

The Western Gaze: Canadian Media Representations of Sex-Selective Abortion in Canada

By:

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Abstract

This research sets out to examine Canadian media representations of sex-selective abortion in Canada. It argues that Canadian mainstream media representations of sex-selective abortion exhibit orientalism. The topic of sex-selective abortion was selected in an effort to contribute to a growing body of literature that shows that ethnic minorities are presented negatively in Western media. This research is among the first of its kind to explore Canadian media representations of sex-selective abortion specifically. Through a thematic content analysis, 43 articles were examined. Results revealed orientalist attitudes in Canadian media representations of sex-selective abortion. Further, it was found that South Asian communities are particularly targeted by negative media representations. These findings suggest deeply rooted colonial thought in Canadian mainstream media representations. However, some attempts by the mainstream media to avoid or even counteract minority stereotyping were also found.

Keywords: sex-selective abortion, gendericide, feticide, orientalism, othering, subalternity, post-colonial feminism

Acknowledgement

This research paper could not have been produced without the support and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Elke Winter who pushed me to deliver a product of quality. Her knowledge and academic expertise in Sociology have been invaluable in making me a better researcher and writer and for that, I express my gratitude. I would also like to thank the second reviewer on my committee, Dr. Mythili Rajiva for her constructive criticism and wealth of knowledge of post-colonial feminist scholarship. Additionally, I would also like to give a special mention to Laure Lafrance, Leila Hussein and Stephanie Ferrao for reading and commenting on my work.

This undertaking involved a lot of time and effort whilst balancing a full-time demanding career and a number of competing priorities. Thank you to my amazing and loving family and friends for their ongoing support and encouragement over the course of this endeavour. Thank you also to my employer and colleagues for their support and confidence in me.

I would like to thank my mother, Begum, and father, Karim, for always pushing me to reach for the stars and for believing that with hard work I can achieve my goals. Thank you Mama, for reminding me to “put the glass down” whenever I needed to hear it. Thank you Papa, for encouraging my ambitious nature and teaching me about the power of persistence. I would also like to thank my sister, Malika, for her ongoing optimism and sharing some much needed words of motivation with me.

Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful and loving husband, Aly, for his patience, ongoing support and encouragement as I embarked on this academic journey. His faith in my ability to achieve my goals has been especially valued as I endeavoured to not only complete this paper, but the graduate program overall.

Without the support of all of my family and friends, this paper would have remained an incomplete venture for me. Thank you all for helping me to achieve my goal.

Introduction

There is a growing body of literature that discusses the ways in which ethnic minorities are represented negatively in Western mainstream media. Scholars are pointing out that these representations are rooted deeply in colonial discourse. Aspects such as customs, traditions or practices perceived as being “foreign” to Western culture are particularly targeted. Those that are viewed as unattractive, wrong or “evil” are labelled barbaric, backwards or uncivilized despite the fact that similar practices arguably also exist in Western societies. We see this in the examples of media coverage on honour-based violence and veiling, especially in the post-September 11, 2001 climate.

For example, so-called honour-based crimes have been treated as acts that are different from “normal” domestic violence. They are considered “dissimilar” from what happens on a regular basis in Western societies, despite obvious parallels with other practices of violence against women. The academic literature on the representation of honour based violence in Western media finds media representations of honour killings to be racialized (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009; Rajiva & Khoday, 2014). Representations of veiling have been constructed in the West as an action that oppresses women (Jiwani, 2004).

Similarly, my research will examine to what extent sex-selective abortion (SSA) practices in Canada are orientalised in mainstream print media representations. This research endeavour allows me to make an original contribution, namely to add the example of depictions of sex-selective abortion practices in Canada to the analysis of ethnic minority representations in Western mainstream media.

Sex-selection is not a foreign concept in Western society and nor is abortion. However, through an analysis of newspaper articles, my research reveals how this practice is framed as “foreign” or “other.” My research will show that sex-selective abortion is orientalized by mainstream Canadian media representations. I will also show that there is an act of othering in these representations which is specifically directed towards South Asian¹ populations.

Canadian media have a history of portraying ethnic minorities in a negative light. Doreen Indra (1979) was among the first to research media representations of South Asians and other ethnic minorities in Canadian media. More recent research on representations of ethnic minorities in Canadian media (Krishnamurti, 2013; Jiwani, 2004; Mahtani, 2001; Ojo, 2006; Rajiva & Khoday, 2014) also find that Canadian media representations of ethnic minorities are often inconsistent with Canada’s self-proclaimed image as a tolerant and multicultural society. These findings are of particular interest to me as an individual who includes South Asian and Canadian heritage to be a part of my identity. I am particularly curious about the ways in which practices like sex-selective abortion are represented by Canadian media since it is often associated as a South-Asian cultural practice (among other Asian countries).

The practice of sex-selective abortion is indeed prevalent in South, East and South-East Asian countries, where it is rooted in traditional cultural practices. Western countries such as Canada do not adhere to the same cultural practices. So what happens when this seemingly “normal” practice in certain countries of the East migrates to the West? One way to explore

¹ The terms ‘Asian’ or ‘South Asian’ mentioned throughout this discussion will primarily refer to populations that reside in Canada but whose heritage is from those regions of the world. Whether or not they identify as Asian Canadians or South Asian Canadians cannot be discussed here. Other references of the terms ‘Asian’ or ‘South Asian’ will specify which region of the world they are being contextually described from.

this exodus of cultural norms is through analyzing mainstream media representations as proposed in this paper.

This research is of an exploratory nature. Its objective is to uncover attitudes as represented by Canadian mainstream media regarding the practice of sex-selective abortion. My research question is the following: How do mainstream Canadian newspapers portray the practice of sex-selective abortion in Canada? Drawing upon the existing literature in the field, I hypothesize that the Canadian media representations of sex-selective abortion in Canada exhibit orientalism. I also add two sub-hypotheses that stipulate; i) Canadian media represent the practice of sex-selective abortion as one that belongs to specific cultures that devalue women and ii) Canadian media represent the practice of sex-selective abortion as an immigrant problem.

Having stated what my research will do, I will also state what it does not do. Although I recognize that the practice of sex-selective abortion is a gendered practice, for the purpose of this research paper, I will be using SSA as an example of a practice that is “othered” in Canadian mainstream media representations. Discussing the ways in which SSA itself is a gendered practice is beyond the scope of my research. This paper uses a thematic content analysis of Canadian mainstream newspaper articles as the principal methodology to answer the research question.

While this research did not set out to find a specific group being targeted for practicing sex-selective abortion in Canada, the results reveal that the South Asian² community is a particular

²While much of the content around “South Asians” refers to India, this MRP seeks to avoid associating South Asian as exclusively Indian as it is unclear whether other countries in South Asia also practice SSA. Where the content discussed does refer exclusively to India, it will be stated.

target of Canadian media representations of SSA in Canada. Based on this finding, my paper has been restructured to include references to the South Asian context.

In order to comprehensively understand the purpose and results of my research, it will be important to discuss the literature surrounding SSA in both South Asian and Western contexts, with a focus on India. In addition, it will be equally important to understand the literature discussed on Western media representations of ethnic minorities. This Major Research Paper is structured in the following way: in section 1, I provide a contextual overview of sex-selective abortion and explain the main concepts that will be used throughout this research. Subsequently in section 2, I describe the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis of my research and discuss the Western gaze on sex-selective abortion. In Section 3, I give an overview of the scholarly work that examines ethnic minority representations in Western media. In Section 4, I describe my methodology. This is followed by a description of my findings in Section 5. In Section 6, I provide an analysis of my findings and their relation to the concepts discussed in my theoretical framework and contextual overviews. The conclusion summarizes the main points of this Major Research Paper (MRP).

Section 1: Contextualizing and problematizing sex-selective abortion (SSA)

Abortion and Sex-Selective Abortion

Abortion continues to be a controversial issue in the public sphere and the arguments fall under two main positions, those “for” and those “against”. Those “for” are generally referred to as “pro-choice” and are not necessarily “for” having abortions per se, but are actually “for” the right of a woman to make her own reproductive choice. This position has been criticized for not taking into consideration social, economic and political conditions that influence one’s choice and assumes the notion of “free” choice (Smith, 2005). Those “against” are generally referred to as “pro-life”, and as the name suggests, they are “for” human life and therefore not in favour of the termination of a pregnancy. Followers of this position believe that the fetus is a life, therefore abortion is an act of murder and should be criminalized (Smith, 2005).

Sex-selective abortion is the practice of medically aborting a fetus based on its biological sex. While this can apply to either males or females, it is generally associated with being performed on female fetuses due to dominant cultural beliefs/practices/traditions in South, East and South-East Asian countries (Bumgarner, 2007) which state that a girl/woman is less valuable (or more costly) than a boy/man. It can also be referred to as a form of *gendercide* which is the intentional extermination of persons of a particular sex or gender (Warren, 1985.) It must be stated, however, that gendercide practices are not exclusive to sex-selective abortion. For the context of this discussion, it will refer specifically to the deliberate

extermination of those identified as female. Other terms that refer to this practice include *femicide* or *gynocide*. Another term associated with sex-selective abortion is *female feticide*. This is the process whereby female embryos or fetuses are selectively eliminated after pre-natal sex determination tests (Jena, 2008.)

The practice of sex-selective abortion can often be found in South, East and South -East Asia. India and China show the highest sex-ratio imbalances, which indicates that parents favour the birth of sons over daughters. This is due to strong rooted traditions in cultural practices where males are viewed as the head of their families, and therefore specific rituals, ceremonies or actions must be performed by sons. For example, Hindu religious customs require sons to perform final death rites and in Chinese culture, sons are required to ensure old age security for their parents (Ganatra, 2008). On average, sex ratios at birth range from 1.04 to 1.07. This means that there are normally 104 to 107 males born for every 100 females born, thus putting the natural sex ratio slightly biased towards males (Westley, 1995). The 2014 World Fact Book published by the Central Intelligence Agency indicates that the sex ratio at birth in the United States is 1.05 and in Canada 1.06, both of which fall within the range of average sex ratios. In South, East and South-East Asia the sex ratio is a bit higher at 1.08. However, in select parts of India this nearly doubles to 1.90. This means that there are twice as many males born to every female (Canadian Medical Journal, 2012). Data from the World Data Bank finds this ratio to be even higher at 1.10 (World Bank, 2015). The attached appendix outlines a selection of countries and their sex-ratios for comparative purposes. The following two subsections will provide an overview of sex-selective abortion practices in the world and the alleged rise of this practice in Canada.

Sex-selective abortion: an international phenomenon

Sex-selective abortion research by Bela Ganatra (2008) examined sex ratio imbalances in Asia and the results indicated that a disproportionately larger number of boys being born suggest sex-selection activities are occurring in Asia. The research finds that high sex ratios at birth of 108 boys to 100 girls or higher are seen in China, Taiwan, South Korea and parts of India and Viet Nam. In fact, all of China, with the exception of the provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, has a high sex ratio. In India, gender imbalance is primarily seen in the Northern and Western regions of the country where 49 of the 593 districts of the nation have a ratio of 117 boys or higher. According to Ganatra's research, there is a general consensus that the increase in imbalanced ratios in these countries over the last twenty years is associated with prenatal sex determination followed by an ultrasound. She mentions that sex ratio figures are also affected because of the unavailability of reliable birth registration data in most countries. Due to this, it is usually the childhood sex ratio that is used as a proxy (children aged 0-4 or 0-6 years). She further adds that this ratio is also affected by selective under-counting of girls in census counts as well as discrimination in health and feeding practices that result in an increase of post-neonatal mortality in girls. She notes that there is not necessarily a causal relationship between sex-selective abortion and sex ratios, though it is one factor. Son preference is strong in the Asian countries where high sex ratios of boys to girls are seen. According to the literature, the reasons for the disparity have been attributed to patrilineal inheritance and kinship. Moreover, regions where economies are farm dependant require male workers, and further, sons have the responsibility for ensuring old age security for their parents in the absence of state-sponsored schemes. In South Asia, there is a huge disadvantage to girls of Hindu tradition whereby

religious traditions for performing death rites are given to sons only (Ganatra, 2008). While there have been attempts to rebalance sex ratios which include banning sex detection tests, they seldom exist in practice. Ganatra (2008), states that Governments in India, China, Nepal, South Korea and Vietnam have laws banning prenatal sex determination while allowing abortion practices. The increased commercialization of ultrasound technology in unregulated private sectors, where the sex of the fetus is usually revealed by verbal cues and nonverbal gestures without leaving a paper trail, makes sex-selective abortion difficult to prove. Sex-selective abortion research in India (Ganatra, 2008; Ganatra & Hirve, 2002; Visara et al, 2004) suggests that sex-selection is among the main reasons for women seeking an abortion. More than one fifth of abortions among adolescents are performed for this reason (Ganatra and Hirve, 2002). More specifically, research indicates that preference for a son is among the reasons women report seeking abortion and the explanation for the preference of sons include support in old age, continuing family lineage and performing death rites (Visara et al, 2004).

