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From the Ground Up: Tactical Mobilization of Grief in the Case of the Afzaal-Salman Family Killings

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Abstract This paper focuses on the murders of the Afzaal-Salman family in London, Ontario (Canada) in June, 2021. Immediately after the murders were reported, several hashtags on different social media emerged, focusing attention on the victims and commenting on the Islamophobia that resulted in their deaths. Through a critical discourse analysis of one of these hashtags, #OurLondonFamily that was used on Twitter and Instagram, this paper examines how grief becomes a conveyor of subjugated histories and experiences of Islamophobia, and a conduit through which the politics of identity surface. The paper argues that social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram allow for affective expressions of grief, demonstrating a networked sociality and articulating politics of opposition from the ground up. The affective publics that are engendered include activists and NGOs, whose social worthiness, high number of followers, coordinated and committed attention provides traction that allows for collective grieving that can be politically mobilized. As tactical trajectories, social media posts rupture the spectacle of a harmonious multicultural Canada.

Keywords Afzaal-Salman family, Canada, London Attacks, Islamophobia, Twitter, Instagram, Spectacular Deaths, Tactics, Michel de Certeau, Guy Debord, Social Media.

Death is the problem of the living. Dead people have no problems.
Norbert Elias, (2001, p. 3)

INTRODUCTION[1]

On June 6, 2021, the Afzaal-Salmans, a Pakistani-Canadian Muslim family, stepped out for a stroll after dinner in their hometown of London, Ontario, Canada. A twenty-year old white male driver drove his truck into them, killing four of the five member-family, leaving behind only 9-year-old Fayez Afzaal-Salman as the sole survivor. Fayez was rushed to the hospital with injuries. The four who were killed included his parents, his grandmother and his sister.

These murders sent a shockwave through the local London community and the nation at large. Muslim communities across the country were appalled and shaken out of their sense of security and their belief in the official Canadian rhetoric of Canada as an affirming multicultural nation. Yet, the 'London Attack', as it was quickly labelled in the mainstream media, made it all the more apparent that Islamophobia is as rife in Canada as it is elsewhere in the world (Farokhi, 2021). The victimization of Muslims is persistent across the country, albeit taking on different vectors and intensities depending on the histories, levels of migration, socio-economic conditions and a host of other factors into account in each of the provinces (Mercier-Dalphond & Helly, 2021).

Race, intersecting with religious identity, has also intensified the victimization of Muslims with those who are visibly different as in South Asians and Pakistanis, or those who are marked as different through clothing and other religious signifiers (see also Haque, 2010; Wilkins, 2018; Truelove, 2019), more vulnerable to violence. Jasmin Zine contends: "Muslims have been constructed as the 'enemies

within' and represent the new folk devils that threaten the stability of the nation." This has resulted in an increased hatred towards Muslims as there has been 151% increase in Islamophobia related hate crimes from 2016 to 2017 (Zine, 2019).

These figures point to the everyday violence that Muslims encounter. However, it is only when spectacular or high-profile incidents of such violence occur that they are reported on by the media. These, however, only penetrate the public conscious briefly or result in some form of political performances. Such performances are the hallmarks of major commemorative events, as for example, public death rituals focusing on the victims of the 2017 Quebec Mosque shooting, and more recently, the murders of the Afzaal-Salman family members, wherein the political elites come together, articulate their condolences, and promise that Muslims will be protected from such crimes of hate.

In this article, I examine the Afzaal-Salman murders in terms of its mediated spectacularity, which is made possible by the intense media coverage of the tragedy. I argue that through social media platforms, like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, users seize instances of such spectacular violence to reflect on the pervasive, systemic and viral nature of Islamophobia as it impacts the daily lives of Muslims across Canada. In demonstrating the argument, I utilize Michel de Certeau's analysis of 'making do' in the practice of everyday life as a tactic of resistance against the spectacle of consumer culture and the mediated spectacularization of such high-profile murders as those of the Afzaal-Salman family. In focusing on the spectacle, I draw on Guy Debord's influential work *The Society of the Spectacle* (1983) in which he defines the spectacle as symptomatic of contemporary capitalist society with its heightened, mediated focus on objects. The spectacle captures public attention and as a site for mediating relations, legitimizes representations of power. I situate the spectacularization of the murders within the perspective of digital death studies, paying particular attention to how web-based memorialization of the Afzaal-Salman murders were mobilized for political ends and thereby ruptured the spectacularization of high-profile murders by destabilizing the official representation of Canada as an egalitarian, multicultural haven.

