narratives

reveal the relationship between truth and power, which is tied to specific historical and

cultural contexts (Buozis and Creech 1434). Or, as Hartley puts it, news is a discourse

generated by a general system in relation to a social structure (7). Moreover, Hall argues

media generally reproduces and sustains the situation which favors the powerful (1978, 65).

In Western societies, the dominant social structure is highly influenced by two sets of

powerful interests–business and government.

For Zelizer, it is imperative that the study of journalism be coupled with a cultural

studies approach. She argues that this approach, on the one hand, sees journalism through

journalists' perspectives and experiences in being part of the journalistic community and, on

the other hand, questions the self-presentations that journalists might have (101). More

importantly, a cultural analysis of journalism understands news as a sphere offering a

complex and multidimensional lattice of meanings (ibid). Such an analysis "considers the

meanings, symbols, and symbolic systems, ideologies, rituals, and conventions by which

journalists maintain their cultural authority as spokespeople for events in the public domain"

(ibid). Consequently, the importance and significance of the news within a cultural context,

cannot be underestimated–especially given that they transmit belief systems which legitimate

or justify particular forms of social control, as Cohen and Young state (345).

Zelizer goes a step further than Buozis and Creech in their argument that the news

conveys social meaning. She argues, the cultural analysis of news views journalists as

producers of culture by making moral judgments about what is good and bad, moral and

amoral, and appropriate and inappropriate in the world (102). Therefore, this approach imparts great significance and responsibility to journalists as people and the news as an industry. Journalists and the news as creators and conveyors of world views, as Zelizer describes it (ibid), are in a position to advance and discourage (or omit) specific ideas and opinions, which can and do affect different communities within society. They also impart their own biases to their work. Moreover, Zelizer states that journalism has powerful institutional status, which encourages bias and collusion with political and economic powers (111). This is especially prevalent when it comes to the representation of marginalized people within the news.

Drawing from this critical cultural studies perspective, this research inquiry takes as its point of departure the frameworks that makes news intelligible and socially meaningful. In *Journalism after September 11*, Zelizer and Allan reflect on how the terrorist attacks of 9/11 shaped the news industry as it was and the unfolding consequences. The events of September 11 had significant repercussions both inside the United States as well as throughout the West, especially in how Islam and Muslims were seen and represented in increasingly negative ways. There have been a few defining historical events that have had a profound influence on the press, such as Watergate and the Pentagon papers (Zelizer and Allan 17), but 9/11 is certainly the most significant one in recent history in terms of its global consequences. As Robert McChesney states,

> What is most striking in the US news coverage following the September 11 attacks is how that very debate over whether to go to war, or how best to respond, did not even exist. It was presumed, almost from the moment the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed, that the United States was at war, world war. (93)

However, McChesney argues that even though September 11 changed a lot of things about our world, within the news it merely highlighted its anti-democratic tendencies (91), a point identified earlier by Said in his acclaimed book, *Covering Islam*. Nonetheless, Zelizer

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and Allan assert that "while views differ with regard to how journalism has been changed by the events of September 11, there appears to be something of a consensus that we are in a new era of reporting, a "new normal" […]" (15). Therefore, although 9/11 profoundly shook the West to its core and had vast and global consequences, its effects on the news as an institution of dominant discursive power remains somewhat contested.

Nonetheless, in addition to the vast global consequences and unfolding wars, another consequence of 9/11 is the way in which the representation of Muslims and Islam in the West became increasingly more negative with imagery of barbarism and violence at the forefront. As Karim H. Karim describes, the media have allowed for a small group, militant Islamists, to appear as the representatives of all Muslims as a consequence of failing to acknowledge the diversity within Islam and disregarding the humanistic content within the religion (106, 108). Moreover, Said argues the powerful concentration of mass media provides specific interpretations of Islam, which reflect powerful interests within the society served by the media (1997, 40). This observation was made before the events of 9/11 took place, but it is arguably perhaps even more prevalent today. In the next part, I will be discussing how the news typically cover tragedies similar to the Québec City mosque shooting to then uncover how race and religion are represented and reported on within the context of such events.

Covering Tragedies: The role of Death Rituals

As discussed above, Zelizer and Allan ponder on journalism's imperatives with trauma at the heart of the discussion (1). In working through trauma, journalism needs to simultaneously carry the roles of conveyor, translator, mediator, and meaning-maker (2). They state, that journalism has a vital role in moving populations from trauma to recovery by relying on questions of identity" (ibid). In *The Mourning News*, Tal Morse makes a similar argument. He asserts the media cultivate a sense of belonging to a community by adhering to "death rituals" when covering mass death related events. These rituals have the function of managing a

healing process for a community, and they are a phase in the process of order restoration (Morse 37). They also invite communities and individuals to self-reflect, which can encourage a re-examination of the social order and could even possibly change things (ibid).

In addition to their official function and role, death rituals also mark the different values and ties that hold societies together (Morse 3). According to Morse, death rituals influence our understanding of "order" and "disorder" as well as "us" and "them" (51). By following these rituals, the news elicit grief and inform the solidarity that is the basis for community formation. The question of identity that Zelizer and Allan bring forward is reinforced by a sense of belonging to an imagined community, which is informed by the rituals Morse writes about in the unfolding of tragedies. In other words, the news reporting on mass violent death events cultivates solidary and forms a sense of community by relying on an idea of a shared communal identity. Through death rituals, Morse argues, the media as well as community are intrinsically linked (4). By reiterating the boundaries of community, death rituals also define and reinforce those who are at the margins and those who are excluded as I discuss below.

For this study, Morse's approach to death rituals and media rituals as "manifestations of symbolic power that reflect the contestation of power and dominance" (5) is important. He finds that the performance of death rituals marks death as something that matters, reaffirming the value of the deceased and their importance to the community. Death rituals also place death within a broader historical and social context (Morse 38). By doing so, the news delineates the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and extends an understanding of who belongs to a community and, more importantly, who does not (ibid). Morse explains that the absence of death rituals reflects the value (or lack thereof) of the lost lives (ibid), which is resonates with Cirino's notion of bias through selection (Cohen and Young 40). This notion is grounded in Judith Butler concept of 'grievability' or precariousness and the precarious life

(2004), which is most often extended to Muslims within Western societies and elsewhere (2009). The concept of grievability, as Morse explains, is "the idea that death becomes politically meaningful only when it generates a symbolic, public performance that manifests grief as a signifier of ethical ties that form communities" (2). Grievable lives are then lives which are valued through the commemoration of their deaths. Lives which are ungrieveable, by contrast, are lives that are regarded as not being important or valuable. Moreover, to be politically meaningful, in this sense, is contingent on how hegemonic powers can mobilize the situation to their advantage.

Furthermore, Morse finds that the occurrence of unexpected mass violent deaths exposes the fragility of the social fabric by creating insecurity, confusion and fear (36). Perhaps this is why the news' reliance on questions of identity and community is so vital in the unfolding of such events. Violent and unnatural deaths, like the shooting at Sainte-Foy, suggests a level of negligence and inadequate functioning within a society thus leading to a failure to protect the lives of some individuals in a society (Morse 39). This kind of negligence and failure creates mistrust and destabilizes society, which, Morse argues, death rituals work to repair or remedy by reasserting the commitment to common survival (ibid). As a defining event in a society, violent mass death can work to either increase social solidarity and downplay contestations, or it can galvanize social instability further (id. 39). Therefore, the news has the power to either classify an event as disruptive and as threatening the social order (id. 44), or to choose not to, which is a direct manifestation of the power and control the news possesses.

One of the most relevant observations from Morse's research for the context of this study is the following: "the formats in which the news about death are framed and circulated establish social categories and hierarchies of belonging, since they tell the public whose death matters and for whom" (40–41). In other words, managing the visibility of any given death or

mass death event is a manifestation of symbolic power in that, in such a situation, the news

has the power to manage the conditions of the appearance of death and the means of its

representation (Morse 45–46). Morse concludes that by looking at the way in which death is

portrayed in the news, we can begin to understand large global power dynamics (50).

The disposition of the convergence of news reporting and mass violent death exposing

underlying power dynamics is at the center of Saif Shahin's article, which analyzed two

different tragedies and how their coverage in the news diverged. The tragedies in question

were the Boston Marathon bombing on April 15, 2013 and the explosion of the West

Fertilizer Co.'s storage and distribution facility in Texas on April 17, 2013. In the latter, the

mass deaths were framed as resulting from an accident, whereas in the Boston Marathon

bombing, they were attributed to terrorism. This, despite the fact that there were more deaths

resulting from the explosion at the West Fertilizer company's storage and distribution facility.

