

DOCUMENTING HONOUR:
EXAMINING “HONOUR KILLINGS” AND MUSLIM REPRESENTATION IN
DOCUMENTARY FILM

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ABSTRACT

Although documentary films offer viewers the chance to learn about the realities and experiences of others cultures, it is also possible for filmmakers to stereotype the people they represent. In this paper, I examine Shelley Saywell’s documentary *In the Name of the Family*, a film about Muslim youth victims of “honour killings.” I suggest that by framing domestic violence as “honour killings” this film stereotypes and misrepresents Muslim immigrant families. Through an analysis of promotional material and scenes from the film, I argue that the film’s use of Orientalist narratives of difference between Muslim immigrants and mainstream Canadian society contributes to the impression that “honour killings” are cultural and specific to Muslim communities. I further argue that Saywell’s use of the “imperilled Muslim woman” narrative to elicit empathy and compassion from viewers perpetuates the notion that Muslim immigrant families are traditional, oppressive and unwilling to adapt to North American society.

Key Words: Documentary film; honour killings; Muslim immigrants; domestic violence

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Introduction

Shelley Saywell's 2010 documentary, *In the Name of the Family*, examines the lives of Muslim immigrant youth victims of "honour killings" in Canada and in the United States. In her film she explores three cases of "honour killings"-- that of Aqsa Parvez, Sarah and Amina Said, and Fauzia Mohammed--that occur within a span of six months in the two countries. Saywell conducts interviews with the family and friends of Aqsa, Sarah and Amina to learn about their lives and the reasons they were murdered by their male family members. The filmmaker also interviews Fauzia, the survivor of an attempted "honour killing", as well as Hana and Alina, two teenaged girls who have suffered physical abuse by their fathers. The use of engaging and emotional scenes and testimony throughout the documentary suggests to viewers that the victims were killed or abused for wanting to live a "Western" life.

Documentary films offer viewers something different from the world of fiction film--a view of the real world as opposed to an imaginary world created by a filmmaker (Chanan 10; Nichols, *Introduction* xi). As a result, documentary films create a desire to know about the world (Nichols, *Introduction* 40) and are able to "shed light on the very issues, people, places and processes that make the world so complex" (Ellis and McLane 326). Filmmakers engage viewers by trying to inform or persuade them about the world through evidence (or footage). The way a filmmaker presents or "frames" this evidence can structure how viewers come to know what they know about a subject (Butler 23-24). In creating this desire for knowledge and presenting evidence, especially about other cultures and their realities, filmmakers run the risk of exploiting or stereotyping the people they represent (Nichols, *Introduction* 9; Chapman, *Issues* 34). In this paper, I argue that by framing domestic violence within Muslim families as "honour killings",

this film stereotypes and misrepresents Muslim immigrant families. I suggest that by leaving viewers with the impression that domestic violence is specific to culture and religion, Muslim families (male relatives in particular) are perceived as unwilling to adapt to North American society. I further suggest that this film contributes to the notion that “honour killings” are specific only to Muslim immigrants (Meetoo and Mirza 187-188; Sen 46; Welchman and Hossain 13-14) and that domestic violence in Muslim communities is worse than domestic violence in mainstream North American society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 21; Terman 5).

As documentary films engage the public and contribute to public debates about social issues (Chanan vi; Chapman, *Documentary* 18; Kilborn and Izod 234; Nichols, *Introduction* 2), the impressions created by this documentary are familiar with regards to how Muslims and Islam are viewed by the West within a post 9/11 context. Within this context, Muslims are viewed within the confines of familiar Orientalist narratives such as the “dangerous Muslim man” or the “imperilled Muslim woman” (Meetoo and Mirza 195; Razack, *Casting Out* 5; Zine 148). Under these narratives then, the West views Muslim men as dangerous threats to society and Muslim women as oppressed victims of violent and patriarchal Muslim men and Islam (Razack, *Casting Out* 4, 19; Zine 150). There are also the familiar binaries of “us” and “them” perpetuated by the mainstream media in which Muslims are perceived as “traditional” and violent and not respecting the democratic values associated with Canada or the United States (Arat-Koc 221; Jiwani, *Discourses* 178; Razack, *Casting Out* 16; Terman 5). These assumptions are also present within the context of immigration and discussions of gendered violence in Canada. For instance, during the highly publicized three month trial in Kingston, Ontario for the Shafia family during which an Afghan family was on trial for murdering four female members of their family in an

alleged “honour killing”, debates and questions ensued in the media around issues such as culture (Afghan and Muslim), religion (Islam), values (“traditional” immigrant values versus Canadian values) and their roles in “honour killings” (Butt and Raza; Findlay; Niazi; Paikin; Haroon Siddiqui).

Furthermore, the current edition of *Discover Canada*, Canada’s citizenship guide states the following:

In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, “honour killings,” female genital mutilation or other gender-based violence. Those guilty of these crimes are severely punished under Canada’s criminal laws (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 9).

This statement is suggestive of what Himani Bannerji describes as “marking the difference between a core cultural group and other groups who are represented as cultural fragments” (10). Hence from the guide’s description, Canada’s “core” culture is one of equality and tolerance whereas potential immigrants are seen as not possessing these qualities which implies their difference. In highlighting this difference, immigrants from the same country may also be perceived as being culturally homogenous despite having different histories and experiences (Bannerji 167). Culture thus becomes a tool of power that is used not just to determine differences between Canadians and immigrants, but also to keep immigrants within socially constructed boxes (Bannerji 37, 41, 158).

The phrasing of the guide seems to imply that forms of gendered violence associated with other countries are seen as more violent than other forms of gendered violence in Canadian society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 21; Terman 20). The use of the words “barbaric cultural practices”

gives the impression that these forms of gendered violence are due to culture. Immigrants from particular countries where these forms of violence occur are thus seen as more violent, oppressive, traditional and patriarchal, and may be perceived as less likely to assimilate into Canadian society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 21; Razack, Smith, and Thobani ix). By perceiving gendered violence within immigrant communities as not only more violent but also as part of an immigrant's culture, features associated with gendered violence such as patriarchy and misogyny are seen as "foreign cultural imports" (Zine 155). The notion that these features are cultural and foreign is not uncommon among Western media reports about gendered violence in immigrant communities (Jiwani, *Discourses* 94; *Doubling* 76; Razack, *A Violent Culture* 92; Zine 155). As a result of the constant focus on culture in cases of gendered violence within immigrant communities, other factors that can contribute to gendered violence such as migratory experiences, class issues, underemployment, and the changing power relations between family members, are not emphasized (Meetoo and Mirza 189, 191; Tyyskä 86, 93).

Using culture as a framework to comprehend gendered violence within immigrant communities is, as Yasmin Jiwani suggests, a new form of racism which is used to create difference and is "directed at groups seen to be culturally different" (*Discourses* 114). In creating this difference, the dominant culture (or North American culture) sees gendered violence of other cultures as more barbaric than its own, perpetuating the belief that other cultures are more deviant, traditional and oppressive (Jiwani, *Discourses* 21). From the phrasing of the above statement in the Citizenship guide, it is possible to see how a particular cultural framework is used to establish perceptions of gendered violence within immigrant communities and how gendered violence is tied to an immigrant's culture. With Western media oftentimes associating

violence with culture or cultural differences, it is possible to see how the familiar Orientalist narratives of “the dangerous Muslim man” and “imperilled Muslim woman” (Razack, *Casting Out* 5) become effective in maintaining the notion that domestic violence within Muslim communities is different from that which occurs in mainstream society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 199; Narayan 100; Terman 6). At the core of these Orientalist narratives is a focus on difference. Edward Said notes that this difference is “a construction of opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their difference from “us” ”(*Orientalism* 332). Hence within the realm of culture, the dangerous Muslim man and the imperilled Muslim woman are the opposite of Western culture: they are part of a dangerous, misogynistic, and patriarchal culture that does not have democratic values or gender equality (Razack, *Casting Out* 16; Terman 5). As a result of these narratives which establish difference, mainstream Canadian society may perceive gendered violence within the Muslim community as cultural. In analyzing this documentary and situating it within the context of immigration and gendered violence in a post 9/11 environment, I attempt to examine how this documentary uses the Orientalist narrative to lead viewers to certain impressions and attitudes about “honour killings” and Muslim immigrants.