SSA – still a reality in India, but socio-economically, culturally and regionally stratified

Census data in India from 1991 to 2001 reveals a large drop in female to male sex ratios. In 1991, the overall sex ratio was 943 females to 1000 males. By 2001, this ratio fell to 927 females to 1000 males. As of 2011, the figure has further fallen to 914 females to 1000 males for the age group (0 – 6 years). While India does have a long history of gendercide, these figures demonstrate a historic low with the biggest gap in gender ratios of India (John, 2011).

Abortion became legal in India in 1971 through the enactment of *the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act*. This Act allows the medical termination of a pregnancy

for reasons due to medical risk to the women or her child, pregnancy due to rape, the socioeconomic status of the woman posing a danger to the health of a newborn child and pregnancy due to failed contraceptive methods, with the latter stipulation being applicable to married women only (Retherford and Roy, 2003). The MTP Act stipulates that abortions may only take place in government-approved facilities but there are only a limited number of approved facilities across the country. As a result, a number of private clinics and private laboratories have opened up to provide accessibility for people seeking to undergo an abortion (Ganatra, 2008; Ganatra and Hirve, 2003, Retherford and Roy, 2003; Visara et al, 2004). Further, the availability of sex-determination technology in the seventies led to an increase in sex-selective abortion. These technologies were advertised on billboards encouraging prospective parents to abort female fetuses as a means to avoid future dowry expenses (Retherford and Roy, 2003). In 1984, a coalition (the Forum against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection) was formed by various women's groups, civil liberties groups and health organizations. The coalition monitored the increased use of sex determination tests for the purpose of sex-selective abortion and fought to outlaw the use of these tests for this purpose. As a result of their efforts, the state of Maharashtra passed the *Regulation of the Use of Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act* in 1988, banning the use of sex determination technologies. Following this, other states including Punjab, Gujarat and Haryana also passed similar legislation.

Later in 1994, the Parliament of India passed the nationally legislated *Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Regulations and Prevention of Misuse Act* (PNDT). The Act prohibits sex-selection before or after conception. However, the PNDT contains many loopholes. While government facilities are now monitored much more closely, private clinics and laboratories are

not as heavily scrutinized and are only required to register under the Act if they perform prenatal diagnostic procedures. Genetic tests are monitored much more closely than ultrasounds and therefore, the regulatory gaps have allowed for the spread of many private clinics and thus the growing instances of sex-selective abortion.

Given the arguably controversial background of ongoing sex-selective abortion practices in India, it is important to take a more nuanced look at the phenomenon. In order to justify the theoretical framework chosen for this research paper, it is crucial to uncover who exactly makes use of SSA technologies, where these individuals are located geographically within India, and which classes/groups they belong to. This will be accomplished in the next two subsections.

Geographical differences

Retherford and Roy (2003) have shown that overall, sex-selective abortion in India is not a national issue, although the trend is upward. The highest sex ratios at birth are seen in states located North (with one exception) and in the West. Sex ratios at birth refer to the ratio of male births to female births. High sex ratios are indicative of but not completely attributable to sex-selective abortion. These figures come from analyses of sex ratio births and birth histories over a fifteen-year period using National Family Health Surveys. The states with these high ratios are Haryana, Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra. The state of Punjab itself has one of the highest sex ratios at birth in the world. Sex-selective abortion in southern India seems to be rare; sex ratios there are close to the average or natural occurring figure of 1.05. These findings indicate differences pertaining to geography or region, thereby addressing the question surrounding “where” SSA is practiced. Retherford and Roy explain the differences of these

regions as attributable to north-south differences in cultural preference for a son (the state of Maharashtra being the exception). They also argue that women in the South tend to have more autonomy than women in the North. The high sex ratios found in states located in the North and in the West are skewing the statistics for gendercide in the nation overall, which therefore fail to provide a nuanced picture of the gendercide practices in India. Other research also finds that geography is a factor in the practice of sex-selective abortion in India. These results come from the analysis of census data from 1991 to 2011 and nationally representative birth histories from 1990 to 2005 which suggest that sex-selective abortion is localized to certain states. However, mobility in India has changed over the years and today, more people are living in states where sex-selective abortion of girls is common (Jha et al., 2011).

Socioeconomic differences

Retherford and Roy (2003) also argue that socioeconomic status is a factor affecting sex-selective abortions in India, specifically in relation to the concept of *ideal* sex ratios, which refer to an ideal family size (the number of children and how many of each gender.) They find that while ideal sex ratio data still indicates a cultural preference for sons, there is also indication of sex-selective abortion of boys (Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra) in order to fulfill ideal sex ratios or ideal family size. The states in which this type of sex-selective abortion of sons is practiced are also the places with the highest sex ratios mentioned earlier. Therefore, while the majority of sex-selective abortions still discriminate against girls, data suggests that it is not limited exclusively to girls. Rather, what matters is the ideal of a balanced family size and composition.

Overall, the analysis of ideal sex ratios shows that high preference for sons is declining in certain states and that some states with this preference do not necessarily practice sex-selective abortion. It was also found that there are socio-economic differences when it comes to sex-selective abortion for the purpose of ideal sex ratios, with the exception of the South where sex-selective abortion is rare. Women in families with high socio-economic status had a higher propensity to use sex-selective abortion as they have access to and can afford sex determination tests and abortion services (Retherford & Roy, 2003). The evidence of sex-selective abortion is stronger when confined to sex ratio births for specific demographics of women; urban women, women with middle school complete or higher education and women living in homes with high standards of living. The results overall suggest that sex-selective abortion is high among high status groups of women (specifically in the North, West and East but not much in the South.) Jha et al. (2011) suggest that son preference varies marginally by education or socio-economic status, however these scholars too concluded that sex-selective abortion of females is more commonplace among the educated and wealthier populations. In summary, socio-economic statuses impact the practice of gendercide in India.

While much of the research on sex-selective abortion has been confined to countries in South, East and South-East Asia, namely India and China, there are a few pieces of literature that examine SSA outside of Asian borders. For example, in the Netherlands, the active and overt practice of sex-selective abortion is illegal although the Dutch government has been criticized for its lax abortion policies. A 1997 debate in the Netherlands revealed the assumption that certain minority cultures in the nation have cultural preference for sons over daughters and therefore the practice of SSA would be appealing to them (Saharso, 2005). The

majority of the Dutch population rejects sex-selective abortion and there is little information to confirm whether or not the practice of sex-selection abortion actually occurs in the Netherlands (Saharso, 2005). However, access to private clinics that have ultrasound technology allow people to get around the law and it is stated that “prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion are driven by the desire to prevent illness” (Saharso, 2003 p.202). This poses a challenge for medical ethics where the prime reason for prenatal diagnosis is to detect genetic anomalies, not to reveal the sex of a foetus. There are concerns and debates in the medical community over which genetic diseases are so serious that they warrant prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion. Saharso (2003), states, “according to Dutch law, abortion is permitted only if there is a risk to the mother’s life or health, or if the woman is in a critical situation which cannot be resolved in any other way. This “critical situation” includes psycho-social distress.” (p. 203.) The ambiguity in Dutch law surrounding what constitutes “psycho-social distress” lends itself to ultimately make the woman the decision maker and therefore allowing sex-selective abortion to be legally possible. Limited research in Australia and Thailand also suggest practices of abortion indicative of sex-selection. Andrea Whittaker (2011) explores the growing cross-border trade in assisted reproductive technology for sex-selection. These technologies are banned in many countries such as Australia resulting in couples travelling to places like Thailand.

The examples outlined in this section illustrate that the issue of sex-selection is not exclusive to one part of the world; it is a phenomenon seen in many parts of the world although no conclusive remarks on its impact are clear. What can be said is that there is evidence of a link between migration and practices of sex-selective abortion. Hence, the following section discusses sex-selection in Canada.

Sex-selection in Canada

A contextual overview

As argued above, the practice of sex-selection is not exclusive to one part of the world. While much of the literature focuses on its prevalence in specific Asian countries, it should not be misconstrued that sex-selection does not happen in countries like Canada. It is important to distinguish here that the term *sex-selection* does not necessarily mean by way of *abortion*. *Sex-selective abortion* is a specific type of sex-selection mechanism. Other methods of sex-selection include pre-implantation techniques. These are applied to manipulate sex chromosomes in a way that increases the likelihood that an egg, once fertilized, will be the zygote of a certain sex. Another method is the selection of embryos created in vitro to be implanted into a woman's womb on the basis of the embryo's sex (Deckha, 2007). *Amniocentesis* is a prenatal diagnostic procedure that contains a number of pieces of genetic information, such as the sex of the fetus. These technologies bring with them options for sex-selection, be it through genetic or medical manipulation or by abortion following the results of amniocentesis or ultrasound technology (Fletcher, 1980). There are two types of parents that request an amniocentesis for the purpose of fetal sex identification; the first are parents who risk passing on a sex-linked hereditary disorder and the other are those that want to select the biological sex of their next child. The issue of using prenatal diagnosis to determine fetal sex has long been an issue in medical ethics and policy making (Fletcher, 1980). Boetzkes (1994) claims that these reproductive technologies make it difficult to determine how to evaluate, and if needed, justify regulating the practice of sex-selection in Canada.

According to Dickens (2000), reproductive technologies and techniques tend to trigger fear of unnatural processes and harmful outcomes. They bring about social disruption and change to conventional family systems. A report by the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies in Canada states that sex determination procedures receive very little interest since they are presumed to only concern “family balancing”. However, the report recommends that the use of sex-selection techniques be criminalized given the understanding of perceived feminist beliefs (as cited in Dickens, 2000 p. 335). It appears this recommendation was taken into consideration by the Government of Canada. Under the *Assisted Human Reproduction Act* (S. 5(1) (a)) legislated in 2004, it is prohibited to “create an ‘in vitro’ embryo for any purpose other than creating a human being or improving or providing instruction in assisted reproduction procedures”, and further under the same provisions the following is also prohibited:

for the purpose of creating a human being, perform any procedure or provide, prescribe or administer anything that would ensure or increase the probability that an embryo will be of a particular sex, or that would identify the sex of an *in vitro* embryo, except to prevent, diagnose or treat a sex-linked disorder or disease (*Assisted Human Reproduction Act*, S. 5(1) (e)).

While using reproductive technologies to manipulate or modify an embryo in an effort to change the biological sex is against the law in Canada, these prohibitions exist only in a prenatal or pre-implantation context. As Deckha (2007) points out, the Act does not ban the practice of sex-selective abortion or the techniques that provide information about a fetus’s sex after a woman is deemed pregnant, that is, once the embryo is inside a woman’s uterus. It is

understood that the omission of sex-selective abortion in the legal framework is that it would implicate legalities surrounding abortion and would impair the availability of abortion in Canada, putting women's rights to liberty, security and their rights for reproductive choice at risk (Deckha, 2007). In an already complicated scenario heavily tied to the broader abortion debate in Canada, a ban on sex-selective abortion would also infringe on privacy rights. It would raise questions about how medical communities or authorities on abortion assess or measure the rationale for a woman's request for abortion. Further, it would be difficult to evaluate the authenticity of the reasons for a woman's request for abortion and even if this could be determined, we are returned again to the issue of women's rights and human rights in general. This becomes a circular debate. In summary, there are laws in place that speak to acting on fetal sex preferences; however there are no laws that state one cannot have a preference for a son or daughter.

Parental preferences

As mentioned before, parental preference for the sex of one child over another is not limited to certain parts of the world. Soon-to-be parents often declare to their social circles which sex they desire their unborn child to be, and this seems to be a fairly normative process based on my own encounters. One phrase that often gets tossed around is "it doesn't matter, as long as it's healthy". Despite this apparent flexibility regarding the sex of their child, research shows that the position of fetal sex preferences among parents in Canada is not necessarily the same for both parents. It also shows that this position has changed over time.