Theoretical Framework

To critically theorize how the Afzaal-Salman murders were viewed, I begin with the discussion of Michel de Certeau 's 'making do' followed by the notion of the spectacle as defined by Debord, and then situate this within the literature on digital memorials with respect to the ambient networks of sociality they generate and sustain. I then apply aspects of these frameworks to a case analysis of the Afzaal-Salman murders.

On 'Making Do'

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau draws attention to how those with less power utilize tactics of resistance in their daily lives. He defines a tactic as

> "…a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. … The space of a tactic is the space of the Other. Thus, it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight and self-collection: it is a maneuver 'within the enemy's field of vision' …" (2000, p. 169).

The tactic, he argues is mobile. It symbolizes a way of 'making do' against hegemonic structures of power. Tactical trajectories, de Certeau argues, "select fragments taken from the vast ensembles of production in order to compose new stories with them" (2000, p. 167). Within this framework, it can be argued that user-generated content on social media constitute one such form of tactical intervention. They are tactics against the strategy of containment, of normativity, allowing for an expression of self

and of politics that are otherwise dismissed, trivialized or denigrated by the wider society. Tactics of intervention constitute 'ways of making do'. For marginalized groups, tactical trajectories authorize 'cultures of truth,' (Hamilton, 2009) making evident subjugated realities and articulating counter-narratives. NGOs, whose mandates are aligned with the needs of marginalized groups, similarly 'make do' with the technological supports and affordances that social media platforms provide by amplifying particular messages that emanate from marginalized communities (Olson, 2016).

SPECTACULAR DEATH

In the *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord (1983) defines the spectacle as an illusionary image, appellated by consumer culture, wherein the image becomes the mediating point of human relations. As Shukaitis (2014) clarifies, the spectacle "is not a thing or an object, but the condition where relations are mediated by images; … it is not simply the proliferation of media forms and technologies, but rather the transformation of social relations through the transformation of how they are mediated" (p. 256). High-profile murders that summon government elites and the mass public in ceremonial commemorations are constitutive of such spectacles. Extensively reported on by the mass media, they compel societal recognition of the tragedy, while at the same time, offering sites where mourning can be expressed in a legitimized and sanctioned fashion. Drawing from Debord, Jacobsen (2016) argues that 'Spectacular death'

> inaugurates an obsessive interest in appearances that simultaneously draws death near and keeps it at arm's length – it is something that we witness at a safe distance with equal amounts of fascination and abhorrence, we wallow in it and want to know about it without getting too close to it (2016, p. 10; see also Walter et al, 2012).

The Afzaal-Salman murders were spectacularized in this way, with widespread coverage in both mainstream and alternative, community-based media, as well as on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. However, the spectacle in the Debordian sense of the term, belies the real relations of power (see also Jacobsen, 2016). In the case of the Afzaal-Salman murders, the spectacle of public mourning maintained the imagined Canadian community as one that is caring, compassionate and egalitarian. To be sure, the kind of integrative propaganda (Jiwani & Al-Rawi, 2020) that such death rituals circulate deflects attention away from the systemic Islamophobia that pervades society, while at the same time smoothing out the cracks and fissures created by such killings. With the Afzaal-Salman murders, the focus was on the shock and horror of how this could happen in a smaller Canadian city and that the perpetrator was a white Canadian. The ensuing coverage of political elites such as the Prime Minister of Canada, the Mayor of the city of the London, the provincial premier and many others condemnation of the murders, also reflected their insistence that London was not a racist city, and that such abhorrent acts could not be tolerated in multicultural Canada. Even the New York Times headlined their story on the murders in the following way, "As a Family is Mourned, Canada Grapples with Anti-Muslim Bias" (Austen, 2021), implying that this was a novel phenomenon even though these murders happened just four years after the Quebec Mosque shootings in 2017.