In order to examine how the narrative is used in this film, I analyze *In the Name of the Family* in two sections. In the first section I analyze promotional materials for the film used to generate interest in the documentary. As these materials are produced by mainstream media, I suggest that these promotional materials create interest by producing familiar binaries between Muslim immigrants and North American society within the context of immigration and gendered violence in Canada. In the second section, I examine the film to see how Saywell’s arrangement

of the footage, which I suggest is based on the notion of the “imperilled Muslim woman”, guides viewers to the impressions that domestic violence is specific to culture and religion and that Muslim immigrant families are not willing to adapt to a new society. According to Bill Nichols, the persuasive power of documentary “lies in its ability to couple evidence *and* emotion in the selection and arrangement of its sounds and images” (*Introduction* 57, emphasis Nichols). By reviewing the footage used in this documentary I specifically examine how the use of cinematographic techniques (for instance, music, camera shots, and angles) contribute to viewers empathizing and identifying with the victims for wanting to live a “Western” lifestyle and in the process accepting the impressions about domestic violence and Muslim immigrants previously mentioned (Butler 51; Chapman, *Issues* 103; 153; Villarejo 28-38). I also explore how Saywell continues to frame gendered violence within the Orientalist narrative despite moments in the film where some scenes exceed this narrative frame, thus suggesting that culture and religion are not the only factors contributing to gendered violence. It is my hope in analyzing this film that I can shed some light on how this film contributes to the ongoing tensions between immigrants and mainstream Canadian society on the topic of domestic violence, a subject that should not be associated with a specific culture, since violence unfortunately affects women in all societies.

Analysis of Promotional Material and Film

Promotional Material

As previously mentioned, documentary films create a desire to know about a subject (Nichols, *Introduction* 40). In order for audiences to know about a subject of a documentary film, promotional strategies are used to inform and create interest about films and their subject matter for potential audiences (Kilborn and Izod 223). Some of these promotional strategies include

press coverage, interviews with the filmmaker or other members of the documentary film, and opportunities to preview the documentary (Kilborn and Izod 223). As documentary films are meant to engage viewers and persuade them of a particular view of the world, promotional materials will also try to persuade viewers that documentary films will inform, challenge or involve them in some way (Kilborn and Izod 226; Nichols, *Introduction* 40-41, *Representing* 18). In this section I briefly examine how the promotional materials for *In the Name of the Family* promote this film to potential audiences. The promotional materials are from CTV, a Canadian television corporation that aired the documentary on its television station and website, and press reviews of the film from the website of the documentary's production company Bishari films (see appendix for promotional materials).

Reviewing the promotional material for *In the Name of the Family* reveals they have used familiar Orientalist narratives of difference between “Western” society and Muslims to persuade potential viewers to watch this film. This narrative usually consists of Muslims being thought of as an inferior or monolithic culture as opposed to the West being superior and diverse (Jiwani, *Discourses* 181; Said, *Covering Islam* 4,10). Given that these promotional materials are from mainstream media, this type of narrative is not surprising. Mainstream media often represents racialized people and immigrants as exotic, devious, dangerous, or criminal (Fleras and Kunz 146; Jiwani, *Discourses* 48-49; Mahtani 234). The promotional materials also depict Muslim immigrants in a negative manner. In describing that the film “explains how the clash between an ancient tribal notion of honour and western culture leads to these crimes”, the CTV promotional material depicts Muslims as steeped in tradition and unable to adapt to a modern Western society. This statement also implies that Western culture is perceived as superior and does not have a

traditional or backward view of honour (Sen 44). In this sense, the idea that honour is ‘ancient’ is perceived by the West to mean that crimes against women are committed for “petty or unreasonable” reasons and are thus “barbaric or backward” (Sen 45).

Muslim families are negatively depicted in the CTV material and in a *Toronto Star* review. The CTV material mentions that the film will “enter into a normally closed world where young women wanting to bridge two worlds are victimized by the men who claim to love them the most” (CTV). The *Toronto Star* notes that the film “*focuses on a secretive world with its own rules and punishments...*” (emphasis by Bishari Films). From these examples it is assumed that Muslim families are both closed and oppressive. As well, a review from the *National Post* notes that the documentary “*explores the often complex relationship between Muslim fathers and daughters*” (emphasis by Bishari films). From this review, the complex relationships between the young women and their male relatives featured in the film are generalized to all Muslim families thus indicating an assumption that most Muslim fathers have complex relationships with their daughters. These three examples generalize the specific, horrible circumstances of a few families to that of all Muslim immigrant families, which is part of mainstream media’s tendency to frame atypical incidents in racialized communities as representative of the whole community (Fleras and Kunz 43).

Furthermore, if an event that occurs in a racialized community is perceived to have an element of novelty or drama, it will likely be treated as newsworthy (Jiwani, *Discourses* 39). This seems to be the case with the reporting of “honour killings” in the media. Although gendered violence happens in all communities, when it happens in Muslim communities the media quickly labels domestic violence as “honour killings” (Terman 14-15). Often in these

media reports there is an element of sensationalism and a focus on the culture of the family (Meetoo and Mirza 194). Usually sensationalism in crime reporting involves emotionally charged content that has the ability “to mold common responses to extreme violations of social norms” (Wiltenberg 1378). By focusing on the culture of the family in a negative way, these common responses to “honour killings” can include moral panics whereby immigrants are perceived as threats to civilized society by adhering to their own traditions or by not wanting to adapt to mainstream society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 29,49; Zine 156).

The promotional material of CTV perpetuates a panic around “honour killing” to generate interest in this documentary. The material states that the film “explains how the clash between an ancient tribal notion of honour and western culture leads to these crimes,” suggesting that Muslim immigrants do not want to adapt to a modern Western society and will murder their female relatives who try to adapt to a new society. Although the promotional material does refer to “cultural explanations” such as religious views or traditional values as reasons behind the murders of these girls (Narayan 84, 112), they also imply a fear by associating “honour killings” with a rise in immigration. The CTV material claims that “as immigration to Canada and the United States increases, there has been an upswing in the brutalization and murder of young Muslim women by their fathers or brothers for defying male authority...”. Emphasizing an association between Muslim immigrants and brutal murder can, as Jasmin Zine points out, not only create Islamophobia (156-157) but also fears about Muslim immigrants being a threat to civilized society and social order by engaging in brutal forms of murder (Jiwani, *Discourses* 49; Meetoo and Mirza 194; Zine 156). As well, the emphasis between “honour killing” and

immigration gives the impression that domestic violence within Muslim communities is foreign to and much worse than in Western societies (Butler 41; Zine 155).

In summary, by using Orientalist narratives and by focusing on cultural differences to promote *In the Name of the Family*, the promotional material contributes to the binaries of “us” and “them” whereby Muslim immigrants are perceived as homogenous and prone to violence while Western societies are represented as open and welcoming of a diversity of attitudes and beliefs (Imam 145; Said, *Covering Islam* 58-60). As well, describing “honour killings” as a form of violence that is foreign and cultural, implies that it is worse than domestic violence in Western society. The promotional materials thus illustrate what Wendy Brown suggests is a common perception of liberalist (Western) societies regarding their nonliberal (non Western) ‘Others’: that ‘Others’ are not only ruled by culture and religion but that they are intolerant of autonomous individuals and attempts at individual autonomy, which are key features of Western society (150,166). Hence as the promotional materials claim, male relatives will suppress the attempts of their female relatives who show signs of individuality or autonomy. Brown’s description of the attitude of liberalist societies with respect to their so-called “non liberal ‘Others’” parallels Bannerji’s notion of culture as a tool used to define differences between Canadians and immigrants. In the Canadian Citizenship Guide, for instance, Canadian culture is represented as embracing gender equality and demonstrating tolerance towards other cultures. Some immigrants, however, are perceived as intolerant of gender equality and gendered violence is understood as a cultural phenomenon. In the next section, I analyze scenes from *In the Name of the Family* to explore how these Orientalist narratives and cultural differences are presented on

screen thus consolidating the binaries between Muslim immigrants and North American society and contributing to negative generalizations about Muslim immigrants.