The 1993 Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies reports that a large majority of Canadians do not have preferences for one sex over another when it comes to having children. They state that assumptions around Canadians having a pro-male bias appear to be unfounded (as cited in Dickens, 2002, p.335). A study on parental preferences for the sex of children in Canada finds that most women wish to have one child of each sex. When it comes to first-born children, most women in their sample did not have a preference for one sex over the other. For those women that did, the preference was for their first-born to be a son and their second to be a daughter (McDougall et al, 1999). This finding is consistent with other research in Western societies as noted by Marleau and Saucier (2002), whose review of the literature on parental preferences states that a number of researchers have tried to determine women's sex preferences for their first-born child and many point out that most prefer to have a son as their first-born rather than a daughter. They also mention research where it was found that women and/or men also prefer a son rather than a daughter for a first-born child (Marleau and Saucier, 2002 p.13). From their review of these studies, the authors conclude that these findings provide strong indications that the preference for a son as a first-born child has been almost universal among women in Western societies. In an effort to examine the idea of male-preferred first-borns in Western societies, the authors conduct a comprehensive and comparative analysis of their own, looking at data presented in a sample of past empirical studies on parental preferences. Among a number of factors, they examine preferences for men, as well as pregnant and non-pregnant women, to see if being pregnant or living with a pregnant woman had any bearing on their responses in those studies. In brief, the results of this study suggest a shift in preference by first-time pregnant women for daughters and a first-

born preference for sons by women not pregnant. This preference is also seen in second-time pregnant women, even if they already had a daughter as their first child. This shift in preference has occurred over several decades between 1948- 1996. Among a number of potential factors, the authors note that culture likely plays an influential role in sex preferences. The findings for the years of 1948 – 1996 reveal that there is a shift in sex preferences among Western societies. However, it seems fair to say that, in the West, these preferences are no longer as deeply rooted in cultural practices as they were over centuries – and still are – in Asian countries (Marleau & Saucier, 2002). The question is can these sex-selection preferences be rooted so much in “Asian” culture that they are transported to other countries in the process of migration? The next section sheds some light on this question.

A problem on the rise in Canada?

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada³ 2013 data, India is among the top three source countries for immigration to Canada along with China and the Philippines. In the five year period from 2009 – 2013, an average of 31,044 permanent residents from India have been admitted to Canada, this represents an average of 11% of the total number of permanent immigration admissions to Canada (CIC, 2014). According to Statistics Canada, between 2011 and 2031 population aging will accelerate as the baby boomer generation approaches the age of 65, the first of the baby boomers will reach the age of 80 where mortality is high and as a result, the number of deaths will significantly increase. Further, fertility rates in Canada have been on the decline since the 1970’s and therefore Canada is facing a problem of population

³ Following the 2015 Canadian election, the Department was renamed Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, however, the timing of the finalization of this MRP coincided with the transition of the new Government and therefore not all information on the website was updated to reflect the newly named Department.

decline. That said, according to Statistics Canada, migration could account for more than 80% of Canada's population growth, compared to 67% currently (Statistics Canada, 2012). While not a solution to the problem of population decline, this does suggest that immigration will become increasingly important and therefore we can expect immigration from Asia to continue to grow, specifically from India, China and the Philippines.

It is important to understand that the implications of immigration in an era of globalization play a role in how the media represents sex-selective abortion in Canada. As illustrated earlier, there is a large body of research to support the notion that SSA is practiced in China and India. Therefore, two of the three top source countries for immigration to Canada are countries where SSA is a common (but not necessarily a condoned) practice. This does not mean that everyone who migrates to Canada from these countries will practice SSA; to assume that would be constructing them as a homogenous group⁴. However, not researching the issue at all would also be problematic.

In January of 2012, the Canadian Medical Association Journal published an article by the interim editor-in-chief at that time, Dr. Rajendra Kale. The editorial proposes that doctors should delay revealing the sex of a baby to patients until 30 weeks gestation, a time where it is typically too late or very risky to have an abortion. The author argues that that this information is not "medically relevant", and that this delay may serve to curb SSA in Canada. In the editorial, Kale cites research suggesting SSA is being practiced in Canada by members of certain ethnic groups, specifically of South Asian and Korean descent (Almond et al, 2009). The release of the editorial gave rise to a flurry of media articles on the issue of sex-selective abortion.

⁴ As my research will show, the Canadian mainstream media does indeed often make this claim and thereby perpetuates stereotypes in the context of sex-selective abortion practices in Canada.

Following the editorial, the Canadian Medical Journal published a study by St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto that examined Ontario birth records. The findings reveal that (first-generation) immigrant women from India who give birth to children in Canada are more likely to have male babies for their second or third births compared to women of other ethnic backgrounds born in Canada (Ray et al., 2012). This research suggests that the practice of sex-selective abortion may be occurring in Canada. While still early for any conclusive or representative findings, the results of the two studies drew much public attention to SSA in Canada, putting the spotlight on Canada's Asian communities and as my research will show, specific attention towards South Asians.

Although the practice of sex-selective abortion itself may not be novel, the notion that it may be an emerging practice in Canada is. Similar to the context of the literature by Saharso (2003) and Saharso (2005) in the Netherlands cited earlier, only a limited amount of research on this topic is available. The limited research, however, suggests that sex-selective abortion is practiced in Canada, specifically by Asian populations. While academic research is still scarce, SSA is widely discussed in the political and public spheres. Activists, human and women's rights organizations and the media have debated the issue, specifically in the weeks and months following the aforementioned editorial written by Dr. Kale in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. Most importantly, the mainstream media has been paramount in the shaping the values and beliefs of Canadians towards the practice of SSA. Hence, my research examines the ways in which Canadian mainstream media portray SSA in Canada. The theoretical "lens" I will be using to examine this phenomenon is post-colonial feminist theory as described in the section below.

Section 2: Theoretical Framework: The Western Gaze on Third World Women

Theoretical Overview

The theoretical framework that underpins my research is post-colonial feminist theory. The term “post-colonial studies” refers to the scholarship that examines the cultural effects of colonization (Ashcroft et al, 2013). Initially, post-colonial studies provided an avenue for scholars to re-evaluate societal structures and constructions, especially those of nations that were former (or existing) colonies. While post-colonial studies provided valuable contributions, notions of gender and sexuality were ignored. Feminists in formerly colonized nations such as those of South Asia re-evaluated the constructions of gender and sexuality as portrayed in colonial discourse. With that, the intersection of post-colonial and feminist theory came together. My theoretical framework is specifically focused on the concept of *orientalism* as described in this section and discussed throughout my research. In order to understand orientalism, it is also important to note the phenomenon of othering and the notion of subalternity. Both fall within the conceptualization of orientalism. The terms ethnocentrism and racialization are also of importance. These concepts and approaches are outlined in this and the following sections. Using a post-colonial feminist perspective in this Major Research Paper, I will examine to what extent Canadian mainstream media representations of the practice of sex-selective abortion in Canada are orientalist.

Orientalism, as described and introduced by Edward Said, refers to the way in which the West (referring to Europe) during colonial times constructed its own knowledge and

understanding of “the Orient” (Said, 1978). When referring to the Orient, this meant the geographical area to the east of Europe and specifically what is known as the Middle East today and now extends further to include Asia. During that time, this referred to all people who were “non-Europeans”. The knowledge of the non-Europeans was circulated throughout Europe in an ethnocentric manner. Ethnocentrism refers to attitudes and behaviours that are discriminatory in the context of ethnic conflict and involves seeing one group – referred to as the “in-group” – as being superior to other groups, so-called “out-groups” (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). Ethnocentrism is the act of judging another culture purely on the basis of one’s own cultural standards and viewing one’s own cultural standards as superior to the other. Ethnocentric behaviours are “based on group boundaries that are typically defined by one or more observable characteristics (such as language, accent, physical features, or religion) regarded as indicating common descent” (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006 p. 927). Therefore, ethnocentric individuals judge the values, behaviours and/or beliefs by another group in relation to the values, behaviours and beliefs of their own group. The contemporary understanding of orientalism has been extended to not only refer to an attitude about what is the West, but to mean a specific discourse of what it takes to belong to the Orient (Said, 1978). Broadly speaking, Said’s orientalism describes the way institutions in the West deal with the non-West by making authoritative statements or views, generally in an ethnocentric manner. These authoritative statements are then regarded as universal and therefore hegemonic because they are an act of dominance by one group over others. Orientalism describes the style of the West to dominate, restructure and be an authoritative voice for those outside the West (Ashcroft et al, 2013), more specifically to “Eastern” nations of the world and those that

were once colonized by Western bodies still in power today. Therefore, Said's concept of orientalism includes the practice of ethnocentrism or ethnocentric behaviour. Jiwani (2004) describes orientalism or the orientalized body as a projection of everything the West views as foreign, alien and repulsive but also intriguing and exotic. According to Foucault, orientalism is comprised of a truth or understanding that comes from an authoritative voice or body of knowledge (Jiwani, 2004). That is, the West takes ownership and authority over the knowledge of *their* understanding of all that is foreign to them. One of Said's arguments is that the conceptualization of the Orient has been feminized; i.e. the "East" is being viewed as a body that is willing to be domesticated and subjugated by the so-called "progressive" or modern West (Jiwani, 2004). This is a form of modern day colonialism which is part of post-colonial scholarship.

Even if colonization itself is no longer in practice by way of violently subjugating certain countries, its traces remain. Implicitly through certain behaviours, information sharing and disseminated knowledge about "them" in the media, colonialism continues. Margaret Kohn (2012) explains that Said reveals that orientalism also involves gaining knowledge of the Eastern body (the Orient) so that it can be dominated. This idea of the West dominating the East is commonly discussed in post-colonial feminism.

Much of today's post-colonial feminist theorists draw from notions of orientalism as described by Edward Said. Post-colonial feminist theory argues that colonial thought and infrastructure are still at play today, even if not formally established. Gayatri Spivak (1988), a notable postcolonial feminist introduced the intersection of post-colonial feminism through her examination of "voice" and whose voices are really heard in colonial discourse. She specifically

examined “who” speaks for the woman of the Third World and argues that the subaltern is silenced. In her classic essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, Spivak analyzes the way Western discourse speaks on behalf of the Third World (as though the Third World is a homogenous entity) without truly understanding the individual experiences of the voices of the Third World and therefore silencing them (Spivak, 1988). Leela Gandhi (1998) on Spivak notes that within the Third World group, there is also an issue of recognizing differences among those classified as Third World women and how they are represented. The subaltern is a critical concept in post-colonial discourse. As described by Harindranath (2006) who cites Gramsci (1971), the subaltern is “both a reference to a subordinate group within a society, and an acknowledgement of its potential as an agent for socio-cultural transformation” (p.54). The term subaltern signifies a lower hierarchy given the prefix “sub” which refers to something beneath. For instance, the way the West refers to the Third World as “Third World” already creates a notion of subalternity. As cited by Harindranath (2006), instead of using the term Third World another less condescending term could be used such as “global south”. In the discourse of social and cultural formations of colonialism, subaltern specifically refers to those dominated by the colonial elite. In post-colonial discourse, this often includes those of the Third World. Subaltern groups are therefore “voiceless” in the constitutive history of a nation (Harindranath, 2006). Throughout her essay, Spivak (1988) questions the rationale and justification of intellectuals and producers of culture in their attempts to speak *for* the subaltern. On the representation of the subaltern, Spivak is concerned with the instability of what she refers to as “paradoxical subject privileging” (p.275) by which those who “act and speak” silence those who “act and struggle” (p. 275) and therefore the question of “who

represents the subaltern” emerges. In Spivak’s view, subalternity is also defined by not being adequately represented and therefore the subaltern who speaks is no longer a subaltern (Harindranath, 2006; Spivak, 1988). In terms of the boundaries and the politics of representation, Spivak uses the example of the practice of *sati* or *suttee*, a form of widow sacrifice in colonial India (now obsolete and criminalized). Using this example, she states that the Indian woman (the subaltern) is denied her voice but yet it is represented differently by the colonialists trying to criminalize or outlaw the practice. She refers to this instance as one of “dialectically interlocking sentences” (p.297) where on the one hand you have the notion of the colonial response that is “white men saving brown women from brown men” (p. 297) and yet at the same time you have the nationalists’ perspective that “the women wanted to die”(p.297). The subaltern in this case is still entrenched between the two dominant narratives and unable to speak as she is denied her voice. The concept of *white men saving brown women from brown men* extends to the phenomenon known as the *White Saviour Industrial Complex*⁵.

Relevant to orientalism and post-colonial studies is *othering*, which was introduced by Spivak. Othering, “refers to the social and/or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group” (Ashcroft et al, 2013, p.188). Through othering, a binary is created that divides the perceived superior or dominant group – generally referring to the West, from the subordinate and inferior group or the subaltern – generally referring to the East. Othering has been applied across Western societies in a number of instances where “foreign practices” or public displays of religious and cultural affiliation have garnered attention. To put this in

⁵The *White Saviour Industrial Complex* refers to the tendency of white wealthy individuals to put a great deal of efforts towards “making a difference” in the lives of the poor and disadvantaged without sufficient research or consultation with those supposedly experiencing the need (Travis, 2014).

perspective, an example of the ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group can be seen following the events of September 11, 2001. The post-911 era has sparked much debate on the issue of the wearing of a veil or head covering, specifically of Muslim females who take the decision to wear a hijab. There are many cases where females wishing to wear the hijab have been excluded from social and political activities in the West. For example, in 2007, eleven-year-old Asmahan Mansour was expelled from a soccer tournament in Quebec because it was argued that her headscarf conflicted with the FIFA dress code (Lakhani, 2008). This example demonstrates an act of othering by the soccer tournament authorities towards Asmahan creating a societal divide between “insiders” and “outsiders”.