DIGITAL MEMORIALS AND PUBLIC MOURNING

Increasing attention has been paid to how social media platforms have amplified the power and mobilization of social movements (Gerbaudo, 2012; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). The affordances of these platforms also allow for an increased expression of individualistic performances and politics that are

grounded in looser networks of affinity, whether these be primordial or situationally constructed in nature (Gotved, 2014). The emerging literature on the use of these platforms to express grief resulting from the loss of loved ones attests to the networks of sociality (Döveling, Harju & Sommer, 2018) that spring up around web-based memorials, as for example the RIP pages on Facebook (Brubaker & Vertesi, 2010; Kasket, 2012). Carroll and Landry (2010) suggest that "social networking platforms enable and empower those marginalized by traditional forms of grief to stay connected to the deceased" (p. 1130), forming in the process a 'collective memorial landscape' (Veale, 2004). As Pennington (2013) remarks: "The contemporary available technologies, together with platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, allow ordinary people to create their own digital narratives by writing, filming and publishing details of their lives. These blogs, tweets and videos then build into a collection of enduring digital memories" (p. 1135). The intertextuality between these platforms is a critical affordance that allows for the magnification and enhanced virality of the message through the fluid crossover of digital artefacts of mourning across platforms (Harju & Huhtamäki, 2021).

It is the connection between marginalized status of communities and access to these technologies that allows for micro-histories of subordinated groups to emerge. These histories can, through accumulation and sedimentation, contest dominant histories (Nora, 2002). In that sense, they are interventions that create disturbances in the hegemonic order, or, in de Certeau's (1984) framework, constitute the tactics of the weak. However, what gives them the power and potency to effect change or alter how particular deaths can be considered grievable (Butler, 2004), is both their alignment with normative values and the sheer multitude of those involved in these networks of sociality that frame how an event is framed and interpreted. NGOs and individual activists are critical in this regard as they enable personal expressions of grief to be harnessed into collective action frames and thereby generate the momentum for social change (see for instance, Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Collective action frames are initiated and organized by established organizations and collectives. Importantly, it is the combined impact of both that results in what Bennet and Segerbeg (2012, p. 740), drawing on Tilley, define as 'WUNC' - worthiness, unity, numbers of those involved and commitment reflected by users/members that moves a personal action frame out of the confines of individual networks and onto a plane of digitally networked social action.

Social media platforms provide one window through which we can observe the range of emotive networks that emerged in response to the Afzaal-Salman murders. These emotive networks are the affective chains of relationality that bond individuals into what Papacharissi (2016) has described as affective publics: "networked publics that are mobilized and connected, identified and potentially disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (p. 311). Thus, Twitter and other social media platforms like Instagram, have affordances that enable organizations and activists to mobilize and escalate personal expressions of mourning and reimagining group identities. This is especially true of marginalized groups who use social media platforms to construct counter-narratives that resist hegemonic representations (Bonilla & Yarimar, 2015).

VERNACULAR MEMORIALS

As soon as the Afzaal-Salman attack was reported, social media platforms were abuzz with pictures of the spontaneous memorials erected on the site of the attack, pictures of the victims, and messages regarding the pervasive Islamophobia in the city of London (Ontario). Such spontaneous memorials, as Maddrell (2012) has argued, represent the vernacular in contrast to the spectacular mediatized memorials that capture media attention and summon a wide swath of the public and political elites. However, vernacular memorials can and do co-exist alongside the spectacular but, unlike the latter, persist over a longer period. What lengthens their lifespan is also the digital platforms on which they are posted. As Bhattacharya (2010, p. 71) has observed, "Private grief gets

transformed into communal mourning on these websites as the medium facilitates participation in and sharing of personal memory on a public forum". In this sense, digital memorials on social media platforms constitute "memory communities" (Silberman & Purser, 2012) because they act as referent points for subsequent actions, and through their accretion over time, they form a sedimented bedrock of knowledge that is continually invoked through reminiscences via their resemblance to other events. These constitute, in de Certeau's terms, tactical trajectories. Viewed cumulatively, they constitute micro-histories of particular groups. The algorithms embedded in various platforms also mobilize the formation of enclaves that are reflective of the affective, imagined communities that have formed around particular events (Lim, 2020).

Fig. 1. Tweeted image of a spontaneous memorial in London

However, it is the spectacularization of death via the mass media and its intertextual presence on digital platforms that propels particular deaths into the public limelight, and that fuels the transversal of personal grief encapsulated in digital memorials into digitally networked activism.