Film Analysis

Part of the popularity of documentary film is the chance for viewers to learn not just about the real world, but also about the realities and experiences of others which may be similar to or different than their own (Austin 79-80; Chanan 10; Ellis and McLane 338; Nichols *Introduction* 74). However in presenting the realities and experiences of others, especially those of other cultures, it is possible for filmmakers to exploit or stereotype the people they represent (Nichols, *Introduction* 9; Chapman, *Issues* 34). In this section I analyze how *In the Name of the Family* misrepresents and stereotypes Muslim immigrant families by using the narrative of what Sherene Razack has called the the “imperilled Muslim woman” (*Casting Out* 5). Razack suggests that under this narrative, Western societies perceive Muslim women to be oppressed victims who are “confined, mutilated and sometimes murdered in the name of culture” (*Casting Out*, 107). She further notes that the use of this narrative also serves to reinforce the perception of the “dangerous Muslim man” who is misogynistic, patriarchal and a threat to Western society (*Casting Out* 16, 107). Hence by proposing that *In the Name of the Family* uses “the imperilled Muslim woman” narrative to stereotype Muslim immigrant families, I explore how Saywell presents the experiences of these young women as proof that Muslim families are unwilling to adapt to a new society, and that Muslim men are controlling and dominating figures. Uma Narayan also echoes Razack’s suggestion that Muslim women are viewed by the West as oppressed victims of their culture. Narayan points out that the West often attributes the deaths of Third-World victims of domestic violence to specific aspects of their culture (82, 112). She notes

that Western societies often give “cultural explanations” such as “traditional values” or “religious views” as reasons for their deaths (112). Using Narayan’s suggestion of cultural explanations as reasons for domestic violence, I explore how Saywell effectively persuades viewers that domestic violence is a result of cultural and religious reasons.

In order to persuade viewers of these impressions about Muslim immigrants and domestic violence, Saywell has to arrange and organize her footage (or evidence) in a particular way to not only help shape the meaning of her film but to also engage and convince viewers about her perspective on “honour killings” (Aufderheide 11; Nichols, *Introduction* 27, 46; *Representing* 18). However viewers are not just persuaded of a perspective through the images that appear on screen. There is also an affective dimension to persuasion (Butler 42; Nichols, *Introduction* 57). An important part of engaging viewers with the realities of others is through empathy and identification with their situation, especially in documentaries about pain and suffering, which includes *In the Name of the Family* (Austin 14; Nichols, *Representing* 194; Sarkar and Walker 17; Chapman, *Issues* 103; Smaill 71). In my analysis of certain scenes of this documentary I examine how Saywell persuades viewers that domestic violence is part of Muslim immigrant life, not just through the sounds and images appearing on screen but also through their emotional engagement with this film (Butler 51; Nichols *Introduction* 57).

To examine how select scenes emotionally engage and persuade viewers, I ask the question Theo Van Leeuwen poses in his analysis of visual racism in Western print media: “How are the depicted people related to the viewer?” (137). In his analysis, he defined three symbolic dimensions whereby people can be depicted as “others” (138-141). These dimensions, which are not mutually exclusive, are social distance, social relation and social interaction. By social

distance Van Leeuwen suggests that people are depicted as either “close to” or “far away” (as strangers) from the viewer. The distance to the viewer is usually dependent on whether the picture is a close shot or long shot of the person. Social relation, according to Van Leeuwen, is related to the angle from which the image is taken and represents symbolic power differences between the viewer and the depicted person. Hence, if the image of the person is taken at a high angle, the viewer would have power over the depicted person. If taken at a low angle, the depicted person would have power over the viewer. In terms of “othering,” then, the depicted person would be seen as inferior to the viewer. Finally, social interaction, for Van Leeuwen, relates to the gaze of the depicted person, as in whether or not they are looking at the viewer. If they are not looking at the viewer, Van Leeuwen suggests that the depicted person is “othered” by being perceived as an object of scrutiny by the viewer.

While Van Leeuwen’s argument is applied to print media, it can also be applied to images in film, as cinematographic techniques (camera shots) and production techniques (music and lighting) used in film can influence whether viewers feel close to or distant from characters, and engage emotionally with them (Aufderheide 11; Gaut 208; Golden 20; Renov 26; Plantinga, *Moving* 135-136; *Rhetoric* 98,166-167; Villarejo 28-38, 50). As well, Van Leeuwen’s three dimensions of how “others” are related to the viewer echoes Sara Ahmed’s argument on the politics of emotions. Ahmed notes that emotions can be political and can represent relations of power. As a result, emotions shape how we react towards or think about “others” (4, 12). Thus Van Leeuwen’s dimensions, especially social distance and social relation can be thought of as how the viewer relates emotionally to the characters in this documentary, which of course is dependent on how Saywell arranges and organizes her footage around the subject of “honour

killings” and the narrative of the imperilled victims. As Judith Butler points out, how someone understands a subject depends on how it is framed or constructed (8). She further notes that how we feel about and react toward a subject operates through our senses--namely the images and sounds we see and hear (51).

In asking then, how people in this film are depicted in relation to the viewer, I am proposing that Saywell persuades viewers of certain perspectives about domestic violence and Muslim immigrants through emotionally engaging scenes where viewers become empathetically involved with the victims’ stories of suffering. As will hopefully become apparent in the scenes to follow, I attempt to demonstrate that Saywell uses the narrative of the “imperilled Muslim woman” to invoke sympathy and engage viewers with the victims’ stories, which result in negative impressions of Muslim immigrant families. In using this narrative Saywell also maintains the Orientalist binaries that are common in attributing domestic violence in Muslim communities to one of culture. In the next section I examine a few scenes from the story lines of each of the victims to explore how this is done. Some of the story lines are interwoven with others, which further suggests that Saywell has arranged the footage to structure the argument in such a way to present all these cases as alike (Chapman, *Documentary* 123; Van Leeuwen 143-146). This deliberate arrangement of the footage removes the individual particularities of each case and thus generalizes the individual cases as examples of “Muslim honour killings” (Fleras and Kunz 43). I will address each storyline separately for the sake of simplicity.

Analysis of Story Lines

The Aqsa Parvez Story

The film opens with a scene featuring a vigil for Aqsa Parvez. At the vigil, a woman says a prayer for Aqsa as mourners light candles. There are close-up shots of young women crying with tears streaming down their faces. Accompanying this scene is the slow, sorrowful background music of violins. As the vigil scene fades to black, two friends previously seen at the vigil, are shown carrying flowers to Aqsa's grave. As they walk to her grave, we hear audio clips of news reports stating that "police had received a 911 call from a man indicating that he had just killed his daughter" and that "she had been involved in a long standing conflict with her family over her reluctance to wear the traditional Muslim headscarf, the hijab". We see the girls kneel down at Aqsa's grave while their voiceover commentary provides information on her funeral. As we listen to their commentary, we also see newspaper clippings appear onscreen featuring a smiling Aqsa with headlines about her funeral. As the camera moves slowly showing the flowers on the grave, one friend states in a voiceover, "we've come to the realization that she is in a better place for sure and now her father can't touch her. He has no way of reaching her at all". As the girls walk away from the grave, the sorrowful violins play louder in the background.

Starting with the vigil scene, viewers can detect that the tone of the film will be one of sadness from the close-up shots of the mourners' faces and the sombre music of the violins (Sobchack and Sobchack 433). The sad tone of the vigil and cemetery scenes gives viewers a sense of the emotional journey they will have throughout the film (Chapman, *Documentary* 119). The vigil and cemetery scenes not only capture our attention by making us curious about the tragic life of Aqsa, but also send a message to viewers that Aqsa's death was different because of

her religion (Narayan 112; Chapman, *Documentary* 119). The use of the news report audio clips also help to amplify Saywell's argument that Aqsa was indeed an "imperilled Muslim woman", who was a victim of not only an oppressive family but an oppressive religion (Jiwani, *Doubling* 75; Nichols, *Representing* 131). The appearance of Aqsa's face in the newspaper clippings brings a sense of sadness to viewers as we now see who the victim is of this horrible tragedy. The superimposition of the newspaper clippings as the girls kneel at Aqsa's grave allows viewers to empathize with Aqsa's friends in their moment of grief (Thompson and Bowen, *Grammar of the Edit* 82).