In parallel, my research examines the way othering occurs on the topic of sex-selective abortion. I examine whether the practice of SSA in Canada also shows a social divide of “insiders” and “outsiders” such as the one illustrated in the example of veiling. Korteweg and Yurdakul (2009) discuss this insiders versus outsiders dynamic in the context of honour based violence citing Zolberg and Long (1999), as well as Alba (2005) on the concept of boundaries. There are “blurred” and “bright” boundaries that capture the social or cultural distance between immigrants and majority society. Bright boundaries are those that convey a sharp and distinct difference – an insiders and outsiders group – whereby minority members of society can only be accepted into the majority if they give up part of their group identity and adopt some of the practices of the majority. Blurred boundaries on the other hand suggest more tolerance for various members of society. The example of bright boundaries captures a form of othering that seems to be at stake in mainstream media representations of minority groups, even today.

In summary, post-colonial discourse sheds light on the effects of colonial times and the notion of the ethnocentric “white” culture and the associated White Saviour Industrial Complex. There are two specific elements that post-colonial studies reveal. First, post-colonial studies uncover the ways in which the Western gaze is constructed as being universal. They show how Western perception has become hegemonic and as such, how it is often taken as the baseline for assessing what is “good” or “bad”, “right” or “wrong.” Second, post-colonial studies help us to trace how the Western world tends to speak and act for non-Western bodies in general and women in particular as subaltern bodies. As noted by Harindranath (2006), scholars from various disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies and literary analysis who have adopted a post-colonial framework have scrutinized representations of non-Western, non-White Others.

Perceived foreign or so-called imported practices tend to be represented as problems that need to be “fixed”. These foreign practices tend to be viewed by the West as backwards or primitive. Veiling for example, has often been constructed in the West as a practice that is oppressive to women but many in the East would argue that it is a form of liberation for women. If apparent “foreign” practices are already represented as problematic, then perhaps in the same vein, sex-selective abortion may also be represented by dominant groups as a barbaric act.

Based on the post-colonial theorizing noted above, I apply a post-colonial feminist theory to my analysis of Canadian media representations of sex-selective abortion practices. My discussion will emphasize the concept of orientalism and the associated phenomena of othering and subalternity as these elements were most relevant to my empirical findings. This

framework is especially relevant given that post-colonial feminism emphasizes implicit colonial tendencies still found today and that these tendencies transcend outside of the once colonized and among the diaspora of formerly colonized bodies.

As I have shown in section 1 above, issues such as gendercide, female feticide and female infanticide (not to mention the related violence perpetuated against women) are indeed problematic and prominent in India. However, the scholarly literature reveals that Western depictions of these issues are often just as problematic. Post-colonial feminist scholarship in particular takes issue with the “Western gaze” on gendercide in India. This research is extremely relevant to my own work on media representations of SSA. It will be reviewed below.

The Western Gaze on Gendercide in India

Through post-colonial scholarship, the concept of orientalism and the notion of subalternity are examined in a more nuanced manner. A frequent topic of study is the way in which the West constructs its knowledge of the East – the “Other”. Notable postcolonial feminist, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, describes the tendency of the Western world to homogenize the experiences of Third World women in her classic essay, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, published in 2003. Here, she addresses the problem of the dominant scholarship of the West upon the rest of the world. This scholarship depicts all of the so-called Third World as a single entity whose values and beliefs are similar across all cultures of the Third World, in that they all tend to oppress most or all of their women. She calls this the “Third World difference” which she describes as:

... that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries. And it is in the production of this Third World difference that Western feminisms appropriate and colonize constitutive complexities that characterize the lives of women in these countries. It is in this process of discursive homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the Third World that power is exercised in much recent Western feminist discourse... (Mohanty, 2003 p.19-20).

According to Mohanty, Western feminists apply one Third World woman's issue as an issue of the entire Third World. Western societies tend to ignore differences amongst othered bodies and the unique realities and experiences they have individually as well as the differences in their privilege⁶. The differences of their experiences sometimes brings them to find common ground in the reality they live-in, but it is not for the West to create this experience as one that is homogenous.

In terms of sex-selective abortion, both First and Third World feminists agree that a woman should have the right to make her own reproductive choices and that she should have control over her body, such as in the decision to undergo an abortion. The problem, in my view, is that the way abortion is framed in the West generally results in the woman being read as being modern or progressive or strong (irrespective of the reasons), while a woman who undergoes (sex-selective) abortion in India is read by the West as being "helpless" or "oppressed". She is seen as a woman who is trapped in a culture that is barbaric, that burns its women, sells its women, rapes its women and makes its women abort their female foetuses or

⁶ It should be acknowledged that the act of homogenizing experiences or groups is not unique to Western societies. Both First and Third world societies are guilty of homogenizing "the other", and therefore it is not just Western feminists who tend to classify characteristics of individual minority women as being representative for the all women considered to be part of that "group".

murder their baby girls after they are born. This perspective assumes that the social, political, cultural practices or structures of these two worlds are comparable when in practice they are not. To adequately account for all the controversies among both Western and “Eastern” feminists on sex-selective abortion, as well as between them goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is worth noting how sex-selective abortion is framed and read between the two worlds differs significantly.

Some caveats; I am neither stating that sex-selective abortion is not problematic from a feminist or human rights perspective; nor am I stating that Third World feminists are condoning this practice; in fact the majority are not. Rather, I want to argue that the representation of sex-selective abortion is just one example of the bigger issue of orientalism that post-colonial feminist scholarship discusses. I am also not stating that all feminists agree to this and that everyone in the West has an orientalist view of the issue. Rather, my point in this section is to outline the extent that Western ideology falls short in offering a nuanced account of the issues of (sex-selective) abortion in places like India⁷. The Western view that all women in India are part of an oppressed group is problematic, since it ignores geographical, religious, class and age parameters (among others). Equally problematic is the way that the West associates the practice of sex-selective abortion, for which the concept of aborting a baby based on their biological sex is viewed as an act of barbarism, as one that is practiced primarily in “Indian” culture and one that is a problem applicable to India as a whole.

The Western gaze on sex-selective abortion in India can be seen in the media. Western media tends to speak for women in India who have experiences with SSA, especially in

⁷ Further below, my research will show that similar tendencies of misrepresentation are also operating in the West.

campaigns to raise awareness about the “missing girls” in India. For instance, the documentary entitled, *it's a girl! – the three deadliest words*, produced by Andrew Brown (2012), is filled with images of rural and poverty struck India where you see village women in their saris in the fields with their sad faces fitting the Indian female archetype that screams victim. This imagery portrays the Indian woman as poor, sad and mal-nutritioned. She then begins to speak in her native tongue about how she had a baby girl and had to get rid of her because her husband (or family or society) wanted her to have a boy. The notion of a baby girl in India as being a burden is then explained in the film along with other cases of women who fit this token example. What is either missing or too loosely touched on in films like this are images of women in urban centres, as well as women who are employed and educated because somehow that is counter-intuitive to the oppressed Indian woman. By presenting SSA in India in this manner, Western media acts as a voice for these women and in doing so, displaces these women as the “subaltern.” These films may be informative and great attempts at spreading awareness of the problem, however, they do not help to break away from stereotypes. It is easier to have a viewer “buy in” to an issue if the way the issue is presented aligns with their notions of “those poor girls.” These images further perpetuate stereotypes of the Third World woman in India and feed into the homogenizing narrative that sex-selective abortion is practiced by women in poverty. These images implicitly suggest that help should come from the West and since the story is being told through a documentary by an American film company; the true voices of women who have practiced SSA are silenced. The audience cannot tell what has or has not been edited. By presenting these images, the practice of SSA is immediately othered because the images are not of women who appear as relatable to the wide-spread and mostly Western

audience watching. In doing so, the representation of the Other may not be in its truest form. As Spivak (1988) argues, the voice of the subaltern is often silenced or misrepresented as shown in her example of paradoxical subject privileging whereby those who act and speak end up silencing those who act and struggle. In the case of the documentary, it is unknown if the accounts of those undergoing SSA are represented in its truest form or in the way that the Western producer has understood it.

My research will show that the Western gaze on sex-selective abortion is orientalist. In the same way that Sherene Razack (2003) describes how key narratives or words such as “hot oil” or “incest belt” activate what she calls the “orientalist fantasy”, the images of rural women in the documentary, *it's a girl – the three deadliest words*, also evokes the notion that these women are oppressed. The images feed into the stereotype propagated by the West and into the stereotype that gendercide is a national problem happening in India. The good news stories are not shared widely such as the stories of women and families who keep their baby girls, who raise them and send them to school. Only the bad news stories are shared and they all fit a specific image, one that is widely accepted and understood by the West as “those poor Indian women.” It is important to have a critical lens when hearing about these women. For instance, demographic, geographic and socio-economic information about those who practice sex-selective abortion in India may help frame our understanding of the issue. As learned from the empirical research cited in section 1, sex-selective abortion in India is much more nuanced and regionally, culturally and socioeconomically diverse than what is often represented in Western media. This MRP argues that Western representations of SSA in India tend to homogenize the experiences of Indian women through depictions in films and media coverage surrounding

gendercide. Images of poor, rural women are portrayed that play into the orientalist narrative of India as a culture where women are exotic, oppressed, uneducated and helpless. Although sex-selective abortion remains a reality in India and is even said to be on the rise, the data suggests that there are important geographical and socio-economic status parameters to consider.

Representations, specifically media representations of the Other in Western countries are notorious for perpetuating colonial interpretations and stereotypes. Further, literature in ethnic and race studies shows that ethnic minorities, which include South Asians, are too often othered and orientalized in Western media depictions. As the next section will show, Western media has a history of misrepresenting minority communities and putting ethnic minorities in a negative spotlight.

Section 3: Western Media Representations of Ethnic Minority Communities

The process of disadvantaging and marginalizing certain groups either socially, economically, culturally, and politically on the basis of biological features is referred to as *racialization* (Zaman, 2010). A growing body of literature in post-colonial discourse and race studies holds that Western media has a history of also racializing members of ethnic minorities who live in Western industrialized countries. These representations of ethnic minorities in the media perpetuate stereotypes by orientalizing the body of the Other. Recall, othering is an act that distances one group from another by creating a social divide of those inside and outside

the dominant group. Ethnic minorities in this case are the Other. Stereotypes that are traditionally associated with the Other are reinforced in media representations. Further, they homogenize and racialize their experiences. This is done by attributing certain aspects of an ethnic minority group as belonging to all members of that group and further by drawing specific attention to ethnic groups such as those of colour. Canadian mainstream media coverage of visible minorities tends to be racist, and this despite a 1991 stipulation in the Canadian Broadcasting Act that states media organizations are to show the “multicultural nature of Canada” (Ojo, 2006). According to Ojo (2006), the Canadian mainstream newspapers *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* have been accused of ignoring minority representations and meaningful input. Ojo (2006) adds that black visible minorities are often depicted as victims, villains, criminals and buffoons or folksy sitcom types. Aboriginals, by contrast, are represented as savage, drunken, or primitive. Journalists have also assumed that in cases where visible minorities are killed by another visible minority, it is for gang-related issues (Ojo, 2006). The advancements in modern day communication technology have made the presence of the media even more accessible with the use of the internet. Much of the academic focus on media representations is the assumption that media plays an influential role in shaping contemporary society and in the way that knowledge, beliefs and values are constructed and maintained (Harindranath, 2006).

Mahtani (2001) provides a critical review of the literature on media representations of minorities in Canada. She finds that media representations of minorities in Canada continue to broadcast negative and stereotypical images which only serve to demean minority Canadians and further adds that the ethnic minority population do not see themselves as accurately

represented in the media. This type of marginalization by the media creates feelings of exclusion. She also states that depictions of minorities that are negative teach minorities in Canada that they are deviant, threatening and not relevant to nation-building. This can be damaging from a psychological perspective as it can instill inferiority complexes among minorities.

Historical research on stereotypes depicted in Vancouver media found that among other ethnic minorities, South Asians were among the most negatively represented in the press (Indra, 1979). Representations of ethnic minorities were often grouped according to “media favourability”. During early waves in immigration of South Asians to Vancouver, newspaper headlines read statements like “*Horde of Hungry Hindoos Invade Vancouver City*” (Indra, 1979 p.168). These titles portrayed South Asians as dirty and compared to other ethnic groups; South Asians were at the bottom of the media’s ethnic minority hierarchy, receiving the most negative coverage compared to other minority groups in Vancouver. The representations of the South Asian population were homogenous as demonstrated by how they were referred to as “Hindoos” despite the majority of South Asians in Vancouver being of the Sikh faith. Over time, it was found that the press did portray South Asians more like other “normal” ethnic groups and the term *Hindoo* was slowly replaced by *East Indian*. However, Indra concluded that South Asians continue to be associated with deviant practices and receive negative representation in the Vancouver press. More recently, a media analysis of the coverage of Tamil immigrants arriving by boat to Canada finds that negative portrayal in the media influenced public perception of Tamil immigrants. It was found that three frequent media representations of the arrival of these immigrants influenced attitudes about immigration in

popular discourse (Krishnamurti, 2013). The first image was categorized as “queue-jumpers”. The second image portrayed Tamil migrants as passengers associated with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), thereby invoking the image of terrorists and criminals. The last image depicted by the media was what Krishnamurti labelled as “the breeder”, referring to the portrayal of the Tamil pregnant female body as a social burden and whose arrival became “symbols for the anxiety around the proliferation of Tamil bodies encroaching on the territory, rights and services available to legitimate Canadians.” (p. 140). These representations influenced public opinion of their perception of the arrival of these migrants to Canada as “legitimate” bodies. While Canada prides itself on its reputation of being a safe haven and protector of human rights, this research demonstrates that media representations influence attitudes about refugees and immigration in Canadian popular discourse and public policy.