Shahin argues,

> […] the social identities of "prospective" agents predict the difference in the framing:
> "deviants" and "aliens" are held culpable while local elites are deemed innocent, although
> these identities are themselves social and draw on prevalent cultural beliefs. (645)

Shahin asserts that the coverage of violent mass death, or "bad events" as he calls

them, attempts to establish already existing predominant values. One way to do so is through

the use of the 'Blame Frame' in which blame is attributed to the social identity of "deviants"

or "aliens" while portraying "our" society as capable of purging them (Shahin 645). The

Blame Frame follows the logic that "normal" members of "our society" are decent and

peaceful (ibid). In his study, Shahin examined the usage of the Blame Frame in the Boston

Marathon bombings, in which aspects of the coverage included affixing responsibility on the

perpetrator(s), ascribing them agency for the "act", and their punishment (646). When a

"deviant" or "alien", such as a Muslim in the case of the marathon bombings, appears to be

the perpetrator, Shahin writes, "news media frame them as "outsiders" who have brought

misery upon "us" and must therefore be identified and disciplined by incarceration or execution–both means of purging them from "normal" society", along the lines of Foucault's thought (646). The way in which the Blame Frame functions is illustrated in the following table:

Dimension	Blame Frame
Label	Terms such as "crime" and "terrorism" are commonly used to describe the tragedy
Impact	Focus on human impact, broken families, dead children and so on; evocative language, dramatic descriptions; victims as eyewitnesses
Identification	Human agents are identified, held responsible and pronounced "guilty"; portrayed as deviants, aliens or both
Response	The need to punish the guilty is highlighted; punishment, when it comes, is cheered

(Table 3: Shahin, 2016: 649)

The Blame Frame is relevant for the analysis of the coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting, which focuses, among other things, on Alexandre Bissonnette (the perpetrator) as an outcast with mental health problems representing a "lone wolf" distinct from the dominant mainstream society. Although Morse does not mention it explicitly, race plays a role in how the media is likely to cover mass death events given that death rituals hold symbolic power and (re)establish social hierarchies. In their study, Duxbury et al. explored how blame is assigned to offenders of different races in the news coverage of mass violence, such as shootings. They find that there are differences in how media coverage represents mass shooters and their culpability based on their race (769). After a quantitative as well as qualitative study of press coverage of mass shootings which included 433 news documents covering 219 mass shootings from 2013 to 2015, Duxbury et al. suggest that references to mental health dominate for white perpetrators. This serves to mitigate their image as immoral offenders and portrays them as victims of society and illness (788). Critical media analysis of the shootings at the mosques in New Zealand reveal the same biases in the coverage.

Hence, when sudden mass death events occur, the news plays the role of providers of information, as Morse writes (222), but it also orients and shapes said information in a way that will reflect the status quo and affirm existing social hierarchies. Following Morse, I have argued that the analysis of how a mass death event is framed ultimately exposes larger societal and political issues concerning inclusion, exclusion, community, nationhood and the Other. In the following section, I focus on how Islamophobia, which is an product of Orientalism, operates and informs the reporting and coverage on Islam and Muslims in the West, and in Québec more specifically.

Orientalism and Islamophobia

Within large communities, such as nations, the process of identifying "in-groups" and "out-groups", as Shahin argues, is an ongoing process, which leads to the creation of marginalized minorities (647). As has been argued in the previous section, the news helps construct and maintain social boundaries by reinforcing social definitions of "normal", on the one hand, and "deviant" or "alien" on the other (Shahin 647–648). By doing so, the news contributes to naturalizing the existing social hierarchy and to further legitimize institutions that hold power and privilege (id. 659), thereby creating and circulating ideological truths that serve the majority. What is more consequential is how, as Cohen and Young explain it, this process transmits belief systems, through which particular forms of social control are legitimized and justified (345). This is where several important points discussed previously converge: how the news works to reinforce existing social hierarchies and exert control over racialized minority groups, specifically Muslims. To unpack this, I now turn to Edward Said's work to better comprehend how Muslims and Islam are perceived in the West.

In perhaps his most famous work, *Orientalism,* Said meticulously studied the complex history and relationship between Islam and the West. To him, the term Orientalism designates several interdependent things: an academic discipline focused on the study of the Orient, an

ontological and epistemological style of thought, and, finally, a discourse in the Foucauldian sense (1979, 2–3). Said argues that the Orient is the West's "cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other"; the Orient has helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience (id. 1–2). Most importantly, perhaps, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient and its peoples (id. 3). Effectively, "the relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (id. 5). In addition, Orientalism is about positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing the relative upper hand (id. 7). In a time of mass migration and, in the case of Québec, when a large number of immigrants are Muslims coming from the (francophone) Orient, the role Orientalism plays has become increasingly significant in modern Western societies.

In his subsequent work, Said reminds us "the underlying theme of *Orientalism* is the affiliation of knowledge and power" (1997, xlix). Therefore, Orientalism feeds into the news in that it is a discourse, which reinforces social hierarchies and brings questions of power and privilege to the forefront. Moreover, any truth about Islam is relative to the one who produces it (id. lviii). In the West, the media hold the power to "constitute a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam and, of course, reflecting powerful interests in the society served in the media" (id. 47). Given the stakes the discourse holds in the West, it is clear that an institution of discursive power such as the news (as previously established) is vital in the dissemination of Orientalism.

In discussing exactly *how* Islam and Muslims are represented in the news through an Orientalist lens, Said argues:

> In many instances "Islam" has licensed not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-

floating hostility. All of this has taken place as part of what is presumed to be fair, balanced, responsible coverage of Islam. (1997, li)

Consequently, Islamophobia, defined as "dread or hatred" of Islam (The Runnymede Trust 1) and an "unfounded hostility towards Islam" (id. 4) is just a stepping stone away–a child or product of Orientalism. By implication, it translates into fear or dislike of all or most Muslims (Green 11). In Islamophobia, racial discrimination against Muslims is justified and anti-Muslim discourse is naturalized. The Runnymede Trust report titled *Islamophobia. A Challenge for Us All.* identifies eight characteristics of Islamophobia (5):

(1) Islam is monolithic and static
(2) Islam is separate and other
(3) Islam is inferior
(4) Islam is the enemy
(5) Islam is manipulative
(6) Racial discrimination against Muslims is justified
(7) Muslim criticisms of the West are invalidated
(8) Anti-Muslim discourse is natural

These characteristics are a result of an Orientalist discourse at work, reestablishing the superiority of the dominant segment of society and reflecting a hegemonic ideology. Although Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon, according to Todd Green, it constitutes one of the most acceptable forms of bigotry in the West today (311). It is not simply a manifestation of older forms of racism, which are rooted in biological inferiority (id. 27). Green argues that it is an example of what some scholars call 'cultural racism', which incites hatred and hostility based on religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and ethnic backgrounds (ibid). Moreover, he finds that the presumed insurmountable difference between Islam and the West serves as the basis for exclusion and discrimination (ibid). This insurmountable difference has to be understood through a long history of conflict, colonialism and imperialism. As Green contends, the West's colonial past is intrinsically linked to how Westerners have seen and understood Muslims and Islam ever since (68), which also set the stage for much of the Islamophobia that has gained potency since 9/11.

Another work outlining the nature of contemporary Islamophobia is Khaled A. Beydoun's book titled *American Islamophobia*. He states that Islamophobia is a presumption that Islam is inherently violent, alien, and un-assimilable; Islamophobia is a modern progeny of Orientalism (28). He, like Green, argues, "connecting Islamophobia to Orientalism is a vital first step toward understanding that Islamophobia is deeply entrenched, fluidly remade and reproduced, and deployed by the state to bring about intended or desired political ends" (ibid). He adds that Islamophobia is not a new form of xenophobia and racism; rather, it is rooted in, tied to and informed by Orientalism and its body of misrepresentations and stereotypes (ibid).