Although the film opens with scenes of Aqsa's vigil and grave, we are not immediately told about her life. By withholding her story after the opening scenes, Saywell allows our curiosity and our engagement with Aqsa's life to increase (Chapman, *Documentary* 125). We are introduced to Aqsa's story with information about her father. Text appears on the screen during a black and white still image of a cab driver observing a group of girls outside of a high school. The information that appears on-screen informs viewers that Aqsa's father was from a rural village in Pakistan, and that he immigrated to Canada in 1999 and worked as a cab driver. The selection of a black and white scene along with a still image for the text to appear suggests that Aqsa's father was a dangerous person who brought his "traditional values" from another country into Canada (Jiwani, *Discourses* 14, 95; Villarejo 33). The effect of introducing Aqsa's father to viewers as a dangerous man with different values than those of Canadian society subtly implies that he is indeed a threat to not just his daughter but to mainstream society as well (Razack, *Casting Out* 19).

We get a glimpse into Aqsa's life through interviews with her friends. These interviews are mostly done at an eye-level angle which creates the sense that the interviewees are speaking directly to viewers with authority (Chapman, *Documentary* 99, *Issues* 103; Thompson and Bowen, *Grammar of the Shot* 40; Van Leeuwen 139). The interviews are mostly conducted at medium close-up to close-up range so that viewers can focus on the words, facial expressions, and emotion or mental state of the interviewees (Thompson and Bowen, *Grammar of the Edit* 17, 145). By focusing on the words and faces of her friends, we not only begin to feel as if we know Aqsa but we also sympathize with them on the loss of their dear friend. However it is not just the camera shots and angles that help create this sense of loss in the viewers. Saywell also uses photographs of Aqsa to support her friends' memories of their time with her (Orgeron and Orgeron, *Megatronic* 240), as will be become evident in a description of an interview below with Aqsa's school friends.

In an interview with her friends Ebonie and Ashley, we learn about Aqsa's struggle to fit in with her friends and about her father's threatening nature. Most of her struggles to fit in came from wanting to wear similar clothes as her classmates and not wanting to wear her hijab. Saywell uses photographic evidence during the interview to emphasize the cultural differences between Aqsa and her friends, showing photographs of Aqsa either with or without her hijab and dressed in jeans and sweatshirts. There is one point in the interview however where Saywell uses a photo montage coupled with music to emphasize Ebonie's comments about Aqsa's decision not to wear her hijab. Ebonie says of Aqsa: "She was beautiful and I guess she just wanted to show herself that she actually was beautiful. She wanted to show her hair, she wanted to wear clothes like us and I guess her father didn't like that". After Ebonie's remarks, a photo montage of Aqsa

is presented where in some photographs she is posing with her friends in jeans and t-shirts, and in others she is wearing South Asian clothing. The photographs selected emphasize Ebonie's claims that Aqsa did try to emulate her friends. Text accompanies the montage informing viewers of Aqsa's life: that she immigrated to Canada at age 9, she had seven siblings, she wanted to become a fashion designer, and she ran away twice to youth shelters. The song accompanying the montage is a pop song entitled "*Live Your Life*".

The choice of song is not lost on viewers given that the lyrics to the song indicate that one should live life as one pleases, and that Aqsa unfortunately did not get a chance to do so (Henley 129; Plantinga, *The Scene* 254). The song selection ascribes to the notion of the importance of individual autonomy and freedom in Western societies. The song and montage also illustrate how Aqsa's death was an example of, in Brown's words, a "thwarting of individual autonomy with religious or cultural commandments" (Brown 166). At the end of the montage, we see a close-up of Ashley's face as she says: "Aqsa definitely lived in two worlds. She lived in our world and she lived in her own world, two cultures, same time." The photo montage and song not only emphasize Ebonie's remarks about Aqsa wanting to show her beauty and fit in with her peers, but they also draw attention to Ashley's comments about cultural difference. The cultural difference being, that as Aqsa tried to live her life in one culture, it was her own oppressive culture that killed her (Narayan 84-85; Zine 154). The photo montage and song coupled with its placement between Ebonie's and Ashley's remarks, allow viewers to feel compassion for Aqsa with her struggle to belong and fit in with her friends and new society (Berlant 3). Lauren Berlant suggests that compassion is an emotion in privilege--that the feeling or expression of compassion separates us from the sufferer (4). Hence viewers learning of Aqsa's

struggle to fit into a culture that is not oppressive like her own “Muslim culture” will thus feel compassionate towards her knowing that she struggled for the privilege that women in the West already have: freedom (Razack, *Casting Out* 86). Thus, feeling compassion towards Aqsa on account of our privilege, reinforces the notion of the Muslim woman being imperilled.

Throughout Ebonie and Ashley’s interview the use of close-up shots help to emphasize the notion that Muslim men are not only violent but will carry through on their threats. In their interview, the camera zooms in on Ashley’s face as she describes Aqsa’s father as scary and not very communicative. The zoom forces viewers to pay attention to her widened eyes as her facial expression compels us to believe that he was an imposing figure and was someone who did not interact much with Aqsa’s friends (Plantinga, *The Scene* 251). Ebonie describes the fear that Aqsa had of her parents if she disobeyed them. She mentions that Aqsa told them the following about what her father said to her: “If you mess up one more time, I swear on the Qur’an I’m going to kill you.” As Ebonie makes this statement, the camera cuts to a close-up of her face. We focus on Ebonie’s words and facial expression as she remarks that both she and Ashley told Aqsa that all parents say that they will kill their children but do not mean it. Despite reassuring Aqsa about her father’s comments, Ebonie recalls that Aqsa told them: “You don’t know my father. What he says goes, whatever he says he’s going to do, he does it.” As she makes her remarks, Ebonie’s facial expression is one of sadness and disbelief--sadness that her words could not reassure her friend and disbelief that Aqsa’s father killed his daughter. Viewers are inclined to believe Ebonie’s remarks and share her disbelief, as we find out later in the film that both her father and brother were charged in Aqsa’s murder. The arrangement of camera shots allowing

viewers to focus on their words during the interview, supports the notion that the Muslim man is dangerous, oppressive and irrational (Razack, *Casting Out* 16).

Although there is a focus on cultural differences between North American society and Muslim immigrants throughout the film, with “Muslim culture” being presented to viewers as violent and overbearing, there is one scene in which domestic violence is not seen as a result of culture or religion, but as an individual case specific to the family. This scene occurs in Aqsa’s story line. In an interview featuring Lubna Tahir, with whom Aqsa stayed prior to her death, she describes Aqsa’s problems with her parents as more complex than the hijab. She informs us that the hijab was not the issue. We learn that she was associating with the wrong friends and not attending classes. Lubna also notes that culture, and not religion, was the issue, as Aqsa’s parents were from a rural and conservative part of Pakistan and Lubna and her family were from the city and were not very conservative. She also mentions that Aqsa’s family was not very religious as they did not pray five times a day. Another important point that Lubna informs us about is that she suggested to Aqsa’s father that he did not spend enough time with his daughter and that he should talk to her. While Lubna’s interview provides viewers with the alternative opinion that there is variety within Islam and that the causes of domestic violence are not solely due to religion and culture as the film may have us believe, Saywell does not follow up on this notion that there are cultural and class differences within the Pakistani community or within the Islamic community (Said, *Covering Islam* 58-60). Also, there is no further discussion that other issues might have been involved in the relationship between Aqsa and her father, such as communication issues between parents and their teenagers (Jiwani, *Racialized* 73; Welchman and Hossain 8; Zine 154). Instead, Saywell frames the issue through the problem of domestic

violence as the principal difference between mainstream Canadian society and Muslim immigrants. The framing of domestic violence through the prism of cultural difference has the effect of presenting Muslim immigrants as threats to society and creating an environment of fear (Ahmed 64; Razack, *Casting Out* 84; Zine 157).