Research on ethnic minority representations in Western media finds that the media is often guilty of drawing upon racialized notions to “other” members of certain ethnic communities. Practices, traditions or customs deemed foreign to the West are often represented in a homogenous stereotypical manner (Jiwani, 2004; Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009; Rajiva & Khoday, 2014). This means they are represented according to the way the dominant society understands them, in this case the West. This feeds into existing stereotypes that the West has of them, which amounts to a form of orientalism.

Aside from this MRP, there appears to be no concrete literature on media representations of SSA in Canada, but there are other examples of the way practices deemed foreign to the West such as veiling and honour-based violence. For example, Jiwani (2004), states that the association of the veil and Muslim women lingers in Western popular media. Its

imagery fuels the narrative of the orientalized woman as oppressed and bound by tradition. She describes contemporary news media coverage of Muslims in the post 9/11 era as stereotypical representations where the suicide bomber or martyr is a frequent image. Furthermore, the veiled woman is often depicted as oppressed and subjugated under Islam, unable to free herself without the aid of Western powers. In her media analysis, she notes, "Muslim women are framed as victims who are acted upon by others rather than as active agents who are capable of determining their own course of safety or resistance to the perceived threat from the outside." (Jiwani, 2004 p.277). The representation of Muslim men and women in the East as orientalized is problematic. It creates a tension amongst these groups living in pluralistic societies. Specifically, the media diverts public attention to the problems "out there" which are then depicted as needing intervention or aid "from here." This way, the media creates binary divisions between those inside and outside of the West, positing those outside as being in need of Western aid. This exemplifies othering, as well the phenomenon of the White Saviour Complex. Similarly, the framing of honour killings as an immigrant problem lingers in Western media (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009; Rajiva & Khoday, 2014). Despite other forms of violence against women in Canada, even those that occur more frequently, the case of honour killings in Canada is given special media attention. This is because it represents a practice considered barbaric and outside of traditional Canadian norms and values despite its low occurrence in Canada when compared to other forms of femicide like domestic violence. This creates hostility towards certain immigrant groups and in an islamophobic climate, feeds into the narrative that it is dangerous to receive these groups in countries like Canada (Rajiva and Khoday, 2014). This type of representation transcends

national boundaries as in the case of media representations of honour-based violence in the Netherlands and Germany. It was found that newspaper coverage on honour killings reinforces bright boundaries between the host society and immigrant groups. Honour killings are presented as a form of violence against women rooted in Islam and/or a specific national origin or ethnicity which marginalizes certain (immigrant) members of Dutch and German society (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009). In the way that these examples of Western media representations activate the orientalist fantasy of Muslims as perpetrators of honour-based violence, similarly, my research demonstrates that sex-selective abortion activates the orientalist fantasy of South Asians as the primary perpetrators of sex-selective abortion.

While a large majority of the literature on media representations does indicate that ethnic minorities are portrayed negatively in Western media, there is some, albeit limited research that underlines positive representations of ethnic minorities and changes in the way the media represents ethnic minorities. Recognizing that Western media has a long history of using orientalist stereotypes and depictions of Muslims as outsiders, Eid and Khan (2011) examine whether Canadian mainstream media have shifted toward non-orientalist representations. They find that Canadian media are in the process of reconciling accurate representations, government legislation as described by multiculturalism policy and corporate interests. They state that Canadian media are making efforts to represent women and minorities more accurately such as those represented in the Canadian television sitcom, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Further, a British media analysis discovers that portrayals of Muslims in British print media are more complex than much of the critical scholarship would suggest (Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar & Abdelhamid, 2015). Their findings reveal that despite widespread

arguments that British media consistently portray Muslims in a negative manner, there are a number of complexities associated with the portrayals of Muslims in British media. While their findings do not suggest that Muslims are depicted in an unfavourable light overall, they are however portrayed in a significantly more negative way when compared to analogous groups (Bleich et al., 2015).

So what knowledge can be gained from these studies? This review of the literature suggests that despite some exceptions, a number of large Western mainstream media still propagate colonial tendencies⁸. The larger part of the scholarly literature posits ethnic minority representations in the media to be very negative and portrayed as an out-group. However, the media portrayal of minorities living within Western countries may not be as one-sided as some research suggests. In some instances – that is, in some media outlets⁹ and/or with respect to specific ethnic groups - the portrayal of ethnic minorities may even have changed and improved over time, even if colonial fantasies still linger. Canada especially prides itself on its multiculturalism policy and tolerance of ethnic diversity. In my research, I will examine which tendencies of representations – colonial, racist ones or more nuanced sensitive ones – predominate in the coverage of sex-selective abortion in Canada

⁸ There may be a number of factors driving these perceptions, but they cannot be discussed here.

⁹ The medium in which these portrayals are presented (i.e. print media versus television) may also matter.

Section 4: Methodology: The Western Gaze in Canada – An issue of (mis)representation?

Research Question and Working Hypothesis

For the purpose of this Major Research Paper, my research question is, how do mainstream Canadian newspapers portray the practice of sex-selective abortion in Canada? Based on my theoretical framework, I form the following hypothesis: Canadian media representations of case of sex-selective abortion in Canada are orientalized. This is done through a “Western gaze” that homogenizes the experiences of non-Western women and lacks nuance of geographical differentiation, as well as socio-economic and cultural realities.

This working hypothesis was strengthened by means of some preliminary analysis of Canadian news media coverage of the subject. At the beginning of this research project, several pieces of news coverage on the topic of SSA in Canada convinced me of the necessity to research this issue. An example of this coverage is a 2012 hidden camera investigation by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) titled, *Unnatural Selection* (Sawa, 2012). CBC used hidden cameras at twenty-two private ultrasound clinics across three metropolitan cities in Canada where they found fifteen centres that agreed to book an appointment for an ultrasound that would reveal the gender of a foetus before 20 weeks of pregnancy. This falls within the range of time where it is possible for a woman to get an elective abortion (Sawa, 2012). The footage featured in the clip focused primarily on the South Asian community and contained the same type of imagery and stereotypical notions portrayed in the “it’s a girl” documentary discussed earlier. The narrative was that preference for boys is a long-standing cultural

tradition in “India” and hence an “imported” phenomenon that could not really happen in Canada if it was not for “them”.

As a consequence, I amended my working hypothesis by adding the following sub-hypotheses: i) Canadian media represent the practice of sex-selective abortion as one that belongs to “cultures that devalue women” and ii) Canadian media represent the practice of sex-selective abortion as an “immigrant problem”.

Why analyze mainstream newspapers?

Coverage featured in newspapers plays a significant role for national identity building (Muller, 2013). News media can be considered as the core of traditional mass media. Hence, they play an influential role in forming general public perception of who/what belongs to Canada and who/what is “foreign” or “imported”. This way, the media contribute to national identity building. Analyses of different news contexts show that news media develop a national self-image that is positive and encourages identification with the nation. News coverage generally represents the host or home nation as superior to foreign groups or nations, therefore creating in-group and out-group bias (Muller, 2013). This is an example of ethnocentrism as discussed earlier. Further, there is empirical evidence to support the notion that mass media coverage creates perceptions of the host nation and other nations in a certain fashion (as cited in Muller, 2013 p.734). This is particularly relevant in the case of how newspapers portray sex-selective abortion in Canada. Since the purpose of this research is to examine media representations of the practice of SSA in Canada, using mainstream newspapers proves to be an appropriate medium. This is not only because of the influential role

newspapers play in policy making and public perception, as shown by Mahtani (2001), but also because the mainstream press can be easily accessed and examined for the purpose of research.

According to the Canadian Journalism Foundation, forty (40) percent of Canadians state that they always consult a regular newscast on a television station during an evening or a late broadcast for their daily news fill. Twenty-three (23) percent stated they always consult a daily newspaper that they would normally pay for or subscribe to, for their daily news fill (Wright and Turvey, 2013). Although this is only half as much as the figure cited for television, it still speaks to the reach newspapers have for disseminating information and how media representations play such an influential role.

Which articles were selected, how and why?

A reference period of three years from January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2013 was used for this study. The rationale for this time period being that both the editorial from the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* and the study by St. Michael's Hospital were released in 2012. Therefore, mainstream media articles that were available one year prior and one year following the release of the editorial were collected for this research.

After several distinct preliminary searches and some preliminary analysis, I opted for the following methodology of data selection. Using the Canadian Media and Newsstand Dailies (CNMDD) database through the University of Ottawa Proquest research portal, I searched for all Canadian mainstream newspapers in English within a defined reference period using the following keywords: i) "sex-selective" abortion (with abortion being within five words of sex-

selective), ii) “sex-selection” abortion (with abortion being within five words of sex-selection), iii) gendercide and iv) female feticide. By searching for the word “abortion” within five words of sex-selective and sex-selection, it allowed for a broader search of articles where the terms were found near each other and would possibly yield more results than if the terms were grouped together as one phrase. With duplicates removed, a total of 464 articles were found. These articles were then exported to Zotero software used as tool for the management and organization of the articles.

Using Zotero, a first screening of the articles was done to filter relevant and non-relevant articles. During this screening other duplicates were found which were not caught by the CNMDD. A slight change in an article title or newspaper publication is not detected by the CNMDD even though the author(s), publication date and content of the articles are exactly the same. After those duplicates were removed, a total of 367 articles remained which were then sorted for relevance.

For the purpose of this study, articles were deemed irrelevant if the keywords or topic of SSA were only marginally discussed in the article. An example of irrelevance includes several articles on violence against women where SSA was listed only as an example among others (gang rape, honour-based violence etc.) but not actually discussed in any other detail. Articles included as relevant were those that discussed SSA (or any of the key words) in a slightly more relative context. These included articles related to SSA in politics, the practice in other countries (i.e. India and China), personal stories and the concept of SSA amongst pro-life and pro-choice activists. A total of 126 articles were deemed relevant.

From the relevant articles, a secondary screening was then performed, still using Zotero, to filter articles that discussed the practice of SSA (or any of the keywords) in a more meaningful way and were not simple summaries or general discussion about SSA. Articles deemed meaningful provided more context and discussion of the practice of SSA, these included some politically related articles and those that were providing information about activities or awareness campaigns and petitions to fight against the practice of SSA. After the secondary screening was completed, a total of 60 articles were included.

A final, tertiary screening was then applied to extract articles that discussed the practice of SSA in Canada specifically, this was also performed in Zotero. These articles discussed various perspectives and reaction to the editorial by the CMAJ and recent discussions about the rising phenomena of the practice. This criterion was placed on this filter so that a focused analysis aligned with the purpose of this study could take place and allow for a quality discussion. Articles excluded from this were those that may have discussed SSA in a Canadian context but were in a more political lens inferring more broadly about the abortion debate as a whole, and did not actually discuss the practice of SSA in Canada in a pragmatic manner. From the final screening, a total of 43 articles remained and were used as the sample for this research. These 43 articles were then converted into a single pdf file.

The selected articles included 33 news articles, 7 opinion pieces, 2 letters and commentaries and 1 editorial. These articles stem from the following newspapers; The Vancouver Sun, The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, The Gazette, National Post, Windsor Star, Calgary Herald, The Ottawa Citizen, Winnipeg Free Press, The Leader, The Province, and The Vancouver Sun. The next section, discusses the process of analysis.

How were the selected articles analyzed?

Thematic Content Analysis

For the method of this research undertaking, I chose to do a thematic content analysis of Canadian mainstream newspapers. Content analysis as described by Smith (2000) is a method used to collect desired information in an objective and systematic manner. This is done by identifying specific characteristics. Weber's (1990) definition states that, "Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid references from text" (p.10). The text being analyzed in the case of this research refers to mainstream newspaper articles. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) explain content analysis as a way to examine texts and other cultural products (non-living data forms) in a systematic manner. The data for content analysis is something that already exists and is not created by the researcher as it would in the case of acquiring raw data through surveys, interviews or ethnographies. For content analysis, examples of data include (but are not limited to) those that are pre-existing such as books, magazines, pictures, television programs and as used for this research, newspapers.