Beydoun defines three dimensions of Islamophobia: private, structural and dialectical Islamophobia (29). In the case of *private Islamophobia*, it can target specific individuals and it can hone in on collective communities, institutions and even non-Muslims (33). He states, mosques are frequent targets of private Islamophobia (34), which makes the Québec City mosque shooting an example of this type of Islamophobia. The second manifestation of Islamophobia is *structural Islamophobia*–the fear and suspicion of Muslims on the part of government institutions and actors (36). The thread binding the private and structural forms of Islamophobia, Beydoun calls *dialectical Islamophobia*. It is the process by which structural Islamophobia shapes, reshapes, and endorses views or attributes about Islam and Muslims subjects (40). It is through works like Said's, Green's and Beydoun's that we can better understand the modern condition of Muslims and Islam in the West, and some of the underpinnings of what led to the events of the Québec City mosque shooting.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated how the news, Orientalism and Islamophobia are interconnected and work together to benefit and serve the dominant society at large. Orientalism and Islamophobia, by extension, as discursive systems of domination and power

have been, and still are being, disseminated through one of the most powerful discursive tools in modern societies: the news. Going back to Hall's argument, the news is a result of human construction and interpretation–a product (1973, 86) that is everything but objective. Similarly, Orientalism is a reflection of a complex social and historical context, in which the Orient and its peoples are not free agents of thought. Orientalism reproduces and conveys social meanings that favor the powerful and reestablish existing social hierarchies in which racialized people become more marginalized. The news media are one influential conduit through which this occurs. In the next chapter, I outline the approach and methodology that guided the analysis of the Québec City mosque shooting press coverage.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Analysis

La Presse and _The Montreal Gazette_

For this research, I have chosen to analyze two Québec newspapers: the French-language newspaper _La Presse_ and the English-language _Montreal Gazette_ (or the _Gazette_, as it will be referred to henceforth) to reflect the language parity in the province. The two papers are part of a total of four daily newspapers published in Montréal (the other two being _Le Journal de Montréal_ and _Le Devoir_). According to data gathered by News Media Canada, in 2015 (the latest data) the total circulation comprising both print and digital versions of the papers on an average weekday was 78 797 for the _Gazette,_ whereas the number for _La Presse_ was 279 731.[14] For reasons of accessibility, in this research I examined the online version of _La Presse_ and the print version of the _Gazette_, as the digitized version of the stories covering the mosque shootings in the latter were not available. After briefly discussing each paper individually, I then discuss the coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting in both papers after which I will discuss the methodology used in the subsequent analysis of the coverage.

The francophone newspaper _La Presse_ was founded in 1884 by William-Edmond Blumhart. In 2015, like many other newspapers in the 21st century trying to adapt to the changes spurred by the internet and the digitization of things, it stopped publishing in print format except for Saturdays. In November 2017, _La Presse_ stopped publishing in print format altogether, instead focusing on the various electronic platforms it offers online and for smart devices. In May 2018, it was announced that _La Presse_ would become a nonprofit organization, thus severing its ties with Power Corporation. Their website (lapresse.ca) has a local and national news section, as well as sections on international news, sports, arts, business, economy and other more common and popular fare. According to their According to

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[14] https://nmc-mic.ca/about-newspapers/circulation/daily-newspapers/, accessed March 18, 2019

their website, it is estimated that lapresse.ca has about 2,9 million unique visitors per month on its different platforms,[15] thus making it a significant news media outlet in Québec.

Since 1989, the *Gazette* has been Québec's only English-language newspaper, when its last English-language competitor, the *Montreal Daily News*, closed down.[16] The *Gazette* originally started as a French-language paper in 1778, then became bilingual, and eventually turned exclusively English in 1822. It exists in print as well as an ePaper[17] and online on montrealgazette.com. The *Gazette* was originally founded by Fleury Mesplet and today, it is part of the Postmedia Network chain, which is a Canadian news media company representing over one hundred brands across multiple print, online, and mobile platforms.[18] Similar to *La Presse*, the *Gazette* also features local, national and international news, editorials, business news, sports news as well as arts and entertainment news. The difference between these two news outlets–*La Presse* being a non-profit model online and the *Gazette*, a print newspaper, being part of national media conglomerate– reflect the different platforms and formats that the news media utilize today. This should offer more diversity in the subsequent analysis in terms of sources and affordances.

Coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting in La Presse and The Gazette

Given the scope of this research, I decided to delimit the coverage of the shooting at Sainte-Foy to the first week (the first 7 days) after the events. For *La Presse*, which is online and is able to publish news almost instantly, this means the coverage started on the evening of Sunday January 29 and ended on Saturday February 4, 2017. As a print paper, the *Gazette* has a publishing delay meaning that my corpus of the coverage started on Monday January 30 and

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[15] https://publicite.lapresse.ca, accessed March 17, 2019
[16] https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/montreal-gazette, accessed March 17, 2019.
[17] According to http://epaper.montrealgazette.com, the ePaper is a replica of the print paper with all the stories, photos and artwork intact.
[18] http://www.postmedia.com, accessed March 18, 2019

ended on Monday February 6, since the paper does not have a Sunday edition. The table below depicts the frequency and distribution of the stories on the topic for the seven days following the event.

Number of articles of Quebec City Mosque Shooting per day

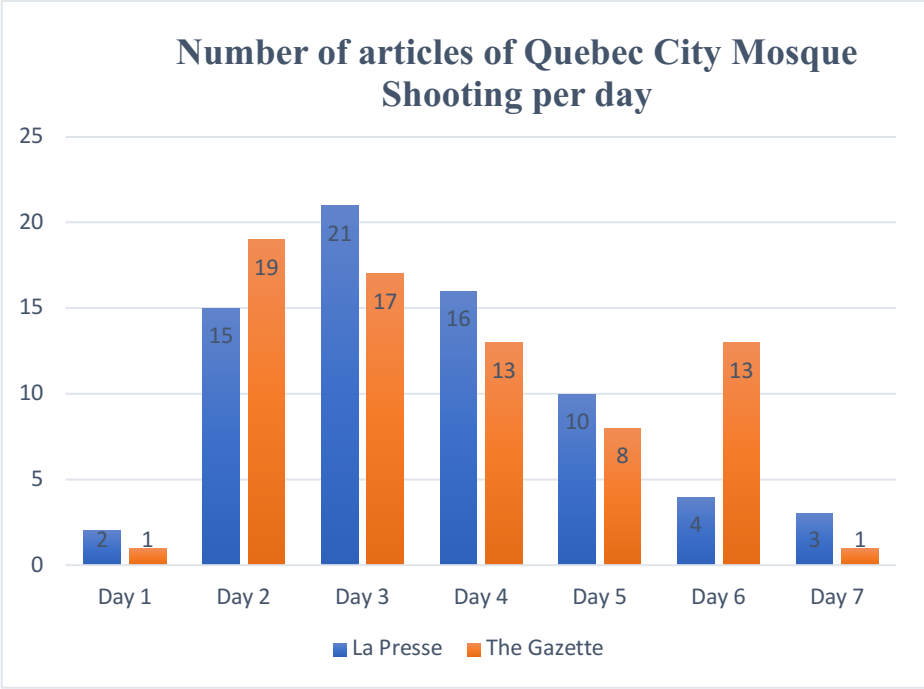|	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
La Presse	2	15	21	16	10	4	3
The Gazette	1	19	17	13	8	13	1

Table 4: Number of Articles of the Quebec Mosque Shooting per day.

In the first seven days following the shooting, *La Presse* published a total of 71 articles while the *Gazette* published 72. In order to gather the articles discussing the events of January 29, I went through all the news published in the first seven days for both news outlets and chose the ones that explicitly mention the Québec City mosque shooting in any capacity. In some instances, news articles were clearly referencing the shooting but did so implicitly, not actually mentioning the events. As mention of the events of January 29 was the only explicit criteria in selecting this corpus, the latter stories were not included in the data set for this research. As seen in the table above, the highest number of articles reporting on the mosque shooting were published on day 2 for the *Gazette* and day 3 for *La Presse*, which was Tuesday January 31, 2017 for both news outlets. Although nothing specific happened on that day that would explain the highest reporting numbers, almost all of the most relevant

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information concerning different aspects relating to the events were reported on that day, which congealed the dominant frame in the rest of the reporting.

To provide context, I will briefly recount the arc of the stories published in the unfolding of the shooting at Sainte-Foy. The shooting took place at the mosque in the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec on Sunday night just before 8pm on January 29. Later that night, *La Presse* published an article titled *Appel à tous: attentat terroriste à Ste-Foy* ("A call to all: a terrorist attack at Ste-Foy", *my translation*). Subsequently that night, the police had detained Alexandre Bissonnette, after he had turned himself in, as well as another man, who they thought was a suspect when he was seen running away from the scene. Soon after, it turned out that the second man was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time and he became a witness instead.

The following morning, both news outlets published the initial details of what had happened. That Monday, Bissonnette appeared in court where he was officially charged with 6 counts of premeditated murder and 5 counts of attempted murder. Meanwhile, the identities of the six victims were confirmed and there were more details on them, specifically on Azzedine Soufiane and Khaled Belkacemi, who were prominent figures in their communities. The same day, there were also press conferences at the Hôtel de Ville in Québec City with Muslim community leaders and the mayor of Québec City, Régis Labeaume, as well as another one at Montreal City Hall with mayor Denis Coderre. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also held a press conference condemning the events, calling what happened a "terrorist attack", echoing the sentiments of the Québec premier Philippe Couillard. Later that evening, there were vigils held in memory of the victims and in solidarity with the Muslim community both in Montréal and Québec City.