Given the significant role that social media platforms play, the questions remain as to how did the affective publics that emerged as a result of the Afzaal-Salman murders respond on social media platforms? And, in the context of widespread Islamophobia, how were the victims constituted as grievable considering the heightened national and international attention focused on their murders, the extensive public mourning rituals that emerged to commemorate their unfortunate deaths? Further, how were messages of mourning and grief conveyed and translated into a networked activism that cast light on the widespread Islamophobia in the Canadian context and called for concrete actions?

METHODOLOGY

Immediately upon hearing about the Afzaal-Salman murders in the news media, a media scan of all captured tweets that were posted on the day of the attack and the rest of that week was conducted while also attending to the posts that accrued after July 29 (when a virtual memorial was organized

by the Western University). Instagram and Facebook posts, as well as the news coverage that was published in the *Canadian Globe and Mail*, *La Presse, Le Journal de Montréal,* and *Le Devoir* and posted on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Global News websites were examined. Ultimately, the hashtag #OurLondonFamily was chosen as it was used frequently across all sites, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Further, these posts were also retweeted with many of the aforementioned hashtags creating a digital cluster. We found 97 tweets on Twitter in the first week with many more thereafter. Instagram reported 5,751 posts and Facebook showed 7.5K posts under this hashtag.

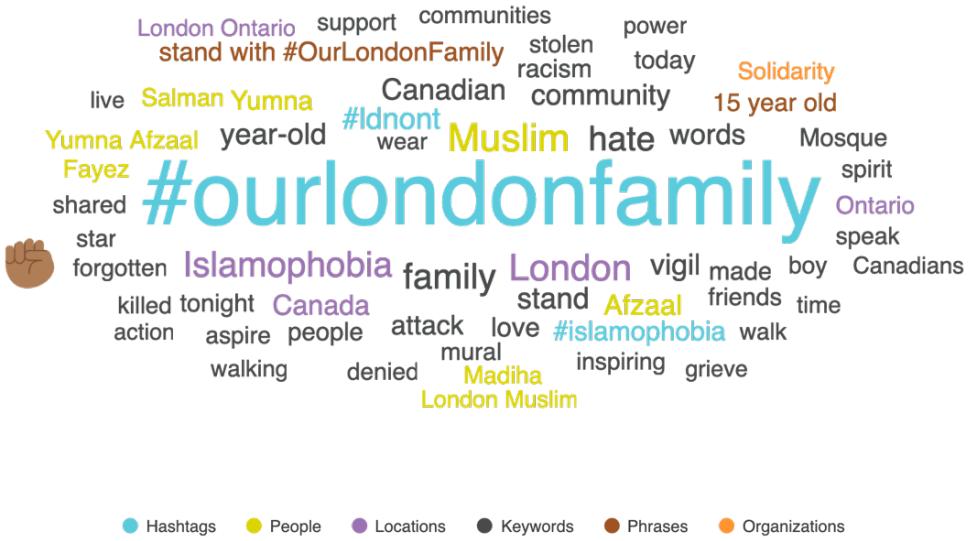

Fig. 2. Word cloud based on recurring words in coverage, courtesy of Zeinab Farokhi

While each platform has its own affordances, Instagram has the added feature of sharing the visuals that are posted on it as well as 'live stories' that are only visible for 24 hours. Further, the hashtag allows the image to be tagged to other conversations within Twitter (Gibbs et al., 2015). Instagram also affords mobility in that it is used through mobile devices and hence captures the mundane as well as the spectacular. Twitter, on the other hand, has its own affordances with respect to its word limit (now 280 characters), possibility of connecting with other hashtags around similar issues, anonymity, and low-level affordances which allow retweeting, liking, and sharing. Both Instagram and Twitter enable the circulation of affect, and through affective alignment, facilitate the formation of what Döveling et al (2018, p. 2) call "digital affect cultures".

Twitter's architectural feature that allows for individual subscribers to join NGOs and other groups (beyond friend-to-friend contact) is worth noting, given that the hashtag #OurLondonFamily was designed and introduced by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), and hence its uptake and viral spread was amplified as a result (see also Geboers & Van de Wiele, 2020 on this feature). Instagram also shares this feature and like Twitter, conversations are contingent on the hashtags used rather than being posted around the profile of the deceased or on a Facebook wall (Gibbs et al., 2015).