There are both quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis; a mixture of both will be seen for this research undertaking. Therefore using a combination of these definitions, it would be reasonable to define content analysis as a research method or technique applied to existing material where information is extracted, using a specific set of criteria or "themes" as established by the researcher. Smith (2000) describes content analysis as means to reduce a large body of qualitative information into a smaller, more manageable form of representation that can also be represented quantitatively. Qualitative content analysis is not simply word counting as some might think, it can also involve careful examination of language that is

grouped into categories that represent similar meanings (Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005), hence the method of “thematic content analysis”, which will be used for this research paper.

Coding is a technique used in content analysis that serves to classify or rate the body of information. One of the uses of content analysis is for exploratory research along with theory development, hypothesis testing and applied research (Smith, 2000). For the purpose of my research, thematic content analysis is being used in order to test my hypotheses and examine mainstream media representations of sex-selective abortion in Canada. The exact method of analysis is described in detail under the sub-section to follow.

Analysis of newspaper articles

The sample of 43 articles were analyzed by paying careful attention to language, key words, phrases and over-all themes or messages being conveyed by the articles. Each article was read at least three times during which keywords, language and phrases were highlighted. Further whenever a particular theme emerged, it was coded with a coloured sticky note and labelled by theme. Articles revealing more than one theme, were coded for each theme, therefore there were multiple colours assigned to each article which therefore translated into multiple themes and coding instances. Coding instances of each theme were recorded and included in a chart as shown in Figure 1.

The analysis of each article was done using an inductive approach; I did not have pre-defined themes that were applied to the empirical material. This being said, my research was also guided by my hypotheses. Through reading each article, I paid specific attention to language, key words, phrases or overall meaning that met the elements of my hypotheses -

whether with a positive or negative association and included these for my analysis. These results were also collected and are presented in Table 1. This approach allowed for flexibility so that “new” or unsuspected themes that did not match the hypotheses were also included in the analysis (under the label “new findings”).

Section 5: Findings – uncovering Canadian mainstream press representations

Timeline

A first noteworthy finding is that no articles from 2011 were screened into the final sample of 43. This suggests that the rise of discussion on the context of SSA may have been introduced in response or reaction to the editorial from the Canadian Medical Association Journal and the subsequent study by St. Michael’s hospital, also published by the CMAJ. In fact, of the 43 articles, 39 were published in 2012, and only 4 were published in 2013. This is important as it indicates the media attention in 2012 is likely linked to the release of the CMAJ editorial and the study by St. Michael’s hospital. Since a specific reference period was chosen, if coverage on the practice of SSA has since been in the media, it has not been reflected here.

Themes and Keywords

From the 43 articles selected for the sample, the initial analysis found 7 themes (later referred to as sub-themes). These themes “emerged” from the empirical material and were

not preconceived. It should be noted that my analysis was (obviously) guided by my theoretical framework and the working hypothesis. Themes were colour coded using stationery notes that can stick. Many articles had more than one theme, and were coded multiple times for each theme they fell under. The following table represents the themes found, their colour of coding and the number of coded instances under each theme. The themes will be described in detail further below.

Table 1: Organization of the screening of initial themes cross-referenced with hypotheses

Theme Number	Theme	Colour Code	Positive association with hypotheses	Number of coded instances in articles
1	SSA as a degradation or devaluation of women	Orange	Yes	9
2	SSA as a cultural problem	Green	Yes	20
3	SSA as part of a broader problem in abortion politics – moral reasoning and policing right and wrong decisions for abortion	Pink	No	12
*4	SSA is not exclusive to one part of the world (new finding)	Yellow	No	11
5	SSA is wrong – period.	Blue	No	4
6	Education will fix the problem of SSA	Coral	Yes	12
7	Action against groups who practice SSA	Light Blue	Yes	1

Table 1 shows that the representations conveyed in the overwhelming majority of newspaper article representations are in line with the hypotheses formulated for this research undertaking. However, some not anticipated ways of presenting SSA were also identified. From the descriptions, it became obvious that some of the individual themes could be grouped together for similarity. Hence, they were condensed into 3 larger categories; themes 1, 2, 6 and

7 align with the hypotheses of this research paper and fall under a broader theme of orientalism. Themes 3 and 5 were merged to include abortion and sex-selective abortion issues as a whole. Finally, theme 4 was found to be a standalone theme. It is one that runs counter to what was hypothesized for this study. Table 2 illustrates the organization of the merged themes. Below, I describe the merged themes in detail. It should also be noted that words or phrases particularly indicative of all themes were highlighted in yellow in the newspaper articles and noted. They will be presented as “keywords” in the detailed descriptions of each merged theme below.

Table 2: Organization of merged themes cross-referenced with hypotheses

Sub-theme number	Theme	Positive association with hypotheses	Number of codes attributed articles
1	There are orientalist attitudes towards SSA	Yes	42
2			
6			
7			
3	Abortion and SSA are an issue of politics	No	16
5			
4	SSA is not exclusive to one part of the world (new finding)	No	11

Sub-themes 1,2,6,7 – there are orientalist attitudes towards SSA

Coding instances found under this merged theme demonstrated orientalism and by extension othering as well, this represents nearly 61% of coding instances. Examples of these are instances where SSA was posited as a problem that belongs to particular cultural groups and/or cultures that devalue women. The South Asian population was especially mentioned. An excerpt from a public opinion piece stated:

1. *This kind of society will always devalue women; result in physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence and unequal treatment. This treatment of women is less evil in the West than in India and China, where feticide is common. (A question of timing, 2012)*

Quotes from other articles that represented SSA as a marginalized practice or a practice that belongs to societies that devalue or degrade women included the following:

2. *While few studies have been done to assess how frequent the practice may be among immigrant communities in Canada, the editorial points to research that suggests sex-selection is more common among immigrants from India, China, Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines who already have at least one daughter. (Viatteau, 2012, January 17, "Keep sex of fetuses a secret")*
3. *And, whether by coincidence or by design, all six hospitals are located in or near areas with high concentrations of South Asian immigrants – one of the ethnic communities at the centre of a mounting concern over female feticide. (Yang, 2012, April 17, "GTA hospitals conceal sex of fetus amid fear for girls")*
4. *It's disturbing that there are cultures that discriminate to such a degree against females. The revelation that this practice occurs in other*

countries is not new. But the fact that these groups can carry out this horrific violation against Canada's high standard of human rights is appalling. (Schouten, 2012, January 19, "Not just girls")

5. *The fact that sex-selection abortion in Canada is occurring also raises what should be unthinkable questions for our society. To what extent, for example, is female feticide associated with creating a culture in which other abuses of women - such as "honour killings" – are tolerated? And how consistent are we in our approach in criminal law when we prohibit female genital mutilation but not the killing of an unborn girl just because she's a girl? (Somerville, 2012, September 29, "The preposterous politics of female feticide)*

Other coding instances found under this merged theme were those where there was mention of the need for education or awareness campaigns to be provided for groups who practice SSA, as well as the need for action against those who practice SSA. The following excerpts demonstrate this:

6. *For real change to come about, there must be deeper cultural paradigm shifts regarding embedded attitudes about girls and women. (it's a girl, 2012, January 18)*
7. *That gender discrimination can be carried out to this degree is appalling. The misogynistic practice needs to be addressed and I thank Ms. Reynolds for*

bringing awareness to this issue in this current series... I find it unfortunate that the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) doesn't recognize that a balancing of rights is needed in order to educate certain cultures how to properly deal with the conflicting rights of the pregnant woman and the pre-born female within her. (Child rights violated, 2012, February 15)

One article specifically mentioned discrimination taking place towards families of specific ethnic groups wishing to know the sex of their fetus. This coding instance revealed an example of unsanctioned action being taken towards the practice of SSA as demonstrated below:

8. There were rumours and reports, Hussain says, that ultrasound technicians in the GTA were deliberately withholding the sex of a fetus from any woman or couple who appeared South Asian. (Ogilvie & Aulakh, 2012, January 17, "Keep sex of fetus secret, MD urges")

Therefore, the quotes of coded instances cited above refer to the practice of sex-selective abortion as one that devalues and discriminates against women. They highlight that SSA is practiced by specific ethnic groups and also revealed the need for education and awareness to be provided to groups that practice SSA. These coded instances among other similarly coded instances were selected and categorized under this merged theme as they were indicative of orientalism. This is elaborated upon further in the discussion section.

Keywords noted under this theme: misogyny/misogynistic, devalue/devaluation, degrade/degrading, ethnic (groups), immigrants, ethnic (communities), Indian, Asian, South Asian, Korean, Chinese, minorities, minority groups, education, awareness, attitudes, and change.

Sub-themes 3, 5 – abortion and SSA are an issue of politics

It was observed that SSA in Canada was used or leveraged to discuss the broader politics of abortion, and SSA was a way to reintroduce the abortion debate in Canada. Some articles clearly indicated anti-abortion views or specifically anti-sex selective-abortion views, while others talked about the abortion debate in general in terms of what constitutes a right or wrong reason for abortion. The policing of moral reasoning for abortion as a whole was often a topic of discussion. Many of these articles were in reference to the political agenda of Conservative MP, Mark Warawa who introduced a motion (M-408) in parliament asking the Government to condemn sex-selective abortion practices in Canada. The motion was denied as was a subsequent appeal by the MP. The following excerpts demonstrate this theme:

9. *Recent studies, for example, show that intelligence is largely determined by DNA, as are mental and emotional dispositions to conditions such as Huntington's (Lou Gehrig's disease), breast cancer, ovarian cancer, Alzheimer's disease and cystic fibrosis to name a few. If we could identify all those conditions in the womb, or shortly afterwards – what difference does a year or two make? – we would have a country full of Canadians who, while fewer in number and predominantly male would be mostly hale and hearty. It can only happen in Canada, because Canada is the only nation in the world that has no law to protect the unborn from being killed and now law to protect those lucky enough to survive the pre-birth screening process from being tabbed as genetic misfits...*
(Oleson, 2012, January 21, "Stumbling through the garden of life")

10. *That is why Canada needs a law to end this misogynistic practice. Over 90 percent of Canadians agree that aborting for gender reasons should be illegal. It's time for the government to act. (Outlaw gender-based abortions, 2012, June 25)*

11. *Legislation targeting sex-selective abortion is ineffective in the West, because it is difficult to enforce (as in the Netherlands, where the practice is illegal but still widespread). That is why I favour Conservative MP Mark Warawa's petition for the Commons to approve his motion - M408 – to "condemn discrimination against female pregnancy termination. (Kay, 2012, December 29, "The 'War on Women' That Dares Not Speak Its Name")*

12. *I understand the argument from a professional standpoint: Doctors are facilitating something they believe is unethical by providing information about the unborn baby's gender, and they can't just go around not giving the information to certain people. But it highlights a central absurdity in the abortion debate: How can people be completely at ease with abortions performed for reasons unknown, or for no reason at all, but freak out at abortions performed on the grounds of gender? Is it our*

business or isn't it? (Are some fetuses more equal than others, 2012, January 17)

13. *The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) states in its position paper on sex selective abortions that while most people, including those in the pro-choice movement, are uncomfortable with gender-based abortions, "we cannot restrict a woman's right to an abortion just because some women might make decisions we disagree with."*
(Reynolds, 2012, February 15, "The XX Factor, Part 2: The value of girls")

14. *Schratz emphasized that many groups that are pro-choice on abortion are equally opposed to sex-selective abortions. The website of the women's group, Canadians for Choice, says ending sex-selective abortion is one issue on which there is agreement with anti-abortion activists. However, the two sides disagree over whether the practice should be halted through "education", a ban on all abortions or by not allowing medical professionals to reveal the gender of a fetus before 30 weeks.*
(Todd, 2013, May 3, "Catholic archbishop plans rally to stop "gendercide" targeting female fetuses")

No particular keywords were noted for this theme outside of the general keyword search conducted in the CNMDD.

Theme 4 – SSA is not exclusive to one part of the world

A surprising number of coded references under theme 4 were negatively associated with my hypotheses. The coded instances found in articles for this theme avoid the pitfalls of racialization and approach the practice of sex-selective abortion in Canada with a slightly more critical and non-discriminatory lens. In fact, these articles highlight the discrimination shown by those in the public sphere regarding the practice of SSA (politicians, activists, other writers). They also provide examples of how sex-selection happens among the North American elite (with a preference for daughters) for family balancing purposes. One article even acknowledged that sex-selection in India is prevalent among the affluent.