The following days' reportage contained detailed accounts of what happened, including stories from people who were at the mosque, updates on the wounded and efforts to

understand Bissonnette and his possible motives. Funeral arrangements were made: the funeral service for Abdelkrim Hassane, Khaled Belkacemi and Aboubaker Thabti was held at the Maurice Richard Arena in Montréal on Thursday February 2, 2017. The funeral event for Azzedine Soufiane, Ibrahima Barry and Mamadou Tanou Barry was held two days later in Québec City on Saturday February 4. The events highlighted the fact that there weren't any Islamic cemeteries near the area of Québec City, forcing families to bury their loved ones hundreds of kilometers away in Montréal or to repatriate their bodies to the countries of origin. During one of the memorials, the mayor of Québec City promised the Muslim community that they would get their cemetery in the city, but to date this has yet to happen. In the end, five out of the six men killed in Sainte-Foy were repatriated and one was buried in the Islamic cemetery in Laval, in the outskirts of Montréal.

Methodology

In *Policing the Crisis*, Stuart Hall argues that journalists often tend to play up the extraordinary and tragic elements of a story to enhance its 'newsworthiness' (53-54). This is part of the process Robert Entman calls 'framing', which involves selecting some pieces of information to highlight and elevate them in salience (1993, 53). In his research, Entman is concerned with the way in which frames "become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text" and how framing influences thinking (51). He posits that:

> …to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in
> a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal
> interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described
> (52).

The way frames shed light on some aspect of reality while obscuring others also reflects the role political power plays in this process and how it is exerted in the media (55). Framing, as Entman describes it, is "the central process by which government officials and journalists

exercise political framing influence over each other and over the public", which typically

benefits one side and hinders the other (2003, 417).

According to Entman (1993, 52), framing and frames operate in different ways: they

can define problems, diagnose causes and make moral judgments, much like Zelizer has

previously argued (2003, 102). Moreover, framing is also biased in different ways:

> Sometimes framing is applied to the news that purportedly distorts or falsifies reality
> (distortion bias), sometimes to news that favors one side rather than providing equivalent
> treatment to both sides in a political conflict (content bias), and sometimes to the
> motivations and mindsets of journalists who allegedly produce the biased content
> (decision-making bias). (Entman 2007, 163)

As a method, frame analysis and developing an understanding of framing more

generally helps in making the connection between political influence and the news media, as

it highlights the relationships between the elites, media and the larger public (Entman 2004,

23). Powell argues that as a conveyor of ideology, the news media in fact creates and

distributes said ideology primarily through framing (93), making framing analysis that much

more pertinent. For these reasons, in conducting the analysis for this research, I employ

content analysis to identify media frames used in *La Presse* and the *Gazette* in the coverage of

the Québec City mosque shooting.

In addition to framing, another relevant approach to the analysis of the press coverage

of the mosque shooting is what Simon Cottle calls "mediatized rituals". Much like Morse's

"death rituals" discussed in the previous chapter, mediatized rituals are a class of performative

media enactments, which summon solidarities and unleash moral ideas of the 'social good'

thereby exerting agency in the public life of societies (Cottle 411). In other words, according

to Cottle, "mediatized rituals are those exceptional and performative media phenomena that

serve to sustain and/or mobilize collective sentiments and solidarities on the basis of

symbolization and a subjunctive orientation to what should or ought to be" (415). Rather than

merely reporting or 'mediating' stories or events, in producing mediatized rituals the news media performatively enact them while also "invoking and sustaining public solidarities based on ideas and feelings (collective sentiments) about how society should or ought to be" (Cottle 415–16). Therefore, mediatized rituals are part of the process of framing a news piece or story in a manner that evokes feelings of solidarity and community, shifting public perceptions in the process, for the benefit of politicians and the elite.

Morse finds that news stories about death, such as terrorist attacks, wars and natural disasters, that become media events "are usually violent mass death events whose scale, location, and unexpectedness make them eligible to disrupt the news routine […]" (43). Similarly, Cottle argues that to regard media events as employing mediatized rituals, they have to be exceptional in nature; such events are salient or they "obtrude in terms of high-level media exposure and media performativity" (416). According to these definitions, the press coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting became a media event employing mediatized rituals due to the its violent and unexpected nature, which also disrupted the news routine. In the next section, the analysis details the mosque shooting coverage as a media event, the ways mediatized rituals were performed, and how *La Presse* and the *Gazette* framed the events to make them intelligible and socially meaningful.

Analysis

Tal Morse argues that a society's response to how it reacts in light of mass death (and whether it performs mourning rituals or not) is telling in that it defines who qualifies as a member of the community and who does not (38). Therefore, within death and mediatized rituals, it matters greatly how the Other is defined. As Morse contends,

> …the engagement with the other through the media becomes even more significant with the occurrence of violent death, since these are times when the sense of personal and collective security is eroded and the ties between individuals and groups come to the fore (2).

Moreover, such occasions can also serve to expose the unequal measures allocated to protecting lives (Morse 96), echoing Butler's notion of grievability. This analysis asks the following questions: How did *La Presse* and the *Gazette* respond or portray the response to the Québec City mosque shooting? Given that the victims in this instance were Muslims and marginalized Others, how did they frame the events? How were both the perpetrator and the victims portrayed? In essence, how was the shooting at Sainte-Foy framed? The table below depicts the themes that emerged from the corpus and how many stories appeared in each paper on each theme. The themes were delineated through a key word search. The rest of the analysis is divided according to these themes.

Theme[19]	No. of articles in *La Presse*	No. of articles in The *Gazette*
1. Terrorism	21	15
2. Bissonnette	12	19
3. Victims	19	11
4. Sociopolitical context	19	32
5. Response as a society	19	26

Table 5: Themes in the Coverage

Themes

1. The Québec City Mosque Shooting as Terrorism

One of the most prevalent and interesting themes in both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* was the discussion regarding whether the Québec City mosque shooting could be defined as an act of

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[19] The key word search was carried as follows. The first theme included a search with "terrori*" that would prompt both "terrorism" and "terrorist". The second was simply done with the search word "Bissonnette". The third theme included all articles that featured at least one or more of the names of the victims. The fourth theme included all articles that had at least one of these terms in context with the mosque shooting: radio, reasonable accommodation, Hérouxville, Trump, Muslim ban, Charter of Values and far-right (and the same in French). The fifth theme constituted all articles with one or more of the following words in context with the Muslim community: solidarity, support, and compassion (and the same in French).

terrorism or not. In other words, the theme cohered around the definition and labeling of the mosque shooting. *La Presse* had 21 articles that wrote about the mosque shooting in terms of a terrorist attack and/or portrayed Bissonnette as a terrorist while the *Gazette* featured 15 articles on this theme. Reporting on Tuesday January 31 from Bissonnette's court hearing, the *Gazette* reporter opined: "Though police and politicians have spoken of terrorism since the 27-year-old student allegedly opened fire just after the last prayers on Sunday, Bissonnette was not charged with any terrorism-related offences."[20] Indeed, the official response from Prime Minister Trudeau[21] and other provincial and federal political leaders was that the shooting constituted an act of terrorism. Several pieces in the editorial section denounced the events as terrorism as well: One published on Tuesday January 31 by Harith Chaudhary put it plainly: "This is terrorism. This is Islamophobia."[22] Similarly, both news outlets used the words "terrorism" in describing the events (albeit interchangeably with "shooting" or "fusillade" in French) as evidenced in the first piece published by *La Presse* warning people of an ongoing terrorism attack.[23] Therefore, people ranging from political leaders to the newspapers themselves, to citizens on the streets, called the act terrorism, seemingly without hesitation.

Initially, there was no discussion of how the shooting constituted a terrorist attack or any detail on how terrorism is defined in the official documentation. Rather, it appeared that there was a general sentiment that people deployed a common-sense understanding. Then, on Wednesday February 1, the *Gazette* journalist Jesse Feith published an article titled "*Terror charges difficult to prove, experts say; Establishing shooter's motivation tougher than proving*

[20] Solyom, Catherine. "Suspect in shootings faces 11 charges; Fellow student says alleged attacker had developed radical views", Jaury 31, 2017, A3.

[21] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/30/01-5064490-une-attaque-contre-les-valeurs-canadiennes-dit-trudeau.php, accessed March 21, 2019.

[22] Chaudhary, Harith. "Address hatred wherever it's seen", January 31, 017, A8.

[23] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/appel-a-tous/201701/29/01-5064361-appel-a-tous-attentat-terroriste-a-ste-foy.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

intent to kill."[24] Sharing the same idea, *La Presse* journalist Louise Leduc wrote a piece on Tuesday January 31 titled *Attentat à Québec: est-ce du terrorisme?*[25] (The Québec attack: is it terrorism?, *my translation*). The article sought to define what legally constitutes an act of terrorism and when the term can be applied. In their articles, both news outlets interviewed professors and researchers who study terrorism, who said that Bissonnette's motivations are hard to prove. As the *Gazette* article explains, for an act to be charged as terrorism in Canada, a political, religious or ideological motivation needs to be *proved*, which is difficult to do. Nonetheless, both media outlets used the term "terrorism" from the beginning and reported on a variety of people using the term which was followed by a deeper analysis into what "terrorism" means conceptually. This shows that both outlets promoted a particular problem definition in framing the event. Moreover, the editorial decision to include several opinion pieces denouncing the events as an act of terrorism indicates that the papers' editorial lines stand behind these claims.