As we are introduced to each of the other victims in this documentary, Saywell connects each case to Aqsa's death. This connection is made either through informing viewers about the timelines of the incidents (such as in Sarah, Amina, and Fauzia's cases occurring soon after Aqsa's death) or in having interviewees (such as Hana and Alina) mention the similarities between their own cases and Aqsa's case. Not only does this build upon the empathy viewers have for Aqsa and the other victims, but it also creates a fearful perception that all young Muslim women are living in danger at home under the oppressive rule of domineering male relatives. While Aqsa's case does not really demonstrate how threatening her father was, in the following cases of the Said sisters and Fauzia Mohammed, I analyze how Saywell convinces viewers that young Muslim women are oppressed, and that Muslim males are extremely dangerous.

The Sarah and Amina Said Story

Viewers first learn about the Said sisters by watching a recreation of their deaths. In recreating this scene, Saywell creates interest in how they died, allowing viewers to witness what might have happened on the night of their death (Nichols, *Documentary* 210; Orgeron and Orgeron, *Megatronic* 240). In this recreated black and white scene, the camera follows a car driving along a highway. We hear Patricia's voiceover informing us of what occurred that night. She had called her brother-in-law to inquire about her husband's whereabouts since she had not heard from him or from her daughters. She tells us that her brother-in-law said that her husband

“did not want to raise whores.” The music accompanying the scene suggests both sadness and suspense, and after learning of her brother in law’s comments, the music emphasizes the feelings of sadness in viewers (Henley 129; Sobchack and Sobchack 188). As the car exits off the highway, we see it eventually turn into the driveway of a hotel, and through Patricia’s voiceover, we learn that the police came to her door to inform her that they received a 911 call from her daughter Sarah. As the car comes to a stop, we hear the call and read the transcript on screen. As the screen fades briefly to black, the next shot that appears is a photo of Amina embracing her sister Sarah. As the photo fades away, we see the camera focus on the parked car in the hotel parking lot. The camera zooms out, pans quickly and then moves from side to side. We also hear the sound of a faint heartbeat. The blurriness of the screen, the movement of the camera, and the sound of the heartbeat suggest that their father, Yaser Said, quickly ran away from the scene (although we do not see a person). We are then informed that Amina and Sarah were shot by their father in the back of a taxi and that he has vanished.

From this dramatic and engaging introduction into the deaths of the Said sisters, viewers become curious about their lives and the reasons that led to their deaths (Goldberg 227). Just as in Aqsa’s case, Saywell takes time in telling viewers their story. We learn about their lives through interviews with their family members and friends. Saywell uses the same cinematographic techniques such as close-up shots, music, and the use of photographs to create viewer empathy and identification with the Said sisters. However Saywell also uses home video footage of the Said family to create viewer sympathy and to convince viewers that the sisters were indeed oppressed. According to Thomas Austin, the use of home video footage allows

viewers to get an inside look at the lives of families, which viewers do with the Said family (86, 96).

After learning how they died, we are faced with a close-up of Patricia wiping away tears after recounting the story of their deaths. As she informs viewers of her life with Yaser, we are presented with home video featuring the young Said sisters playing with their brother in the backyard. She mentions in a voiceover as we watch the video that “her children were her whole life.” As we see the smiling faces of a young Amina and Sarah, we feel sadness knowing their eventual fate. We then see a series of home videos and photos of the Said family throughout the years. We see Patricia and Yaser’s wedding and a photo of the smiling young family. Through her voiceover, we learn that Patricia did not know anything “about his culture or religion” and that her father in law did not like her because “she was American”. She informs us that Yaser decided to stay with his family, despite suggestions from his parents to leave. Although there is no explanation as to what Yaser’s culture is (we eventually learn he is Egyptian) and there is no mention in that moment, of what religion he belonged to, viewers can infer from her comments and the eventual fate of her daughters, that both his religion and culture were dangerous. As she informs us of her early life with Yaser and how her daughters “were close to him and actually worshipped the ground he walked on”, we see photos of the family in Egypt and video footage of the young sisters playing in their backyard and going for walks in the neighbourhood. As we hear her words and see the footage of Yaser hugging his young daughters we sympathize with Patricia and also begin to wonder how a man who appeared to love his daughters could later murder them.

As Patricia continues to discuss her life with Yaser, we learn that his issues of control and abuse started within a few years of their marriage. Interviews with Patricia, Yaser's boss, and his coworker, reveal that a constant source of disagreement between Yaser and Patricia was how to raise the children. In an interview with Yaser's coworker, we learn that Yaser wanted his daughters to be raised as Muslims. The coworker also informs us that after their marriage, "Patricia converted over to be a Muslim but she never believed the Muslim way. She didn't practice anything that the Muslims practiced." There is no follow up or explanation from her comments about what exactly "the Muslim way" is or what Muslims practice. It seems as though Saywell does not want to disrupt the narrative that Islam is a violent religion and that Muslims are dangerous and violent. Further along in the interview, we learn that Yaser worked constantly and was the sole provider for his family. The coworker also mentions the disagreements Yaser had with Patricia and her family over his control issues. It is interesting to note that while we learn of his controlling nature from both Patricia and his coworker, no other reasons are brought up as to what may have contributed to his controlling and abusive nature. As we learn from his boss and coworker that Yaser worked the graveyard shift and that he worked constantly, there is no discussion of whether other factors such as work stress may have played a part in his abusive nature (Welchman and Hossain 8). We are persuaded to believe that his abusive and controlling nature is a feature of his Egyptian or 'Muslim' culture.

In interviews with friends of Amina and Sarah, we learn about their success in school and their goals to be doctors. We also learn of their fear of their father. One friend, Kathleen, comments that although Sarah tried to joke about the fear of her father, she still had a fearful tone in her voice when she discussed anything about him. As she makes this comment, we see a home

video of Yaser hugging and kissing the cheek of a smiling Sarah as they travel in a car. We see that as Sarah moves away from him, he still has his hand around her shoulder. The presentation of this video clip emphasizes Kathleen's statements about Sarah's fearfulness of her father. On the one hand we see a smiling Sarah being embraced by her father. On the other hand we wonder whether her smile is because she is happy or because she is fearful. Kathleen later notes that Sarah would comment occasionally that her father "would kill her". Kathleen explains that she reassured her friend that all parents say this expression including her own. In reassuring her friend that it was just an expression, Kathleen explains to us that she "did not mean it in a literal sense". As she makes this comment, we are reminded of Aqsa's friends Ebonie and Ashley, who tried to reassure her that parents do not kill their children. These two statements from the friends of the victims seem to reinforce the notion that when Muslim fathers are violent and when they make threats to kill their children, they eventually do.

In an interview with Zohair, another friend, we learn that after finding out that Amina had a boyfriend, Yaser began making threats to both his daughters about killing them and sending them back to Egypt. We also learn that Yaser began monitoring his daughters' whereabouts. After Zohair comments about the monitoring, we see a home video of Sarah being filmed at her work. The filming takes place inside of a car. We see the video camera zoom in on Sarah as she works at the checkout counter of a store. We hear Yaser ask: "Where is Amina? She can't see us from inside right?" As someone tells him that Amina cannot see them, the camera films Amina carrying a case of water back to the car. We see the camera zoom in again on Sarah as we hear Yaser say: "Wait, she smiled to the customer." Amina replies: "She has to, it's part of her job". Yaser replies: "She's in trouble". As Yaser observes that Sarah is conversing with the customers,

we hear him say: “She is really in trouble”. As he says this, suspenseful music begins to play in the background. We hear Amina say: “Can we go guys, I’m kind of tired. We can spy on Sarah another day.”