Using Entman's (1993) concept of frame analysis, the major frames embedded in the posts focusing on these attacks were analyzed. Entman defines framing as "*select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the

item described" (emphasis in the original). He adds, "frames diagnose, evaluate and prescribe…" (p. 52). Analyzing the frames that were embedded in the various posts involved examining them in terms of their dominant messages, their definition of the situation, interpretations of the attacks and their calls for action. I was particularly interested in how these frames gained momentum by mobilizing grief (see Morse, 2018) to pressure for particular outcomes. This is similar to how Entman utilizes frame analysis to highlight the 'cascading activation' (2003) of the White House's interpretive frames of the 9/11 attacks and how these frames spread to other levels, cascading down to journalists' reportage of the attacks.

For the purposes of this paper, I focus on #OurLondonFamily in both Twitter and Instagram reflecting the intertextuality that is facilitated across both platforms. The hashtag was introduced by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), an organization that has 11.8K followers on Twitter, 13.5K followers on Instagram and 18,298 followers on Facebook, along with 4,725 followers for its Alberta chapter. It is also linked to numerous other organizations. The Afzaal-Salman family quickly became "Our London Family," epitomized by the numerous posts accruing under the hashtag #OurLondonFamily. The hashtag, as Papacharissi (2016) argues, "serve as framing devices that allow crowds to be rendered into publics; networked publics that want to tell their story collaboratively in their own terms" (p. 308). The use of "our" in this hashtag demonstrates a linguistic severing of the stereotype of Muslims as Others, as outsiders to the nation. Hence, "our" designates a possessive attribute. In framing the attacks against "our family", the NCCM clearly sought to embrace the victims, enfolding them within the larger Muslim community or the ummah.

In selecting illustrative examples for each of these frames, I anonymized the data when it involved individual posts but retained the names of the organizations that were involved or artists that were posting their work.

Fig. 3. An Instagram post of support featuring the #OurLondonFamily hashtag

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ACTION

#OurLondonFamily

#OurLondonFamily represents a vehicle not only for the collective expression of grief but also the politics that surround Muslim bodies. Using a qualitative inductive approach, I identified the main frames emerging from the coverage, which included: 1) grief and a collective mourning of the loss of the Afzaal-Salman family members which were also intertwined with messages of unity and support, e.g. "We stand with #OurLondonFamily," and "uniting against hate and racism"; 2) fear among Muslims and particularly Muslim women that they too would be the targets of such attacks; 3) a condemnation of Islamophobia that referenced previous attacks; 4) a call for action on confronting Islamophobia and holding the government and politicians accountable. Below, I discuss these in more detail paying particular attention to how collective grieving, experiences of fear and Islamophobia, and calls for action and accountability are entangled and cumulatively layered in these posts (Gibbs et al., 2015). These highly participatory communities functioned to keep alive the micro-histories of violence that Muslim communities across Canada are subjected to, whilst also enabling a registering of collective grief and shock.

In tracing the progression of this coverage, it is apparent that the immediate response was one of shock and fear which is akin to Entman's (1993) criteria of frames as defining the situation, followed by a recalling of the patterns of previous incidents of Islamophobia, critiques of the government and political elites, (or, in Entman's words, offering a causal interpretation), and then the calls for action, which in frame analysis are akin to recommending particular solutions. In actuality, all of these messages were intermingled within the larger frame of mourning, but for the sake of analytical clarity, they are separated out here and illustrated below.

MAJOR FRAMES

1. Grief and Collective Mourning

One of the main frames that organizes all these posts is grief and collective mourning. These messages diagnosed the immediate situation at hand, namely the loss that was immediately experienced. Memorials which were posted on both Instagram and Twitter reflected the sorrow that was felt throughout both the local and national communities. They also underscored the lone child that was the sole survivor, generating both solidarity for him (through a subsequent GoFundMe campaign), and messages of condolences. Accompanying the focus on the lone child survivor, were numerous tweets and posts about the upcoming vigils and marches against hate. As evident in the visual image above, posted on Instagram and subsequently on Twitter, the child is positioned with his hands holding his head in what could be construed as a gesture of despair but also as puzzlement on how this could have happened. Surrounding him are the flowers indicative of the spontaneous shrines that emerged at the site of the attack. The crescent moon near his feet symbolizes Islam, but instead of the star that is usually next to it, the artist had placed the symbol of the heart indicating love. Solidarity was a major theme interwoven in these expressions of grief as also evident in the caption on the poster behind the child 'Love for all, hatred for none,' expressing the alignment of users who liked (214) and retweeted (111) this post.