One of the incidents from the week following the mosque shooting, reported only by *La Presse*, was how the TVA news anchor Pierre Bruneau was recorded as saying that the shooting was an act of "inverse terrorism":

> On aurait pu imaginer le contraire : qu'une communauté musulmane ou qu'un groupe extrémiste musulman commette un geste, mais que nous ou qu'quelqu'un […] d'une autre communauté attaque les musulmans, c'est un terrorisme à l'envers […]. (We could have imagined the opposite, that a Muslim community or an extremist Muslim group would do such a thing, but that we or someone […] from another community would attack Muslims, it's inverse terrorism", *my translation*)

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[24] Feith, Jesse. "Terror charges difficult to prove, experts say; Establishing shooter's motivation tougher than proving intent to kill, February 1, 2017, A4.
[25] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/31/01-5064757-attentat-a-quebec-est-ce-du-terrorisme.php, accessed March 21, 2019.

Collins and Glover explain that because the Middle Easterner "has been linked through language with terrorism, it is easy to see all people who resemble someone from that region of the world as possible terrorists" (6). Consequently, with a white Québécois man as the perpetrator in the case of the shooting at Sainte-Foy, Bruneau's comment can be linked to the modern Orientalist association of Islam with terrorism, in which crimes committed by a white Westerner cannot be perceived as terrorism. Although *La Presse* did not explicitly condemn Bruneau's comments, they did highlight the fact that there was a petition online asking him to apologize, which he ultimately did. One could argue that although *La Presse* did not take an apparent stance on the issue, they did offer moral judgments on how it should be regarded–as amoral.

Similarly, another incident involved the American news outlet Fox News, which had tweeted that the suspect in the attack was of Moroccan origin (most likely referring to the second man, who is Moroccan, and who was mistakenly detained and released a few hours later). Following the tweet, on Thursday February 2 the *Gazette* journalist Andy Riga reported that Prime Minister Trudeau's office had asked Fox to retract the news or update the information.[26] As with the previous case involving *La Presse*, this article in the *Gazette* seems to indicate that the paper as such did not take a stance on the matter. Rather it reported on the incident highlighting the fact that Fox's information was incorrect and that Trudeau's office found it harmful and as dishonoring the victims' memory, thus indirectly offering a moral evaluation of the situation.

2. The perpetrator
Another theme running throughout the coverage was where and how exactly to assign the blame; in other words, how do they portray Bissonnette, the perpetrator? His name appeared

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[26] Riga, Andy. "Opposition blasts Trudeau over Fox News tweet flap", February 2, 2017, A4.

in a total of 12 articles in *La Presse* with 42 individual instances and in 19 articles and 100

instances in the *Gazette*. Researching the differences in how the media treated domestic and

international terrorist agents in the aftermath of 9/11, Powell finds that domestic terrorism is

typically covered as less of a threat than foreign terrorism because it is instigated by

seemingly isolated, troubled individuals working alone: "thus, it is the outsider that is more of

a threat than the one that walks among us" (108, 98). In her research, she found that in the

case of the domestic agent the descriptors included identifying the person as intelligent and as

a planner, heavily personalizing them and labeling them as mentally ill or unstable (98–99). In

addition, local or domestic terrorists are often portrayed as having concerned family members

(and friends) that do not understand the act of terrorism or condone it (106).

These descriptors are accurate and consistent in how *La Presse* and the *Gazette*

portray Bissonnette. Both news outlets personalize Bissonnette heavily and extensively: they

report that he studied Political Science and/or Anthropology at Université Laval and that he

enjoyed music ranging from Katy Perry to Megadeth, and that he played chess. They cite

some of the pages he liked on Facebook (French Front National leader Marine Le Pen and

Donald Trump, among others) and that he often trolled pro-refugee and feminist groups on

social media sites. The papers describe how Bissonnette was bullied at school, that he

developed a liking for confrontation and was arrogant but also anti-social, calm, normal,

introverted and seemingly not violent. Further, they reported that he enjoyed and was an

amateur in shooting and guns. Many sources told the press that Bissonnette has a twin who

was known as "the nice one" (le gentil), while he was known as the "mean one" (le méchant).

His family ties, specifically how close he was with his parents and brother, were accentuated.

As one of Bissonnette's friends described: "He has a family, a brother, friends. He didn't have

enemies."[27] In one of their articles, *La Presse* also asked, "Qui donc est cet étudiant, ce frère, ce fils, accusé de six meurtres et de cinq tentatives de meurtre ?"[28] (Who is the student, the brother, the son, that is charged with six murders and five attempted murders?, *my translation*). Bissonnette is given many attributes that heavily personalize him. In the process, the press deeply humanizes him.

From the coverage and how it discursively represented Bissonnette, it transpires that no one in his circle could have predicted what he would do, although there were some clear signs. The papers report a collective dismay over what he did. A childhood friend said: "my first thought was that it wasn't possible he did this alone. Was he pushed by an extremist group who accepted him for who he was? I think someone pushed him over the edge or coached him to go over the edge"[29]. A person that knew him said: "He was not overtly racist or Islamophobic, but he had borderline misogynist, Islamophobic viewpoints."[30] The same point was brought forward by other people. Another person who did not want to be identified said Bissonnette held ultra-nationalist views, he devoured alt-right media from the U.S. and loathed aspects of Islam but claims that he had no idea Bissonnette's hatred ran so deep[31]. Powell describes that domestic agents' are typically portrayed as having "concerned family members that didn't understand the act of terrorism or condone it" (106). This is also how *La Presse* and the *Gazette* portrayed Bissonnette and his family.

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[27] Hamilton, Graeme and Steward, Bell. "'At the end of the day, I didn't know him'; Friend of alleged mosque shooter speaks out over crime that shocked country", February 2,2017, NP.1.

[28] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/31/01-5064754-alexandre-bissonnette-amateur-darmes-et-islamophobe.php, accessed March 22,2019

[29] Solyom, Catherine. "Were there warning signs, friends ask; Bissonnette talked of far-right Le Pen acquaintance says", February 1, 2017, A1.

[30] Solyom, Catherine. "Suspect in shootings faces 11 charges; Fellow student says alleged attacker had developed radical views", January 31, 2017, A3.

[31] Hamilton, Graeme and Steward, Bell. "'At the end of the day, I didn't know him'; Friend of alleged mosque shooter speaks out over crime that shocked country", February 2,2017, NP.1.

Finally, one of the most common descriptions of a domestic agent, according to Powell, is labeling them as mentally ill or unstable. They are also portrayed as isolated and troubled individuals working alone; they are social outcasts. Although the *Gazette* reported that Bissonnette did not show signs of illness or paranoia, the fact that he was bullied, and that people were mean to him as a child was mentioned several times in both news outlets. However, they do not elaborate on why they thought the piece of information was relevant or what it possibly meant. One could ask, are they implying that there is a link between him being bullied and murdering innocent people, thus lifting the blame from the individual? In an article by the *Gazette*, a friend of Bissonnette's said: "We never know how or why madness emerges."[32] Therefore, although officially Bissonnette was not mentally ill or unstable, many in his circle as well as the press used these descriptors to explain his actions, going as far as calling him mad.

In addition, many friends said Bissonnette had isolated himself in the month prior to the shooting (although one of his friends said he had grabbed drinks with him about a week before), and that he was introverted thus depicting him as an isolated and troubled outcast. These descriptors echo Shahin's 'Blame Frame' (discussed in the previous chapter), which attributes blame to the deviants' social identity (645). The perpetrator is portrayed as distinct from mainstream society, which is what *La Presse* and the *Gazette* did by accentuating Bissonnette's personality traits. This framing ascribes agency to the individual and his "isolated" act, thus assigning blame and affixing responsibility to what he had experienced rather than to the systemic currents of Islamophobia embedded in Québec. Following Duxbury et al., "there are racial differences in how the media coverage discusses mass shooter's culpability" (769). After all, references to mental health are more prevalent when

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[32] Hamilton, Graeme and Steward, Bell. "'At the end of the day, I didn't know him'; Friend of alleged mosque shooter speaks out over crime that shocked country", February 2,2017, NP.1.

the perpetrator is white, which "serves to mitigate their image as an immoral offender and portrays them as a victim of society and illness" (Duxbury et al. 788). In conclusion, the focus on Bissonnette's mental health in *La Presse* and the *Gazette* is conclusive of Shahin's and Duxbury et al.'s arguments on how a white mass shooter, a domestic agent, is typically portrayed in the media.

3. The Victims

Following the content analysis of how *La Presse* and the *Gazette* portrayed and framed the perpetrator, I now discuss how they did the same for the victims. First, in *La Presse*, the names of one or more of the victims appeared in a total of 19 articles, whereas in the *Gazette,* the names of one or more appeared in 11 articles. The table below depicts how many articles each victim's name appeared in as well as the number of individual instances in both *La Presse* and the *Gazette*.