The home video footage not only supports Zohair’s claims of monitoring (Kepley and Swender 5), but it also provides viewers with a glimpse into the lives of the sisters constantly being monitored by their father both inside and outside the home. Inclusion of home video footage of the sisters allows us to comprehend their reality being under the surveillance of a domineering and violent father whom they feared. Despite using home footage to obtain empathy from viewers (Austin 79-80), it is also important to question the inclusion of the footage (Austin 86, Van Dijck 274). For instance, we are presented with video footage of the daughters when they were young children in a seemingly happy family. These scenes are then followed with video footage featuring Yaser’s surveillance of his daughters during their teenage years in what now appears to be an oppressive and controlling family atmosphere. Viewers do not know what occurred with the family during the time between the daughters’ childhoods and their teenage years. Saywell appears determined to have us believe that Yaser becomes controlling overnight, yet it is possible that Yaser did not always monitor his daughters’ whereabouts. This gap in narration also leads to a destabilization of the representation of the dangerous Muslim man since it raises a doubt regarding Yaser’s controlling nature. Home video footage may have different contexts and meanings before and after its inclusion in a documentary (Kepley and Swender 5). Whereas the person who originally recorded the video footage may have done so with a certain purpose in mind, once the footage is included in a documentary, it is under the control of the filmmaker. The filmmaker may then edit the footage to create a different purpose or meaning

(Kepley and Swender 4; Orgeron and Orgeron, *Familial* 47; Austin 86). Therefore while Saywell wants us to believe that Yaser's intent of the home videos was to control and monitor his daughters, we cannot be sure of his exact intent in making the videos, as he does not personally appear in the documentary to inform us of his intent (we only see him through photographs or video footage). Also, while watching this video and others where Yaser videotapes his family, it seems as if videotaping is a form of amusement for the family and that the daughters are more annoyed with his constant videotaping than fearful. Therefore it is possible that while the original context of the Said family videos may have been for family amusement, within the documentary film, the context is changed to one of control and fear.

Fauzia Mohammed's Story

Fauzia's case is interesting because not only do viewers get the opportunity to hear directly from her about her oppressive life, but we actually get to hear her brother Waheed give his reasons for stabbing her. We learn that she moved to New York with her family at the age of twelve from Afghanistan. As she discusses her life in Afghanistan, and later Pakistan, we are presented with vivid pictures of destitute children in the street and in refugee camps. These pictures evoke pity from viewers as they represent how hard life was for Fauzia and her family in these countries. The pictures also resonate with viewers as they know that she has come to America from a war-torn country to live a better life (Meetoo and Mirza 195; Nichols, *Representing* 158). She describes her life in New York as "perfect" before the arrival of her older brothers, especially her brother Waheed, who made her home life "worse than hell". She tells us how her brother would follow her at school and physically abuse her. We also learn that an issue of contention between her and her mother and brother was her decision to attend college. She

explains that she wanted to attend the college where she was granted a scholarship but that her mother and brother wanted her to attend a local community college. As she describes her opinions about her brother wanting to control her life and her actions, her facial expression reveals her disgust at how her brother treated her. As the interview is conducted in a close-up shot, at an eye-level angle, we feel close to her as if she is speaking directly to us (Van Leeuwen 139). By seeing her facial expression, we also feel and share her disgust at her family's attempts to sabotage her desire for a quality education at the college of her choice, which she eventually attends (Plantinga, *Moving Viewers* 98, *The Scene* 242). By sharing her disgust, viewers may tacitly agree with the perception offered by Saywell and North American mainstream society that Muslim families are controlling. Their perception would only be confirmed once they learn about Waheed and his reasons for stabbing Fauzia.

We first hear Waheed in a voiceover informing us that Fauzia had bad friends and followed their actions. We then see his face as we hear him question his sister's choice of clothing and the way she speaks (subtitles accompany his voiceover and interview as he speaks with a heavy accent). He questions why she is not "like other Muslims" and what other people will think about him and his family. We realize that he feels that his sister has brought shame to him and his family not just because of what she wore and how she acted but because he could not control his sister and her actions. As we learn through a voiceover about his life growing up in Afghanistan and the sacrifices he made working for his sister and their family, we are presented with black and white photographs of army tanks, crumbling buildings and destitute children in the street. As they did with Fauzia, these images also invoke a sense of pity as they represent Waheed's difficult upbringing. Unlike Fauzia's photographs however, which were

presented in colour and represents what Veena Meeto and Heidi Mirza would call a “romantic heroine, struggling for the benefits of the ‘West’” (195), especially since we are aware of her determination to succeed, the black and white photographs for Waheed allude to his evil and controlling nature, emphasizing the Muslim man as a threat to Muslim women.

Viewers are presented with the reasons surrounding Fauzia’s stabbing through a series of voiceovers and interviews featuring both Fauzia and Waheed. As Saywell presents the interviews and voiceovers in a dramatic alternate fashion, viewers are forced to pay attention to the reasons given by Fauzia and Waheed (Chapman, *Documentary* 90). Both of them concur that the event that led to Fauzia’s stabbing was her decision to move to the city for summer employment. Waheed informs us that he did not approve of her plans and became upset that she was leaving without his permission. He tells us that Fauzia started cursing at him and their mother. Fauzia explains that as Waheed cursed at her, she informed him that she was leaving to work in the city because she could no longer live under his control. As she describes the moment she was stabbed, Fauzia informs us that not only was Waheed’s face angry but that “his eyes were full of hatred and at that moment all of his jealousy came out”. Waheed informs us that he felt disrespected and shamed by his sister and that he “had no choice that day.” Throughout their alternating interviews are the rapid and fluctuating sounds of a flute and the pulsating sound of a drum. Not only does the presence of the flute and drum intensify the sadness and anxiety we feel as we hear Fauzia describe being stabbed, but it is also suggestive of the ‘nativeness’ or ‘backwardness’ of Waheed and his Afghan culture (Hall 40). The explanations of disrespect and shame over Fauzia’s refusal to obey him along with jealousy over her assimilation into American society, supports Razack’s argument that Muslim men are viewed by the West as “deeply

misogynistic patriarchs who have not progressed into the age of gender equality, and who indeed cannot” (*Casting Out* 16). It is interesting to note, however, that while Saywell tries to portray Waheed as a dangerous Muslim man based on his responses, Waheed’s reasons for stabbing his sister exceed this narrative frame and can be more indicative of the unsettling change in gender relations that occur during the immigration process especially concerning economic matters (Tyyskä 86, 93). His responses seem to indicate that he stabbed his sister because he was jealous of her success in the host country and was struggling with the fact that she, rather than he, was the breadwinner in the family. Saywell, however, appears to suggest that his rage was somehow connected to his religion.

Alina’s Story

Alina’s story of abuse is the least dramatized story in the film. Whereas viewers become quite engaged emotionally with the other stories through archival footage, photographs and reenacted scenes, Alina’s story of abuse is engaging and poignant without the use of these methods. Although most of her scenes involve her friend Hana and their conversations about Hana’s abuse, Alina has the fewest scenes in the film. Despite having the least amount of screen time, Alina’s story shows a different version of the imperilled Muslim woman. As Alina no longer lives with her abusive father or under his control, she is free to act as she pleases, as is evident when we first see Alina in her apartment. The camera pans Alina’s apartment to reveal that her decor includes a Christmas tree and paintings with Arabic text on them. Showing these specific images to audiences indicates that she is free to live how she wants in a society that prides individuality. She can have a symbol of a Christian holiday while still retaining her

identity as a Muslim (Imam 145; Jiwani, *Discourses* 115). Despite her freedom however, Saywell allows viewers to see the emotional hardship she faces in dealing with her family.

In one particular scene where she visits her family to deliver gifts for Eid, we empathize with how hard it is for her to not see her family, especially her mother. In this scene, the camera follows Alina back to the apartment complex where she used to live with her family (and where her family currently lives). Alina tells us that “ever since we came here my father would hit us constantly.” It is interesting to note that viewers do not learn if her father was abusive before moving to the complex or became abusive while there. As there is a great amount of focus on the culture of the abusive families in this film, Saywell seems to ignore any other factors, if there were any, that may have contributed to the abuse in Alina’s family such as barriers that may impede an immigrant’s settlement into a new society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 10, 19; Meeto and Mirza 191; Terman 27; Welchman and Hossain 8). As Nichols notes, a filmmaker will ignore or dismiss pertinent information to persuade an audience of a certain perspective (*Representing* 124). By focusing only on cultural explanations for the abuse, viewers are persuaded that the abuse stems only from culture and not from individual reasons as is characteristic of domestic abuse in mainstream society (Fleras and Kunz 43; Zine 155).