At the same time, many of the tweets that expressed sorrow and solidarity for the family also emphasized their members of the Afzaal-Salman family had contributed to society, their educational achievements and their compassionate and caring personalities. This clearly positioned them as grievable victims (Butler, 2004).

Remember them:
-Madiha, 44
-Salman, 46
-Yumna Afzaal, 15
-Talat, 74

Survived by the son Fayez, 9 💔

End the hate against Muslims.

#London #Ontario #OurLondonFamily

Fig. 4. A Twitter memorial honouring Fayez Afzaal

2. Fear

In immediate aftermath of the murders, there were numerous tweets that emphasized fear. This frame was predicated on the interpretation of the murders as stemming from Islamophobia and its implications for all Muslims. This interpretation makes a causal connection between the appearance of difference and how that difference is defined by society. On Instagram and Twitter, many users expressed their fear of being attacked because they were Muslim, and of going for walks because they were physically identifiable. One compelling visual posted on Instagram shows four silhouettes with a lone child. The silhouettes suggest that anyone who wears these types of clothes can be

targeted. The text confirms this fear pointing to how somatechnological differences (in this case clothes) can be used as identifiers that make particular groups vulnerable to violence.

Fig. 5. Artwork posted on Instagram communicating the fear

The caption in the visual above eloquently captures the fear that was pervasive among Muslims: "I can't help but think that this could've been my family". The soft grey colour reflects an affect of mourning, invoking feelings of sadness. The four silhouetted figures with halos represent the deceased, and the young boy in blue (again indicating sadness and loneliness) represents Fayez, the sole 9-year-old survivor. The words "Could've been my family" reveal how the attacks could have targeted anyone who looked different, or anyone that fit the prototype of the silhouetted figure. It suggests that no one in the Muslim community at large is safe from such violence. As well, the words "could've" and "my family" reflect alignment and affective proximity.

Fear was also echoed in many other posts, especially by users who expressed concerns about their mothers who wear hijabs and traditional clothing going for walks or taking public transit. Safety was thus manifested as a paramount concern, similar to that featured in anecdotal and other accounts from Muslims in the aftermath of the tragic attacks of 9/11 (Akram, 2002; Ryan, 2011). The emotion of fear can be noticed in the below tweets:

> I told my mom she shouldn't take walks (often in shalwar kameez and a duputta) in the evening after dinner, especially by herself. She told me that she worries every time I'm out that someone would try to run me off the road. So yeah. We're not okay. #cdnpoli #ldnont. (SM, June 7, 2021).

> thinking of all the after dinner walks I used to go on with my family and grandma, wearing home clothes (Pakistani salwar kamiz). So we enjoyed our evenings and the summer breeze, how many people looked upon us with hate, but just a touch shy of expressing it through violence? (SS, June 7, 2021).
>
> For the first time in my life in Canada, I was scared to walk home with my kids from the park. Whenever a car would drive by, I would flinch. #Islamophobia #Londonattack #OurLondonFamily. (SP, June 10, 2021)

In each of these instances, the women expressed their fears of walking home alone, of being run over by cars, of being hated. This degree of quotidian violence is rarely expressed in the mainstream media, and if expressed, is often dismissed and trivialized. These tweets showcase how the affordabilities of social network sites allow for the expression of certain emotions that are otherwise not possible.

3. Condemnation of Islamophobia through Layered Resonances

Another major frame that was apparent cohered around the genealogies of previous incidents of Islamophobia. Here, Entman's analysis of frames as incorporating causal interpretations and moral evaluation is at play. For example, the tweet below which was also posted on Instagram depicts the names of all those who had voted in favour of the Barbaric Cultural Practices Act passed in 2015 (Branch, 2021) that amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code. The act was introduced to prohibit polygamy, forced child marriages, and the removal of children from Canada in order to forcibly marry them elsewhere. While the Act does not refer to Muslims as such, all of its attributes and measures to be implemented were implicitly associated with Muslim communities. That aside, naming these acts as 'Barbaric Cultural Practices Act,' implied that such barbaric cultural practices do not occur within Canada and are not committed by non-Muslim, white Canadians. To this day, references to 'barbaric cultural practices' are inscribed in the documents provided to newcomers who are applying for Citizenship (Gulliver, 2018). The image shows the silhouettes of the deceased with the names written in the background suggesting how those who voted for the Act were complicit in allowing Islamophobia to claim the lives of the Afzaal-Salman family. Not only does this reflect a political alignment with a condemnation of Islamophobia but it also demonstrates an affective alignment with the victims of legislated Islamophobia.