Victims	Articles / Instances in *La Presse*	Articles/ Instances in the *Gazette*
Azzedine Soufiane	9 / 18	9/ 31
Khaled Belkacemi	9 / 23	7 / 15
Abdelkrim Hassane	6 / 12	7 / 9
Aboubaker Thabti	6 / 17	7 / 10
Mamadou Tanou Barry	7 / 13	7 / 12
Ibrahima Barry	6 / 11	6 / 10

Table 6: Frequency of Mention of Victims' Names

Both in *La Presse* and the *Gazette,* Soufiane's name appears the most frequently out of all the victims, and Belkacemi's the second most, while the rest had somewhat similar numbers in terms of their naming in the articles as well as in individual instances. It is interesting to note that the numbers between how many times the perpetrator was mentioned compared to how many times the victims' names appeared are essentially the inverse of each other in both news outlets as evidenced in table 5: *La Presse* mentioned the victims' names in 19 articles and Bissonnette's in 12, while his name appeared in 19 articles in the *Gazette* and

the victims' names appeared in 11. In other words, *La Presse* focused more on the victims whereas the *Gazette* concentrated more on the perpetrator in their coverage of the mosque shooting. According to Morse, recounting the names of the victims of violent mass death in the media is a ritual which reminds people that their death counts and that they belonged to the community: "It is an act of remembrance designed to give meaning to the death of an individual as well as to remind the participants of the bond that holds them together as a community" (2). Therefore, by giving more space for the victims, one could argue *La Presse* attributes more meaning and value to the victims and their death than the *Gazette*. However, as I will argue later, portraying grievability also works to reinforce social solidarity, which ultimately benefits to dominant population more than the marginalized group in question.

When it comes to the press reporting on mass death events, Shahin argues that by using the Blame Frame, the coverage focuses on the human impact after the initial reactions. According to him, within the Blame Frame "victims are depicted as common members of society who were going about their everyday life when it was rudely interrupted" (649). This is exactly what both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* did: they portrayed all six men who died at the mosque shooting as fathers and husbands who were by all accounts normal people who lived normal lives. They wrote about each man's occupation, background and other features that highlighted their "normalness" and "humanness". There was special attention given to Azzedine Soufiane and Khaled Belkacemi due to the fact that they were prominent figures in their communities. Both papers spoke to the men's friends and colleagues who spoke highly of them. Soufiane, specifically, was portrayed as someone who not only helped new immigrants in the area but many also testified that he was a hero in trying to stop Bissonnette.

According to Shahin, in employing the Blame Frame in relation to victims, "news reports are replete with stories of broken families, dead children, and so on" (649). Both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* featured stories on the impact on the children within the Muslim

community in the aftermath of the shooting. On January 31, *La Presse* reported that 35 children of the Notre-Dame-De-Foy elementary school had not shown up to school the day after the shooting because they were scared. Of these children, 20 were heavily affected by the attack, 10 had lost their father or an uncle and 5 were witnesses at the scene, according to *La Presse*[33]. The *Gazette* reported that groups such as Islamic Relief Canada vowed to support impacted families financially (such as paying for education).[34] The same article describes how "schools with a significant Muslim population were either closed or calling upon social workers and psychologists to assist in helping healing wounds." Subsequently, the coverage somewhat focused on the human impact of the shooting, although in a rather limited capacity.

Still adhering to the Blame Frame, Shahin writes, "the language used for such coverage is descriptive and evocative" (ibid). Examples of such language can be found in several stories and their headlines, such as "*Bloodied prayer rugs as terror strikes Québec; Witnesses recall how horror unfolded amid peaceful worshippers, Graeme Hamilton writes*"[35], "*Shaken worshippers return to jarring scene at mosque*"[36] and "*Il nous tirait comme des lapins*"[37] ("He was shooting us like rabbits", *my translation*). Therefore, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* both employed the Blame Frame in how they portrayed the perpetrator as well as victims in their coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting by framing the event as terrorism, focusing on the human impact while affixing responsibility and assigning blame and agency to the deviant individual. and in using evocative and dramatic language.

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[33] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/31/01-5064928-des-enfants-apeures-laissent-des-chaises-vides-a-lecole.php, accessed March 31, 2019.

[34] Plante, Caroline. "Support pours in for families", February 1, 2017, A2.

[35] Hamilton, Graeme. "Bloodied prayer rugs as terror strikes Quebec; Witnesses recall how horror unfolded amid peaceful worshippers, Graeme Hamilton writes", January 31, 2017, A7.

[36] Plante, Caroline. "Shaken worshippers return to jarring scene at mosque", February 2, 2017, A3.

[37] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/31/01-5064784-il-nous-tirait-comme-des-lapins.php, accessed March 31, 2019.

4. Sociopolitical context

In the aftermath of 9/11 and its media coverage, the focus of the news was "primarily on the immediate reaction rather than on the larger issues" (Karim 105) that might have catalyzed the event. Similarly, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* tried to answer the same question: why did the shooting at Sainte-Foy happen? What are some of the larger societal issues that might have been overlooked? A few days after the initial reaction, the news outlets started publishing articles on this topic. In looking for external factors that might have influenced Bissonnette's decision, there were generally two points of view. One identified the precursor events in Québec such as the Reasonable Accommodation hearings and Hérouxville's code of conduct. The other pointed the finger at Donald Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric and his Muslim ban in the United states. These events have been discussed in the first chapter to provide context. Nonetheless, both points of view were discussed far less in *La Presse*, as shown in table 5 (19 articles in *La Presse*, 32 articles in the *Gazette*), which suggests that the *Gazette* was more concerned with larger issues that might have influenced and explained Bissonnette's actions.

Adhering to the first point of view, the *Gazette* journalist Philip Authier interviewed a Muslim man who stated that "the mood turned sour just about the time the province fell into a debate about reasonable accommodation" and it had eroded ever since.[38] Another Muslim man interviewed by *La Presse* said that the Charter of Values and the Reasonable Accommodation issue is where it all started.[39] This sentiment and a direct reference to the Reasonable Accommodation debates was repeated several times making a distinct link between Québec's socio-political past and present. As Entman contends, repetition is one of the ways texts can make bits of information more salient. On the other hand, many blamed

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[38] Authier, Philip. "Climate of intolerance a factor in massacre, mosque member says", January 31, 2017, A2.

[39] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/30/01-5064711-islamophobie-il-y-a-une-ambiance-sournoise-a-quebec.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

Trump's xenophobic rhetoric, which seemingly normalized racist and Islamophobic speech. As one editorial in the *Gazette* stated: "It did not take long for anti-Muslim rhetoric to make its way across the border to Canada."[40] Another opinion piece writer stated: "I believe there exists a link between the shooting at the mosque in Québec City and Donald Trump's immigration order […] The U.S. president reinforces xenophobic and racist thinking, and promotes violent actions."[41] Both news outlets also reported on the protests in Montréal opposing Trump's Muslim ban, linking them with what happened at Sainte-Foy. Nonetheless, these two points of view offered by *La Presse* and the *Gazette* are framed in such a way as to promote a particular causal interpretation.

Nonetheless, some articles minimize Trump's influence stating: "it would be irrational and unfair for Canadians to blame this barbarity on Trump […]".[42] Instead, they should turn to the possible role populist and right-wing politics in Canada might have played. *La Presse* turned its gaze to Québec far-right groups immediately from the start of the coverage (the *Gazette* did later), reporting on how some of them reacted to the shooting on social media. Moreover, both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* distinctly assigned blame to some of Québec's radio stations known as "trash talk radio" (radios poubelle), that have been known to disseminate anti-immigrant, xenophobic and racist views.[43] One article even said that Bissonnette might have gotten radicalized through such radio stations.[44] The number of articles that referenced these radio stations was significant: 9 articles in both *La Presse* the *Gazette*, which necessitates a deeper analysis.

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[40] Scullion, Joanne. "In solidarity with the Muslims community", January 31, 2017, A8.
[41] Marcuse, Jane. "A link to Trump's policy on migrants", February 1, 2017, A8.
[42] Michael Den Tandt. "Canada had to do this dance with U.S. before; Trudeau, like Mulroney, trying to walk fine line", February 1, 2017.
[43] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201702/01/01-5065133-radios-de-quebec-lheure-est-a-la-prudence.php, accessed March 22, 2019.
[44] Authier, Philip. "'We're all responsible' for climate: Couillard", February 1, 2017, A1.