In an over the shoulder shot, we see Alina looking at her former apartment building. The camera cuts to her face as she views the building pensively. As we see her face, we can only imagine the horrible memories she has of her former apartment (Gaut 210). In her voiceover that accompanies this shot, we learn that her father was abusive to her and other female members of the family. She explains that he would watch her and her sister to see who they spoke to outside of school (male friends) and also if they wore the hijab to school. Despite her horrible memories

of abuse, we see that it is important to her to maintain contact with her family although she does not live with them anymore. After she has returned from delivering holiday gifts to her family (she has left them at the door), she speaks to her mother by phone about the gifts, which do not seem to be appreciated. The close-up shot of her face during her conversation with her mother reveals her disappointment in not being able to see her mother. After her conversation, we hear the filmmaker (in a rare case where the filmmaker's voice is heard in this film) ask Alina:

“Wouldn't you have been so much happier if she had said come on, come back up, I want to see you?” As the shot is a close-up we see how Alina struggles to answer this question. She informs us that while she she would be happy, the visit would also be emotional and depressing because she has not seen her mother in a year. We see how disappointed Alina is in not being able to see her mother and we empathize with her. While viewers can clearly see from Alina's phone conversation that her relationship with her mother is difficult for her, Saywell's questioning about their relationship further persuades viewers that Alina's suffering is not over just because she is removed from the physical abuse of her father. She continues to suffer because of the tense relationship between her and her mother. In choosing individual freedom, Alina's family continues to make her suffer by refusing to see her. Hence Alina's story reiterates Brown's claims that 'Others' are seen in the West as intolerant to the idea of free will and autonomy (166). As a result of her autonomy, Alina's family shows their intolerance to her decision by refusing to see her. Hence, Alina remains a victim of her oppressive family and intolerant culture.

Hana's Story

Whereas the stories of Aqsa, Sarah and Amina have taken place and ended tragically, and Fauzia's and Alina's stories are also in the past but have ended in survival, it is Hana's story that

viewers become curious about throughout the documentary. Hana's story is the one whereby viewers are most likely to engage with as it involves what Bill Nichols calls "photographic realism, psychological realism and emotional realism" (*Introduction* 92-93). Photographic realism consists of real-time shooting through location. Psychological realism consists of showing the inner states or emotions of characters. Emotional realism consists of creating an emotional state in the viewer. Hana's storyline documents her current situation of living in an abusive household. Hence, not only is she the present day "imperilled Muslim woman" but as Saywell interweaves her storyline throughout Aqsa's, Hana becomes the "modern day Aqsa". Through her interviews and conversations with Alina, we see that she is conflicted about whether to stay or leave her abusive home. As she describes her injuries to us and the reasons for her abuse we see that her case is similar to Aqsa's: they both have controlling and abusive Muslim fathers who are cab drivers. They have friends that are concerned for their well-being. They have stayed at shelters and at the homes of friends. However we know that Aqsa has already died. We fear Hana's fate. Throughout the film, viewers are left wondering what will happen to her, whether she will stay at home and suffer with the abuse or move out and be free.

There are two scenes in Hana's storyline that keep viewers engaged with her story as the imperilled Muslim woman. In both of these scenes, we understand her father to be the dangerous Muslim man who abuses his daughter in the name of religion. These scenes are consistent with what Narayan would call 'cultural explanations' for Hana's abuse. In one scene Hana's father has told her to not to come home for the evening. We listen to her translate the voicemail he has left on her cell phone. She informs us that he has told her not to come home because of her recent behaviour. While we do not know what that behaviour is, we see that by her facial expressions

that she is distressed over the message. According to her, her father threatens her: “The way you are acting, God will never forgive you. You will die in fire in this life.” She deletes the message part way through listening to it as she informs us that she does not want to continue listening to the message. Her facial expression is one of disbelief that her father would leave such a vitriolic message. We share her disbelief too after listening to what her father has said, as the medium close-up shot of her face conveys her emotional state (Nichols, *Introduction* 93). We become curious as to where she will stay. We then see Hana in a low angled shot calling numerous shelters. The use of a low angled shot allows us to empathize more with Hana’s situation as the shot symbolizes the power that her distressing situation has over us (Sobchack and Sobchack 87; Van Leeuwen 139). We watch as she phones shelter after shelter and is informed that there is no room for her to stay. We become worried and anxious that she will not find a place. Our worry is abated however when she is able to find accommodation at one shelter. We feel relief as the next scene shows her entering a shelter for the night.

The other scene represents the climactic moment in Hana’s story when she decides to move out on her own and confronts her parents about her decision. We see her return home with a friend, to speak to her mother about moving out. While we do not see what goes on in the house, we can hear what is said as it becomes apparent that Hana and her friend have worn hidden microphones while meeting with her mother. As Hana and her friend speak to her mother in their native language, we read the translated English subtitles of their conversation. Hana’s friend informs the mother of the negative effects of abuse on children who live in abusive environments. As her friend and mother discuss Hana’s situation we watch as Hana’s father returns to the house and joins the conversation. He believes that Hana is disrespecting God’s

word. He explains: “It doesn’t matter which country we are in. Nowhere in the Koran does it say, depending on where or when you live you should you should go against God’s word. Hana knows there are bad things in this society.” He also mentions that although he believes that hitting is wrong, he is also a human being. Hana explains to him that she feels conflicted about how to act because she cannot be the “good Muslim Pakistani girl” at school while she lives in a destructive home environment. Her mother explains that they want her to be obedient and respectful to them. As Hana leaves her house, we hear her father promise her mother that he will not hit Hana anymore.

While watching this conversation unfold, it is apparent to the viewer that there is tension and conflict in Hana’s household. The inclusion of this scene helps us sympathize with Hana even more, as we see her try to explain to her parents how her father’s abuse affects her actions. While we may not see the conversation take place, the fact that we overhear it makes us become more involved and engaged in Hana’s story of suffering. From her father’s comments, we realize that he is using religion to justify his physical abuse. We can infer from her mother’s comments that “a good Muslim Pakistani girl” is someone that is obedient and respectful to her parents. While we may not know the extent of Hana’s disrespect other than her refusal to wear the hijab and raising her voice at her father, by making religion the dominant reason for her abuse as well as for the other cases of abuse, Saywell effectively persuades us that religion is a central factor in cases of abuse within Muslim immigrant families.

In selecting these scenes from each storyline, I have attempted to demonstrate how Saywell uses convincing and compelling testimony and images to involve viewers in the lives of these imperilled young Muslim women living in North America (Nichols, *Introduction* 51). By

using the narrative of the “imperilled Muslim woman” and allowing viewers to become emotionally involved in their stories, Saywell has persuaded viewers that these women are victims of a misogynistic and patriarchal religion and culture whereby male relatives do not want to associate with mainstream society (Jiwani, *Discourses* 105, 178). As a result, domestic violence is seen in terms of culture and Muslim immigrant families are seen as traditional and oppressive (Jiwani *Discourses* 21). However I have also tried to demonstrate that it is not just by what is said or shown on film that persuades viewers of these arguments. Viewers are also persuaded of these perspectives by what is not stated or examined in the film such as the diversity within Islam, the variety of cultures within a country, and other causes of abuse besides religion or culture (Meetoo and Mirza 99; Said, *Covering Islam* 53-60; Thobani 233; Welchman and Hossain 8).

Conclusion

In the promotional material for her documentary, Saywell notes the following about *In the Name of the Family*:

Stamping out violence against women requires ongoing education in mainstream society and local communities. This film is a call to social, religious and school leaders to say this is wrong, and will hopefully help keep immigrant communities and families from feeling alienated and under fire (CTV).

According to Jane Chapman, the goal a filmmaker has for their film is that “the content or theme should be scrutinized within the public sphere and can serve to amplify debate” (*Documentary* 18). While I acknowledge that Saywell’s film does advocate for victims of abuse by informing the public about gendered violence in Muslim communities, I have also tried to scrutinize her

film and demonstrate in this paper that her film misrepresents and stereotypes Muslim immigrant families. By framing domestic violence as “honour killings” and promoting her film using familiar Orientalist narratives of difference between Muslim immigrants and mainstream Canadian society, Saywell contributes to the notion that “honour killings” are foreign, cultural and only occurs within Muslim communities (Meetoo and Mirza 194; Narayan 100; Jiwani, *Discourses* 92; Zine 155). As a result, the promotional materials perpetuate Islamophobia and a fear of Muslims (Meetoo and Mirza 194).