15. *We know, for example, that Canadians travel to the United States to have sex-selective in-vitro fertilization. It has been reported that they tend to request female children. This strikes me as sex-selection, plain and simple.* (Selley, 2012, January 27, “Abortion hypocrisy”)

16. *It is also notable that there are no academic studies that prove sex-selection abortion is a significant issue in Canada. The anti-abortion movement likes to cite several studies of macro birth rates to buttress their case – the idea being that we can assume sex-selection abortions exist if certain communities demonstrate higher ratio of male-to-female births.* (Saurette and Gordon, 2013, May 14, “The politics of ultrasounds”)

17. *Finally, it also plays on coded racial stereotyping. Just as the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been marketed in the West as wars to protect the rights of girls and women (itself an well-worn strategy), this campaign relies on centuries-old stereotypical portraits of the West as the defender of individual rights and the East as barbaric oppressors of women to render their position emotionally compelling. This is not to deny that there are very serious women's rights issues and problems of sex-selection in many countries (there are). Rather, it is to say that absent hard evidence proving that this exists in Canada, the power of this communication strategy relies on playing on the continuing, if subtle force of these racialized stereotypes in society. (Saurette and Gordon, 2013, May 14, "The politics of ultrasounds")*

These excerpts provide an example of sex-selection being represented as a practice that is not of foreign origins and further, they provide criticisms of those who stigmatize and racialize SSA.

Keywords noted under this theme: family balancing, in-vitro fertilization and Indo-Canadian.

In the next section, I will discuss these findings in greater detail by providing an analytical discussion that connects the themes discovered in my research with the underpinning theoretical framework.

Section 6: Analytical discussion

The previous section revealed broad themes that emerged through my analysis of the newspaper articles. There was a positive association with my hypotheses for sub-themes 1, 2, 6 and 7 which represent a large majority of the articles. It was also found that there were representations of SSA in Canadian media that did not have a connection to any of my hypotheses. Further, it was found that one theme (theme 4) ran contrary to my hypotheses. These are now discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and contextual overview provided earlier in this paper.

The orientaling and othering of sex-selective abortion

The thematic content analysis revealed that 98% of the selected newspaper articles portray the practice of sex-selective abortion in an orientalist manner as found by sub-themes 1, 2, 6 and 7. This was demonstrated by the tendency for articles to be represented as feeding into the stereotype that sex-selective abortion is almost exclusively practiced among members of the Asian community (South and East) due to deeply rooted cultural traditions. This sample did not find any articles that cover sex-selective abortion as a practice in Western culture, which suggests that SSA is a practice that is orientalized. It is represented by the West as something outside of the Western body and as something that is abnormal. This in turn suggests that those who practice SSA are also outside of the realm of “Westernness”. This can be interpreted as an orientalist attitude, which is characteristic of media representations towards South and East Asians. This attitude is exemplified in quote 4, which states:

It's disturbing that there are cultures that discriminate to such a degree against females. The revelation that this practice occurs in other

countries is not new. But the fact that these groups can carry out this horrific violation against Canada's high standard of human rights is appalling. (Schouten, 2012, January 19, "Not just girls")

The specific reference to other cultures is emphasized further by the words "these groups". It implies that these bodies are outside the dominant culture. This can be interpreted as othering. Recall that othering is closely linked within the concept of orientalism and here it refers to the way the West creates a binary division by marginalizing other cultures (Ashcroft, 2013). The quote also demonstrates an ethnocentric attitude by suggesting that the practice has been brought in from non-Western countries and that it is displeasing to Canadian society. As described in the theoretical section, ethnocentrism involves regarding one's own cultural standards as superior to another culture's (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). As the quote shows, members of the cultures practicing SSA are committing a "horrific violation" of human rights. By making this kind of judgement, by adopting an ethnocentric attitude and by othering SSA, the newspaper journalist committed an act of orientalism. The construction of SSA as a disgusting South/East Asian practice demonstrates the way the West fabricates its knowledge of what is non-Western. Further, one quote even compares the practice of SSA to honour killings:

The fact that sex-selection abortion in Canada is occurring also raises what should be unthinkable questions for our society. To what extent, for example, is female feticide associated with creating a culture in which other abuses of women - such as "honour killings" - are tolerated? And how consistent are we in our approach in criminal law

when we prohibit female genital mutilation but not the killing of an unborn girl just because she's a girl? (Somerville, 2012, September 29, "The preposterous politics of female feticide)

As discussed earlier, non-traditional or foreign practices to the West are too often depicted in a negative light by the media. The quote above makes SSA as something equal to honour killings or female genital mutilation. All three practices are viewed as barbaric and non-Western.

However, as Rajiva and Khoday (2014) point out with reference to another case, the example of domestic violence could have also been used to illustrate a comparable misogynist practice. It does not seem like a coincidence that all the examples cited in the quote are those associated with immigrants. Therefore, this represents an orientalist attitude. The media portrays SSA as a societal issue brought into Canada by foreigners according to the apparently "non-foreign" voices in the sample. The coding instances found under this theme contain language that, as Razack (2003) explains, "activate" the orientalist fantasy since SSA, much like the term "hot oil", is viewed as a practice that comes from and belongs to the East. The mention of SSA in a Western context is immediately linked to South or East Asian bodies since the media representations brand it that way. An illustration of this is shown in quote 1 which states the following:

This kind of society will always devalue women; result in physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence and unequal treatment. This treatment of women is less evil in the West than in India and China, where feticide is common. (A question of timing, 2012)

By using the words “this kind of society”, the quotation above marginalizes a particular group. As the quote goes on, it establishes and almost normalizes the notion that misogyny is far worse in India and China (than in the West), using SSA as an example of a misogynist practice in those countries. By generalizing misogyny as something common in India and China, this quote exhibits the tendency of the West to homogenize the experiences of those in the East. This is a clear demonstration of orientalism. Leela Gandhi (1998) discusses the way in which the West homogenizes the experiences of women in the East. She cites Mohanty (1994) regarding the production of the Third World woman as a monolithic and singular subject. She implies that this in itself is colonialist because it disregards historical differences between “real” Third World women and also demonstrates an othering of the Third World woman by Western feminists (Gandhi, 1998). We know from the research by Retherford and Roy (2003) and Jha et al (2011) that there are differences in socio-economic status and geographical areas that may factor into the reasoning behind SSA in India. As noted by Edward Said, orientalism includes the tendency of the Western body to gain knowledge of the Eastern body so that it can be dominated (Kohn, 2012). We see this happening in the sample where articles not only point to SSA as a cultural problem, but also one that needs “fixing.” This phenomenon is exemplified by the following quotes:

For real change to come about, there must be deeper cultural paradigm shifts regarding embedded attitudes about girls and women. (it’s a girl, 2012, January 18)

That gender discrimination can be carried out to this degree is appalling. The misogynistic practice needs to be addressed and I thank Ms. Reynolds for bringing awareness to this issue in this current series... I find it unfortunate that the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) doesn't recognize that a balancing of rights is needed in order to educate certain cultures how to properly deal with the conflicting rights of the pregnant woman and the pre-born female within her. (Child rights violated, 2012, February 15)

By positioning SSA as a problem of culture, the articles homogenize the practice of sex-selective abortion and the media acts as the authoritative voice in representing SSA as a cultural issue. This is an example of Said's reference to the way in which the West makes authoritative statements or views about the non-West. The practice of SSA is projected as something the West views as repulsive, foreign or alien and therefore positing it as an issue that is outside of Western practice exhibits orientalist attitudes. Further, orientalist attitudes are also shown by media articles that suggest promoting awareness campaigns to stop gendercide, to change cultural mindsets and to educate these communities about the value of girls – specifically referring to the South Asian diaspora. While the two cited quotes above do not include the specific portions that show how these remarks are directed towards the South Asian community, the articles they come from both discuss these remarks in relation to South Asians. This representation indicates that the dominant society in Canada perceives the South Asian community to be uneducated and uncivilized and therefore one that needs to be “fixed”. This is discussed in a more nuanced manner in relation to another theme below. By orientalizing and consequently othering the practice of SSA, the supposedly exclusive communities that

practice SSA are also othered. My research shows that the South Asian community is particularly targeted. This will be discussed in the next theme.

South Asians as the primary “Other”

Sub-theme 2, SSA as a cultural problem, is the most frequently represented with 20 coding instances. My research reveals that the South Asian Canadian community is specifically targeted as the Other, given that of the 20 coding instances that represented SSA as a cultural problem, 18 of them specifically mentioned and focused their content around South Asians, while the other 2 coding instances referred to the practice more broadly as ‘Asian.’ None of the coding instances discussed East or South-East Asian communities in more detail. If these communities were discussed, they were only mentioned in reference to Dr. Kale’s editorial in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. Any other mention discussing specific populations was targeted only at the South Asian community. For example, one article specifically focused on the discovery that certain hospitals in the Toronto area were found to be withholding the sex of a fetus to anyone who appeared to be South Asian. This is demonstrated by quote 8 which states:

There were rumours and reports, Hussain says, that ultrasound technicians in the GTA were deliberately withholding the sex of a fetus from any woman or couple who appeared South Asian. (Ogilvie & Aulakh, 2012, January 17, “Keep sex of fetus secret, MD urges”)

The media’s decision to specifically mention the ethnic group being targeted in this story segregates South Asians from Canadian society and positions them as an othered body. This

finding is particularly important since the parameters of this research were not designed to identify a specific ethnic group as being the target of media representations of SSA. Rather, the objective was to look at mainstream media representations of sex-selective abortion practices in Canada more generally. As shown in the sections that provide contextual sources of SSA both internationally and in Canada, the practice of SSA occurs primarily in South, East and South-East Asia, yet none of the other minority groups (such as Chinese and Koreans) had nearly as much coverage in the articles of this sample; only those of South Asian descent were discussed.

The articles coded and grouped under this theme were those that homogenize the experiences of the South Asian community by stating that this practice belongs to a culture that devalues women with preferences for sons. As noted in the previous theme's analysis, the articles ignore geographical distances as well as socio-economic differences in India and do not differentiate amongst residents of the South Asian Canadian population. We know from the data shown in section 1, Retherford and Roy (2003) and Jha et al (2011) suggest socio-economic differences among those who practice sex-selective abortion in India. According to both these studies, the elite tend to practice SSA in India more for the purpose of family balancing and because they can afford the costs of ultrasound technology.

The act of othering was shown by the use of language directed towards groups that practice SSA such as the words "immigrant", "ethnic" and "minority" which convey a meaning of outsiders – people outside or excluded from the supposed majority society. An example of this is illustrated in quotes 2 and 3 below:

While few studies have been done to assess how frequent the practice may be among immigrant communities in Canada, the editorial points to research that suggests sex-selection is more common among immigrants from India, China, Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines who already have at least one daughter. (Viatteau, 2012, January 17, “Keep sex of fetuses a secret”)

And, whether by coincidence or by design, all six hospitals are located in or near areas with high concentrations of South Asian immigrants – one of the ethnic communities at the centre of a mounting concern over female feticide. (Yang, 2012, April 17, “GTA hospitals conceal sex of fetus amid fear for girls”)

The quotes above suggest that populations that practice SSA are othered. As evidenced in the latter quote, South Asians are particularly targeted. As defined earlier, othering involves the way one group either socially or psychologically excludes or marginalizes another group (Ashcroft et al, 2013). As described in the discourse of orientalism from a post-colonial feminist perspective, the East or Orient is viewed as the Other, and constructed as a binary opposite of the West. It is the strange, the alien, the unreliable and the exotic. It is necessary for orientalism to create the Other so that the West can strengthen its own identity and superiority (Said, 1978; Jiwani, 2004). When we consider the concept of bright and blurred boundaries discussed by Korteweg and Yurdakul (2009), the thematic content analysis here suggests that mainstream media representations of sex-selective abortion practices in Canada create bright

boundaries through the othering of SSA. These boundaries are created because the media represents SSA as an immigrant problem and in doing so, the practice of SSA and those who practice it, are othered. As my research shows, South Asians are primarily targeted as the perpetrators of SSA and are therefore the outsiders. The stereotypes perpetuated in these media representations and the use of terms like “immigrants” or “ethnic minority communities” as opposed to more inclusive terms like residents, further reinforces bright boundaries.