For instance, the *Gazette* wrote that a former Canadian Security Intelligence officer said "some radio hosts in Québec have blood on their hands."[45] Allison Hanes from the *Gazette* also wrote: "some pundits and radio shock jocks have also played a role in fomenting anti-Muslim biases."[46] In addition, Québec City mayor Labeaume "singled out his city's notorious radio hosts for fueling anti-Muslim sentiment"[47] and the *Gazette* repeated his sentiment several times. *La Presse* journalists Louise Leduc and Louis-Samuel Perron dedicated a whole article to this topic: "Radios de Québec: l'heure est à la prudence" ("Québec radios: it's time for caution", *my translation*). It is important to note that these radio stations clearly enjoy some popularity and they have a considerable audience. Gagnon and Jiwani argue that an audience is just as crucial as the media messages they are steeped in, as the audience's perspective is necessary in apprehending the media's messages and ideology (140). It is through the audience-media nexus, that media messages are rendered intelligible to audiences who are receptive and share similar maps of meaning. Therefore, while these radio stations seem to hold some of the blame, they wouldn't be able to spread their messages without a considerable audience and listener base.

It is clear both news outlets hold these "trash talk" radio stations culpable to some degree therefore offering another causal interpretation in terms of framing. More generally, in discussing the role the media might have played in the events, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* accentuate the fact that spoken and written words have significance and can be impactful. They do so both directly as well as indirectly by quoting people affirming this, such as the Québec premier Couillard. On the one hand, the news outlets turned towards both the Québec context of the Reasonable Accommodation debates, the Hérouxville incident and the role

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[45] Authier, Philip. "'We're all responsible' for climate: Couillard", February 1, 2017, A1.
[46] Hanes, Allison. "What comes after the tears and vigils for mosque victims?", February 1, 2017: A2.
[47] Hamilton, Graeme. "Mosque deaths force a look inward; Quebec confronts reality of hateful history", February 4, NP1.

media, specifically "trash talk" radio stations, might have played in the events. On the other hand, they also turned towards the American context with Donald Trump and the general anti-Muslim xenophobic climate in place to assign some of the blame and responsibility to explain and make the Québec City mosque shooting intelligible and socially meaningful. This departs somewhat from Shahin's Blame Frame.

One thing both news outlets seem to wholly agree on is the fact that the mosque shooting was undoubtedly an act of hateful racism and Islamophobia, thus giving a clear problem definition to the framing of the events. In fact, in some articles, political leaders, such as Québec premier Couillard as well as Prime Minister Trudeau, state that the people in the mosque were killed simply because of their religion. As Powell argues, "the direct victims of terrorism are rarely intentionally targeted, rather they are injured or killed to gain attention and to send a message to the main target […]" (91). Echoing many political leaders, an editorial in the *Gazette* argues the same: the six Muslims were killed for who they were and what they represented[48]–the Orientalized and marginalized Other. Both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* report various political leaders, community members as well as members of the majority culture using the term Islamophobia in labeling the shooting and in describing the socio-political context of Muslims in Québec. The *Gazette* seems to use the term slightly more readily as opposed to *La Presse*, who mainly uses it when quoting someone else. For instance, the *Gazette* reported, "[…] circumstances suggest that this is also a hate crime perpetrated against Muslims, the result of an ugly rising tide of Islamophobia."[49]

In discussing Islamophobia, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* without hesitation link the events at Sainte-Foy with other forms of hate crimes that occurred before and during the week

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[48] "A time for solidarity", January 31, 2017, A8.
[49] Hanes, Allison. "Quebec and Canada Not Immune From hate; Tide of Identity politics, Islamophobia was rising here long before Trump", January 31, 2017, A2.

that followed the shooting. The *Gazette* journalist Catherine Solyom wrote, "but as the soul searching in Québec City continues, some suggest there's a link between the daily demonizing of Muslims, hate speech and hate crimes, and the deadly attack on the mosque."[50] In many stories, the news outlets interviewed members of the Muslim community about their experiences of being Muslim in Québec and the racism and Islamophobia that often comes with it (although some people they interviewed said they had not encountered it themselves). Several stories, such as one in *La Presse* from January 31, also discussed the fact that hate crimes had been on the rise in Québec prior to the mosque shooting.[51] In addition, both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* reported that the shooting sparked a jump in radicalization complaints reported by the Centre for the Prevention or Radicalization Leading to Violence and the Montréal Police (SPVM). Many shorter stories involved reporting on these hate crimes, such as the case of a man who was charged with inciting hatred online,[52] how some mosques were closed as a precaution,[53] and that a mosque was vandalized.[54] Consequently, through the framing the Québec City mosque shooting in a way that highlights the atmosphere of intolerance and, sometimes, outright hate towards Muslims, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* make what happened intelligible in the context of Islamophobia and hate crimes, which in itself offers another causal interpretation and moral evaluation of the events.

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[50] Solyom, Catherine. "Hate crimes too often ignored, groups say", February 2, 2017, A1.

[51] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/30/01-5064723-les-incidents-haineux-en-hausse-a-montreal.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

[52] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/justice-et-faits-divers/faits-divers/201702/01/01-5065126-lhomme-arrete-a-kirkland-est-accuse-dincitation-a-la-haine.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

[53] Wilton, Katherine. "Kirkland man faces hate charges", February 2, 2017, A4.

[54] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/justice-et-faits-divers/faits-divers/201702/02/01-5065672-une-mosquee-vandalisee-dans-le-sud-ouest-de-montreal.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

5. Response as a Society

The last prevalent theme throughout the coverage in both *La Presse* and the *Gazette*, was the accentuation of the support, solidarity and compassion the majority population showed towards the Muslim minority in the aftermath of the events at Sainte-Foy. *La Presse* had 19 articles on this theme whereas the *Gazette* had 26. Both *La Presse* and the *Gazette* reported on the large crowds that came to pay their respects to the victims and the community and to denounce Islamophobia during the protests and gatherings held in Montréal and Québec City. Likewise, both funeral memorials witnessed masses of people that came in the spirit of solidarity and support. In both news outlets, the numbers and size of masses were accentuated: *La Presse* described one of the events as having "a human tide" (marée humaine)[55] and reported on another one where thousands of people (des milliers de personnes) gathered[56] thus using dramatic and evocative language, reflective of Shahin's analysis of how the Blame Frame operates. The *Gazette* also reported on the masses of people showing solidarity and support in stories such as "*Montrealers rally to support Muslims, oppose Trump*"[57] and "*In solidarity with Muslim community.*"[58]

These accounts are just a few examples of Morse's death rituals and Cottle's mediatized rituals. In stories such as "*Des lettres d'amour aux familles des victimes de Québec*"[59] ("Love letters to the families of the victims of Québec", *my translation*), and *"Support pours in for families,"*[60] La *Presse* and the *Gazette* emphasize the fact the majority population strictly condemns the events and strongly supports the Muslim community. Prime

[55] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/30/01-5064609-une-maree-humaine-a-montreal-en-solidarite-pour-les-victimes-de-quebec.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

[56] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/30/01-5064642-des-milliers-de-personnes-a-la-veillee-de-quebec.php, accessed March 22, 2019.

[57] Wilton, Katherine. "Montrealers rally to support Muslims, oppose Trump", January 31, 2017, A6.

[58] Scullion, Joanne. "In solidarity with Muslim community", January 31, 2017, A8.

[59] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/31/01-5064870-des-lettres-damour-aux-familles-des-victimes-de-quebec.php, accessed April 2, 2019.

[60] Plante, Caroline. "Support pours in for families", February 1, 2017, A2.

Minister Trudeau stated that 36 million Canadians also had their hearts broken by the events and that Canadians will cry together with the Muslim community.[61] Other political leaders echoed the same sentiment. Therefore, the news outlets portray a strong sense of shared communal identity thus delineating boundaries of inclusion and extending an understanding of who belongs to the community (Morse 38) in light of the mosque shooting, which, however, dissipated not too long after the events. Throughout their coverage of the victims, the news outlets also marked the death of the six men killed in the mosque as lives that matter–as grievable–but only conditionally as I will demonstrate in the following section.

By framing the coverage in such ways, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* summon solidarities and moral ideas of social good in order to mobilize collective sentiments and cultivate a sense that Muslims belong to the Québec society. Doing so exerts agency in the public life of the society (Cottle 411) and shifts public perceptions for the benefit of politicians and the elite on "the basis of symbolization and a subjunctive orientation to what should or ought to be" (id. 415). Such framings operate as performative media enactments–in other words, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* employed mediatized rituals in their coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting by summoning collective sentiments and solidarities from the majority population towards to Muslim minority. Moreover, the coverage of the mosque shooting in both news outlets also follow death rituals insofar as they work to regain trust within a destabilized society as well as fix the social fabric that has been rendered fragile, which happens as a consequence of mass violent death (Morse 36). As Morse reminds us, violent and unnatural deaths such as the Québec City mosque shooting suggest a level of negligence and inadequate functioning within society (39). This has led to the failure to protect the lives of some

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[61] https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/dossiers/attentat-a-quebec/201701/30/01-5064490-une-attaque-contre-les-valeurs-canadiennes-dit-trudeau.php, accessed April 2, 2019.

individuals and the exposure of unequal measures allocated to protecting those lives (Morse 96).