Using the narrative of the imperilled Muslim woman to elicit empathy and compassion from viewers has the effect of perpetuating the notion that Muslim immigrants are both traditional and backward, and that Muslim males are dangerous, oppressive, and do not want their female relatives to integrate into North American society (Jiwani, *Doubling* 75; Razack, *Casting Out* 175). By illustrating that all the girls featured in the film live under strict oppressive households, *In the Name of the Family* contributes to the idea that these girls, and consequently all Muslim girls, need to be rescued from their overbearing male relatives and religion (Razack, *Casting Out* 4, 17). The notion of rescue and saving comes from viewers’ sense of privilege that women in the West, unlike their oppressed Muslim counterparts, are free (Razack, *Casting Out* 86). This need to save and rescue women also feeds into the ongoing discourse of security and surveillance that occurs in the everyday lives of Muslim immigrants (Razack, *Casting Out* 4; Arat-Koc 217). This documentary then, will contribute to the ongoing surveillance of Muslims, as it perpetuates the stereotype that all Muslim fathers are oppressive, violent and threatening.

If Saywell hopes her film will keep Muslim immigrant communities and families from “feeling alienated and under fire”, by focusing only on one particular community, she has

effectively pushed Muslim immigrants and their families under the microscope for further scrutiny and stereotyping when it comes to gendered violence. As a result, viewers may not realize that women from other communities of faith and other immigrant groups are also abused or killed due to notions of “honour” (Husseini xiv; Meeto and Mirza 187-188; Sen 46; Welchman and Hossain 4).

The binaries of “us” and “them” become extended in this documentary, as viewers feel concern for the victims but also become intolerant to Muslim immigrants (Austin 181). By connecting the story of Aqsa Parvez to the other stories in the film, Saywell attempts to convince viewers that the cases of these girls are the same and that they are victims of their religion and culture, namely one ‘Muslim culture’. Despite a few interviewees pointing out that religion is not a factor in the abuse and murder of these young women, Saywell continues to emphasize that indeed it is by focusing our attention on such issues as young women's wearing of the hijab, their style of dress, or their friendships with non-Muslims as the primary reasons for their abuse and eventual death at the hands of their fathers or brothers. By focusing on culture and religion as the main points of contention in immigrant families, Saywell ensures that viewers feel more disgust towards so-called “honour killings” than we would towards domestic abuse cases in mainstream society (Butler 41). In creating this difference between domestic violence and “honour killings” then, Saywell masks what Jiwani suggests are the real issues behind domestic violence, namely “power and control, and the results of challenging male authority or patriarchy” (*Discourses* 94).

Although the film presents only one view out of many on the subject, it should be noted that domestic violence occurs in all societies regardless of religion and culture. Instead of categorizing domestic violence on the basis of faith and culture, perhaps it would be more

effective to show the features that are common in domestic violence across cultures, such as the motives and excuses used by men to exert control over a woman's behaviour (Sen 55, 60; Hannana Siddiqui 264-265; Welchman and Hossain 14). Informing the public about the common features of domestic violence in both mainstream and immigrant communities will perhaps achieve the effect that eluded Saywell's film--keeping immigrant groups from feeling alienated and under fire when discussing domestic violence.

Appendix

Promotional Material from CTV and Bishari Film Productions Inc. for

In the Name of the Family

CTV Promotional Material

In The Name Of The Family : News : World television premiere of 'In the Name of the Family' airs Sept. 7 on CTV

World television premiere of 'In the Name of the Family' airs Sept. 7 on CTV



by: CTV

Date: 9/3/2010 11:07:00 AM ET

Around 8 a.m. on December 10, 2007, police in Mississauga, ON responded to a 911 call from a man who had said he had just killed his daughter. When officers arrived, they found 16-year-old Aqsa Parvez suffering from life-threatening injuries. She later died in hospital. The fate of this young Muslim woman and three others is explored in depth in the world television premiere of the two-hour Original CTV Documentary **IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY**, Tuesday, September 7 at 9 p.m. ET on CTV (visit CTV.ca to confirm local broadcast times). The film will be available on demand on the CTV Video Player at ctv.ca following its broadcast premiere.

IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY puts a very human face the harrowing circumstances estimated to claim the lives of 5,000 women around the world every year. Emmy® Award-winning filmmaker Shelley Saywell (Crimes of Honour) continues her list of hard-hitting films that deal with human rights issues. Selected to screen at Hot Docs earlier this year, the film was awarded the 2010 Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature, marking the second time Saywell has earned this distinction at Hot Docs.

“Stamping out violence against women requires ongoing education in mainstream society and local communities,” said Saywell. “This film is a call to social, religious and school leaders to say this is wrong, and will hopefully help keep immigrant communities and families from feeling alienated and under fire.”

In addition to Parvez, the film also looks at teens Sarah and Amina Said of Dallas Texas, shot to death allegedly by their father who has disappeared, and university student Fauzia Mohammad of New York, who miraculously survived eleven stab wounds inflicted by her brother. IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY examines each case from multiple viewpoints and explains how the clash between an ancient tribal notion of honour and western culture leads to these crimes.

Islam does not sanction this practice in any way. But the murder of young women by their family members is often justified by distorted religious and cultural interpretations. As immigration to Canada and the United States increases, there has been an upswing in the brutalization and murder of young Muslim women by their fathers or brothers for defying male authority, which they feel brings shame on their family.

IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY follows the course to violence as the girls start embracing the culture of their new countries. From the refusal to wear a hijab, the traditional Muslim headscarf, to wearing figure-flattering clothes and having connections with non-Muslim men, male family members believe they are justified in punishing them. They often show no remorse for these acts. In the film, viewers meet the girls, their families and friends, and enter into a normally closed world where young women wanting to bridge two worlds are victimized by the men who claim to love them the most.

Shelley Saywell is a Canadian documentary filmmaker whose films focus on social-political issues. She has won numerous international awards, including an Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Journalism, and has been short-listed for the Academy Awards®. In Canada, her work has garnered three Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival awards, and three Gemini Awards. Saywell has personally been honoured with UNESCO’s Gandhi Silver Medal for promoting the culture of peace.

Saywell's most recent film is *Martyr Street*, a feature-length documentary shot over five years, focusing on life in Hebron in the West Bank. It won Best Canadian Documentary at Hot Docs 2006. Her films also include *Generation of Hate (Iraq)*, *A Child's Century of War*, *Out of the Fire*, *Crimes of Honour*, *Legacy of Terror: The Bombing of Air India*, *Kim's Story: The Road From Vietnam*, *Rape: A Crime of War*, *Fire and Water*, *No Man's Land: Women Frontline Journalists and Shahira*. Shelley Saywell is author of *Women in War* (Penguin Books, 1986) and contributing author to *Ourselves Among Others* (St. Martin's Press, 1988).

IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY is a CTV Original Documentary and a Bishari Films production. IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY is the latest in CTV's repertoire of award-winning original documentary programming. Recent titles include THE PIG FARM and LIFE WITH MURDER.

Bishari Film Productions Inc. Promotional Material

Press and Reviews:

MACLEANS.CA “**In the Name of the Family** offers a devastating look at the phenomenon of so-called honour killings. Without sensationalism, the film takes us inside these families and provides a heart-breaking portrayal of girlhood innocence and male cruelty, while unraveling the tricky cultural issues behind the crimes. What’s most chilling is to listen to the men defend their “honour”—the imprisoned brother of the New York girl blaming her for ruining his life.”

POV “*A haunting documentary ...a tender but fierce expose.*”

EYE WEEKLY “Saywell’s documentary examines the rise of so-called honour killings in South Asian and Middle Eastern immigrant families as children get caught in the cultural divide between East and West. Careful to avoid religious and cultural stereotypes, it doesn’t delve into the disturbed minds of the killers. It simply tells the heartbreaking stories of these young immigrant girls.”

NATIONAL POST “*Compelling ...Shelley Saywell’s often-heartbreaking doc explores the often-complex relationship between Muslim fathers and daughters.*”

THE GLOBE AND MAIL “Riveting ...director, Shelley Saywell, is a gifted filmmaker whose work has been acclaimed around the world. Her specialty is venturing into places where others fear to tread – and she found this particular place right here in Canada.”

TORONTO STAR “*Chilling ...In the Name of the Family, focuses on a secretive world with its own rules and punishments, which go beyond any country or religion but are based on the belief that a woman’s sexuality is a commodity to be closely controlled by male relatives.*”

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