South Asians as the subaltern

7 coding instances showed that the media felt that efforts need to be made to educate the South Asian community and to bring awareness about the value of girls in society. Recall, this was mentioned in the analysis of the theme, *the orientaling and othering of sex-selective abortion*. While this is an orientalist attitude, it is specifically one where the notion of subalternity is relevant. As raised in post-colonial discourse, there is a tendency for those in power to speak for and by extension represent the subordinate, the subaltern. This is a common phenomenon still observed in contemporary society as we see in the case of SSA media representations in Canada. Advocates and activists in the West speak of the need to educate communities that still practice SSA and create awareness to shift cultural attitudes. We see this in the quotes cited earlier which were directed at the South Asian community and referenced again below:

For real change to come about, there must be deeper cultural paradigm shifts regarding embedded attitudes about girls and women. (it's a girl, 2012, January 18)

That gender discrimination can be carried out to this degree is appalling. The misogynistic practice needs to be addressed and I thank Ms. Reynolds for bringing awareness to this issue in this current series... I find it unfortunate that the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) doesn't recognize that a balancing of rights is needed in order to educate certain cultures how to properly deal with the conflicting rights of the pregnant woman and the pre-born female within her. (Child rights violated, 2012, February 15)

The first quote implies that change needs to happen in South Asian culture. In order for that change to occur, deeply rooted attitudes about women and girls need to be shifted. This statement presumes that the issue of SSA is due to cultural beliefs and conforms to the ongoing propagation of India as a country that practices misogyny. The latter quote concludes by suggesting the need for education in "certain" (referring to South Asian) cultures regarding women and children's rights. The quote assumes that South Asian women are not aware of their rights and it suggests that the solution lies in increased education. The problem with both these quotes aside from the assumptions being made, are that the proposed solutions are not coming from those with lived experience. These representations are of those who have voice. As Spivak (1988) points out, the subaltern is voiceless. This is exemplified by the two quotes above. The articles in my sample did not contain any dialogue or interviews with women or

members of the South Asian diaspora with first-hand experience. The latter were only represented or arguably, misrepresented, by third parties and more frequently by the Western third party. By third parties, I refer to human rights activist or non-profit organizations. This type of media coverage exemplifies what Spivak (1988) refers to as “dialectically interlocking sentences” where the subaltern is caught between two dominant narratives and therefore still silenced. In this case, the two dominant groups would be those represented from certain activist campaigns in Canada, who appear to be of South Asian descent based on my inferences of their names, and those that belong to other groups such as political parties, the media or other organizations operated by the “White” West. This strikes me as an interesting case of the discussion on the subaltern where the activists in these groups speak for a niche group and therefore, it is unknown what women with experiences of SSA would say since their voices are not heard. The subaltern, as described by Spivak and Gandhi, is important to note here because it brings forth the question of residents in Canada of South Asian descent as representatives for the Third World women. By being the same “race” or nationality, does it mean they actually come from the same *place*? By this I mean, can women of South Asian descent in Western countries like Canada understand the differences in experiences of women in India who do - or do not - undergo SSA? This is an important consideration when thinking about media representations and whose voices are being heard.

The post-colonial feminist concept of the White Saviour Industrial Complex, white men saving brown women from brown men described in my theoretical framework is also exhibited

in this theme given efforts to create awareness or act out against SSA practice such as failed motion-408 proposed by MP Mark Warawa cited in the quote below:

Legislation targeting sex-selective abortion is ineffective in the West, because it is difficult to enforce (as in the Netherlands, where the practice is illegal but still widespread). That is why I favour Conservative MP Mark Warawa's petition for the Commons to approve his motion - M408 – to "condemn discrimination against female pregnancy termination. (Kay, 2012, December 29, "The 'War on Women' That Dares Not Speak Its Name")

The quote above refers to proposed legislation (M408) introduced by MP Warawa to prohibit the practice of sex-selective abortion in Canada in an effort to stop gendercide and "save the girls." While this motion and a subsequent appeal were both denied, the quote demonstrates the operationalization of the White Saviour Industrial Complex. In this scenario, MP Warawa acts as the white man here to save the day and rescue the girls who would otherwise be aborted. The quote exemplifies Said's concern that the West seeks to understand the Orient so that it can be dominated (Kohn, 2012). The quote represents the way the West asserts itself as the saviour of the Other and assumes that creating law to ban sex-selective abortion will "fix" the problem. Failure to include the voice of the subaltern is once again demonstrated.

The examples of the silenced South Asian subaltern reveal the following; not only is this theme evident in the sample of coded instances, but, the silencing of the subaltern may also be used to leverage political agendas as noted in the next theme.

Sex-selective abortion is a political issue

Approximately 16% of the articles examined discussed the practice of sex-selective abortion in a political context but in the broader context of the abortion debate in Canada. This is shown in quote 9:

Recent studies, for example, show that intelligence is largely determined by DNA, as are mental and emotional dispositions to conditions such as Huntington's (Lou Gehrig's disease), breast cancer, ovarian cancer, Alzheimer's disease and cystic fibrosis to name a few. If we could identify all those conditions in the womb, or shortly afterwards – what difference does a year or two make? – we would have a country full of Canadians who, while fewer in number and predominantly male would be mostly hale and hearty. It can only happen in Canada, because Canada is the only nation in the world that has no law to protect the unborn from being killed and now law to protect those lucky enough to survive the pre-birth screening process from being tabbed as genetic misfits...

(Oleson, 2012, January 21, "Stumbling through the garden of life")

Another example is quote 10:

That is why Canada needs a law to end this misogynistic practice. Over 90 percent of Canadians agree that aborting for gender reasons should be illegal. It's time for the government to act. (Outlaw gender-based abortions, 2012, June 25)

These quotes reveal that media articles contained a number of conservative oriented views regarding abortion. It is also interesting to note that SSA was being used to leverage the abortion debate as made evident by the quote earlier in support of Motion-408. As we know from Ojo (2006), the monopoly of ownership of Canadian media belong to wealthy, white, conservative men and therefore re-introducing the abortion debate may be influenced by that ownership. 12 coding instances similar to quotes 9 and 10 cited above made specific reference mentioning that discrimination against girls would be another reason to abolish abortion practices in Canada all together. This finding is less relevant to the focus of the discussion for this research paper, but it is interesting to note going forward on any similar subject matter in the political context.

Sex-selective abortion – let's not be exclusive

Interestingly, 11 coding instances under theme 4, SSA is not exclusive to one part of the world, display opposing views to the majority of the articles in this sample. It was found that 26% (that is one quarter) of the articles discussed sex-selective abortion in an anti-orientalist manner. The journalists even mention a trend amongst middle and upper class women in the West to screen for sex because they have a daughter preference. It was noted that there are women who go to the United States to use in-vitro technology as a way to sex-select for females. This is indicated by the following quote:

We know, for example, that Canadians travel to the United States to have sex-selective in-vitro fertilization. It has been reported that they

tend to request female children. This strikes me as sex-selection, plain and simple. (Selley, 2012, January 27, "Abortion hypocrisy")

However, the article did not mention particular sources or studies and so while the information is anecdotal, it does reveal that there are some representations of SSA that are not subject to stereotypes. This is an intriguing finding and even more so since this information was not mentioned in any other article from this sample. Whether this was conveniently left out or simply overlooked cannot be determined, but it does indicate that maybe the journalistic venture did not go deep enough. Perhaps this was omitted because it does not fit the narrative of immigrant groups as the doers of barbaric practices. While this cannot be said for certain, it certainly does beg the question. This finding is helpful in understanding that there are representations in the media that do run counter to the articles that feed into negative stereotypes therefore providing another perspective. We have also seen this in the case of a small number of studies (Eid & Khan, 2011; Bleich et al., 2015) on Western media representations of ethnic minorities that suggest the degree to which the portrayals are negative may be changing. Such is the case in the following quote, which demonstrates an anti-orientalist attitude towards SSA:

Finally, it also plays on coded racial stereotyping. Just as the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been marketed in the West as wars to protect the rights of girls and women (itself an well-worn strategy), this campaign relies on centuries-old stereotypical portraits of the West as the defender of individual rights and the East as barbaric oppressors of women to render their position emotionally compelling. This is not to

deny that there are very serious women's rights issues and problems of sex-selection in many countries (there are). Rather, it is to say that absent hard evidence proving that this exists in Canada, the power of this communication strategy relies on playing on the continuing, if subtle force of these racialized stereotypes in society. (Saurette and Gordon, 2013, May 14, "The politics of ultrasounds")

This quote also demonstrates that there are others who are in tune with the subtleties of colonial powers still in place and goes on to suggest that there are issues of racialization in Canada.

Section 7: Conclusion

The purpose of my research paper was to examine Canadian mainstream press representations of sex-selective abortion practices in Canada in an effort to contribute to the larger body of literature on ethnic minority representations in Western media. As demonstrated by the literature cited here, a large share of the literature finds ethnic minorities to be portrayed in a negative light, especially in the case of practices deemed foreign or barbaric. A smaller share of recent research has begun to examine whether there have been shifts in these depictions. For my research, I asked the question, how do mainstream Canadian newspapers portray the practice of sex-selective abortion in Canada? I hypothesized that the Canadian media represents attitudes that exhibit orientalism in the case of sex-selective abortion in Canada. I also added two sub-hypotheses which state: i) Canadian media represent

the practice of sex-selective abortion as one that belongs to cultures that devalue women and

ii) Canadian media represent the practice of sex-selective abortion as an immigrant problem.

Through a thematic content analysis, I found that SSA practices in Canadian media are represented as imported practices that have been “brought in” through immigration and are associated specifically with Asian and South Asian cultures. I find that the practice of SSA in Canada is predominantly represented in the media in an orientalist manner and as a practice that belongs to countries where misogyny is common. Additionally, I also find that the practice of SSA is othered, and that South Asians are especially targeted. Further, I also find that the orientalized body of the South Asian is posited as the subaltern as evidenced by representations in the media that come from third party representatives rather than from those who have practiced SSA in Canada firsthand. Sex-selective abortion practices are othered; they are represented as a practice inherent to cultures that do not value women – hence, cultures that are said to be different from the Canadian emphasis on gender equality. The media presents SSA as an imported practice that belongs outside of Canadian society. South Asian communities in Canada are represented as the ethnic group that primarily practices SSA, despite the research cited by the CMAJ stating other East and South-East Asians are practicing SSA as well. These important findings contribute to the scholarship on ethnic minority representation in the media and to the growing body of literature that demonstrates orientalist and racist attitudes represented in the media towards practices that are deemed foreign or non-traditional.

It is important to understand how ethnic minorities are represented, especially in pluralistic societies like Canada. This research reveals how ethnic minorities are perceived or understood based on how they are represented in the media. As Mahtani (2001) explains, this

has psychological implications for ethnic minorities as it instills an inferiority complex in these groups and given the influential role of the media, these groups may begin to internalize these representations. This can be damaging from a sociological and psychological perspective, hence the relevance of this research. At the macro-level, examining negative media representations such as orientalism shown by my research in the case of sex-selective abortion practices in Canada could have impacts that impede immigrant integration and lead to segregation and cultural divide which have significant implications for immigration and immigration related policy.

There are a number of limitations to this research. Limitations include the sample size, method of thematic content analysis (rather than more nuanced Critical Discourse Analysis), and a fairly short reference period. This sample is not representative of all Canadian views or of all Canadian media as it looks at a small sample of newspaper articles. Further, within Canadian media, there are a number of affiliated companies, which subsequently may reflect particular political views and therefore again, may not be representative. It has been found that ownership in Canadian media is a monopoly; media outlets tend to belong to a group of wealthy and white men, which may influence the types of representation of visible minorities in the media (Ojo, 2006). This research also set a reference period, therefore limiting the scope of time. As a result, coverage of the topic of SSA before 2011 and after 2013 is not reflected in the discussion. With minimal evidence that SSA is being practiced in Canada, inferences made using the information presented by the media may not necessarily represent the majority of the population either. As more literature on the practice of SSA in Canada becomes available, another larger and more representative media analysis would be useful in understanding the

context of how SSA practices are viewed in Canada and how this would more broadly contribute to the body of research on ethnic minority representations in the media. It would also be interesting to study if and how SSA is discussed by the so-called ethnic press.

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Appendix

Sex ratio at birth (male births per female births)							
Country Name	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Average
Canada	1.053	1.0536	1.0542	1.0548	1.0554	1.056	1.0545
United States	1.048	1.0482	1.0484	1.0486	1.0488	1.049	1.0485
Mexico	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Brazil	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Australia	1.056	1.0558	1.0556	1.0554	1.0552	1.055	1.0555
Belgium	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
France	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052
Germany	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058
Italy	1.063	1.063	1.063	1.063	1.063	1.063	1.063
Japan	1.056	1.056	1.056	1.056	1.056	1.056	1.056
Netherlands	1.058	1.0574	1.0568	1.0562	1.0556	1.055	1.0565
Spain	1.064	1.064	1.064	1.064	1.064	1.064	1.064
Sweden	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06
Switzerland	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052
United Kingdom	1.051	1.051	1.051	1.051	1.051	1.051	1.051
Russian Federation	1.058	1.0584	1.0588	1.0592	1.0596	1.06	1.059
Panama	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Jamaica	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Haiti	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Nigeria	1.059	1.059	1.059	1.059	1.059	1.059	1.059
South Africa	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03
Egypt, Arab Rep.	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Tanzania	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03
Morocco	1.059	1.0592	1.0594	1.0596	1.0598	1.06	1.0595
Algeria	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
Congo, Dem. Rep.	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03
Romania	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058	1.058
Poland	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06
Serbia	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052	1.052
China	1.17	1.168	1.166	1.164	1.162	1.16	1.165
India	1.108	1.108	1.108	1.108	1.108	1.108	1.108
Philippines	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06
Korea, Dem. Rep.	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05
New Zealand	1.055	1.055	1.055	1.055	1.055	1.055	1.055

Data from database: Gender Statistics - Last Updated: 12/16/2014