It is accurate to point out that the lives lost at Sainte-Foy did not seem to matter until after they were violently taken, in that the state failed to protect them in the first place. This is reminiscent of Yasmin Jiwani's analysis of the press coverage of the Shafia women's killings and their construction as worthy victims deserving of public sympathy after their deaths. Jiwani found that the media took interest in the Shafia women only after they were killed despite some of their efforts to alert a range of authorities of the possible danger they were in (40). Similarly, with the six men killed in the mosque shooting, their deaths became politically meaningful inasmuch as their grieving reinforced social solidarity, which benefitted the dominant population but did little to help the grieving Muslim community. Therefore, one could argue that in employing death and mediatized rituals, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* contributed to covering up the state's complicity in the mosque shooting and in allowing the spreading of Islamophobia in Québec. In that case, the death of the six men mattered to the extent that grieving them in the press by following death and mediatized rituals served to project a positive image of the nation, first and foremost.

Ultimately, Morse contends that mass violent death can work to either increase social solidarity and downplay contestations, or it can galvanize social instability further (39). In the case of *La Presse* and the *Gazette,* the death rituals that were employed arguably tried to perform the former but ended up bringing the latter forward. However, the fact that social solidarity seemingly increased does not reflect reality or lasting effects, evidenced in the way in which Muslims in Québec are still treated, which is not too dissimilar to Kumar's liberal Islamophobia discussed previously. An article by Jasmin Zine in *The Conversation* reported

Islamophobia has been on the rise in Canada, even after the events of January 29, 2017.[62] *The Globe and Mail* similarly reported that two years after the shooting, "we are still missing closure": some of the widows of the victims had yet to get financial compensation from the provincial government (which they are entitled to), updating firearms regulations has been painfully slow and real tangible steps to combat hate speech and hate crimes are lacking.[63] Even more alarming is the fact that many Canadian politicians, as reported by Thomas Woodley, "still appear to want to cultivate support within Canada's extreme anti-Muslim right-wing"[64]. When mass death events create mistrust and destabilize a society, death rituals function as managing the healing process for the impacted community but also, and perhaps more importantly, operate as a phase in the process of order restoration (37), which reflects and re-establishes an Orientalist power hierarchy. In the end, evoking such strong feelings of solidarity and community and framing the stories by following death and mediatized rituals serves to shift public perceptions for the benefit of politicians and the elite. Consequently, the outpour of solidarity, compassion and support does little to actually change things within our society.

Summary

This chapter has sought to uncover how *La Presse* and the *Gazette* responded or portrayed the Québec City mosque shooting and how they framed the perpetrator and victims. By following a content analysis to uncover framing of the mosque shooting, this chapter has showed that *La Presse* and the *Gazette* both promoted particular problem definitions, causal interpretations and moral evaluations in the framing of the events. In discussing whether the shooting

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[62] https://theconversation.com/islamophobia-and-hate-crimes-continue-to-rise-in-canada-110635, accessed April 3, 2019.
[63] https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-searching-for-answers-two-years-after-the-mosque-massacre/, accessed April 3, 2019.
[64] http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/2019/03/following-christchurch-trudeau-government-must-address-islamophobia-now, accessed April 3, 2019.

constituted terrorism or not, the news outlets leaned towards defining the event as terrorism by readily using the term and highlighting the fact that many prominent figures did so as well, thus offering a judgment on the shooting as amoral. They way in which both outlets portrayed the perpetrator, Alexandre Bissonnette, largely followed Powell's characterization of the "domestic agent", employed Shahin's Blame Frame and corresponded to Duxbury et al.'s understanding of how race affects the media coverage of such events. Likewise, when framing the victims of the mosque shooting, the news outlets were consistent with the way in which victims of mass death are typically portrayed. Although *La Presse* and the *Gazette* ascribed agency, assigned blame and affixed responsibility to Bissonnette, they also looked beyond the individual and tried to understand aspects of the sociopolitical context that undoubtedly influenced Bissonnette and his actions thus framing the events according to a specific a causal interpretation. Finally, the coverage of the mosque shooting in *La Presse* and the *Gazette* employed death rituals and mediatized rituals in an effort to summon solidarities and mobilize collective sentiments so as to move the whole society beyond trauma and grief and restore social order. This was done with specific conditions that reflect an Orientalist power hierarchy in which the death of the six men killed in the mosque shooting became politically meaningful insofar as the outpour of support and solidarity reflected positively on dominant society and masked their complicity in the events that led to the shooting in the first place.

Conclusion

Following Teun van Dijk's line of thought, Karim points out that in the most atypical occurrences a society can witness, such as the Québec City mosque shooting, the media make attempts to place the events within "cognitive scripts and models of behavior shaped by the experience and the narration of previous events" (105). He explains, the dominant cultural and religious worldviews of a society are critical in shaping the cognitive structures that make events intelligible. According to Entman, the "frames that employ more culturally resonant terms have the greatest potential for influence" (2003, 417)*.* In Québec, as well as in the rest of Canada and the West, this worldview is informed by Orientalism exemplified by the plethora of ways in which the West and the Westerner remain with the relative upper hand (Said 7). On how this disparity can be addressed, Karim argues,

> If Northern journalists wish to produce informed reporting on Muslims, they will find it necessary to reorient their modes of operation. First of all, one has to understand the basis of one's own conceptualization about the Other. Collective cultural memories play a large part in our views about Islam, as do our society's fundamental myths. (114)

Similarly, Gardee and El-Ghawaby argue that a change in the way in which Canadians see the Muslim minority is necessary by challenging and reframing the public discourse that has become conventional wisdom (149). They contend that narratives can be used for a number of purposes (141); although their conventional use might be more or less congealed, frames are by no means set to always stay the same.

In *Collateral Language*, Collins and Glover state that we, as citizens of a democracy, have an obligation "to question, critique, and understand the language given to us by those who claim to represent our interests" (2). This research has sought to understand how the Québec City mosque shooting was portrayed and explained through a case study analysis. In other words, I have attempted to answer how two news outlets, *La Presse* and the *Montreal Gazette,* made the events intelligible and socially meaningful in the aftermath of January 29,

2017. Basing myself in literature that regards the news as a discursive tool and conveyor of dominant ideologies guided the analysis with an understanding that power and the "truth" that the media claims to portray are interconnected in ways that benefit the dominant segment of society and hinder the already marginalized. Moreover, by providing background into Muslim immigration and assimilation in Québec, this study placed the subsequent analysis within a broader socio-political and historical context, which is necessary in order to understand some of the underpinnings of what led to the Québec City mosque shooting but also contextualize the actual news coverage within a history of social conventions.

La Presse and the *Gazette* provided their readers an orientation and an understanding of how the Québec City mosque shooting should be understood, thus conveying social meaning (Buozis and Creech 1434). This study suggests that neither news outlet employed Orientalist or Islamophobic discourse, as defined by the Runnymede report, in their coverage of the Québec City mosque shooting, like some others have. However, they did largely follow journalistic conventions and what other studies have argued in terms of how different actors are framed, which remain problematic. *La Presse* and the *Gazette* framed the events in terms of terrorism, thus promoting a particular problem definition; they offered moral guidance into how the events should be interpreted. The perpetrator, Alexandre Bissonnette, was heavily personalized and portrayed as mentally unstable, which is typical when the perpetrator is a white domestic agent. Many have pointed out that had he not been white, he would have been treated differently[65]. However, the portrayal of the victims did not deviate from how victims are typically framed in such instances. Consequently, both news outlets framed Bissonnette in a way that assigned blame and affixed responsibility to his experiences of previous violence and his mental instability. Nonetheless, they also addressed the systemic currents of

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[65] https://www.justsecurity.org/63499/how-news-media-talk-about-terrorism-what-the-evidence-shows/, accessed April 5, 2019.

Islamophobia and racism embedded in Québec, to an extent. Therefore, although *La Presse* and the *Gazette* assigned blame to the individual, they also alleviated his responsibility by looking at larger societal events and factors both inside Québec and abroad.

As representatives of the Québec news media, *La Presse* and the *Gazette* highlighted systemic intolerance and hate towards Muslims and summoned solidarity and support towards the impacted community, thus cultivating a strong sense of a united Québec, which includes Muslims and all other minorities. More importantly, they did so in a manner that reflected and re-established dominant power hierarchies, in which the political meaning of the six men killed in the mosque shooting and how the press framed the event ultimately benefitted the dominant culture and society. In the two years that have passed since the Québec City mosque shooting, little has changed for Muslims in Québec. This has been evidenced by a total lack of true initiative to change things and to better protect the Muslims minority. Discriminatory pieces of legislation have been passed, Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslims are occurring around the world, and in Québec City, the Muslim community still does not have an Islamic cemetery to bury their loved ones. Within such a context, one is compelled to ask, how far must we go for real change to happen?

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