The connection between 'barbaric cultural practices' and the attack on the Afzaal-Salman family is evident in a tweet, on June 9, just days after the shooting, when a user, LB posted,

> Remember when a Prime Minister wanted a snitch line for "barbaric cultural practices" and referenced "old stock Canadians" during an election campaign to appeal to his base? That was 2015. We can't be shocked that Canada is rife with racism.

A tweet posted by FK, recalled the Quebec Mosque shooting, drawing the attention to the pattern of Islamophobic violence in Canada:

> Remember after the Quebec massacre they promised us it wouldn't happen again? They told us we shouldn't be afraid. They told us that we were safe. They told us things would change, but they didn't (FK, June 13).

Fig. 6. Artwork posted to Twitter calling out complicit politicians

Other users went beyond Canada and link the violence against Muslims to the wars occurring in the Middle East:

> I'm sad & actually scared for my family. But I also just want to say that you cannot talk about Islamophobia in any meaningful way without talking about imperialism & the ravaging of entire regions through war. All comments/apologies that don't address this are utterly empty #londont (RA, June 8).

All of these tweets highlight the transnational aspect of Islamophobia. Further, they invoke past incidents to demonstrate a pattern which challenges the framing of the Afzaal-Salman murders as an episodic case – an aberrant tragedy. Moreover, the tweet calls attention to the disalignment between the political posturing of politicians who promised safety and the reality of the continued victimization of Muslims. 'They' refers to the politicians who were always present at the commemorative ceremonies such as the funerals, and who continually repeated in the media, that there was no room for Islamophobia in Canada. The "us" reflects the user's alignment with the victims.

MF posted a tweet in which he wrote, "So revealing of the @fordnation government. Showing up at a vigil is not sufficient and means little if you can't back it up with other actions, including in the legislature" (June 11, 2021). This again highlights the discrepancy between the political rhetoric and the reality on the ground for Muslims living in Canada.

Taken together, these posts underscore the 'memory communities' that are operative. By drawing attention to past events, connecting present attacks to previous incidents, these users demonstrate the pattern of systemic Islamophobia that is pervasive in Canadian society. The duplicity and complicity of politicians is highlighted against this backdrop—a backdrop that is often rendered invisible and exnominated.

Tweets also referenced parallel events concerning Islamophobia, as for example the tweet below from the Muslim Daily, a humanitarian organization based in the UK:

Fig. 7. Tweet calling attention to Canadian Islamophobic video

Posted on June 10, this tweet underscores the continuing presence of Islamophobia. The shot features a similar scenario as to when the Afzaal-Salman family went out for a walk. But here, the caption explicitly asks for a Nathaniel Veltman, to enact the same kind of violence that he did when he ran his truck into the Afzaal-Salman family. The red circle around the family identifies them as targets. Again, the sentiment of fear that this tweet provokes is tangible – any Muslim is a walking target and demonstrates the affective alignment of the Muslim Daily (whose Instagram account has 543k followers) with the victims of the London murders.

4. Calls to Action

Emergent and entangled with this discourse were calls to action, from simple calls to join the vigils, marches against Islamophobia and racism, to holding politicians accountable for what were often framed as empty words of condolences. These calls to action can be broadly understood as prescriptions for action. The following tweets reveal such themes:

> Muslim communities, like others that experience hate, need ACTION, not thoughts-&-prayers. Performativity – expressing shock while doing nothing – is the opposite of action. No one has time for that anymore (RBM, June 11, 2021).

> I was very angry when I wrote my column this month about #OurLondonFamily this week. As so many others have echoed, we are way past the point of accepting this is Canada. We need more action or else deaths like these – murders – will keep happening (SM, June 12, 2021).

In calling for action, users also drew from other sources, namely print media and columns written by the journalists who subsequently tweeted them. One example is Amira Elghawaby, a well-known anti-racism activist who frequently writes for mainstream and alternative media. Her opinion piece in *The Toronto Star* was repeatedly retweeted. In it, Elghawaby outlines the possible next steps that can be taken to combat Islamophobia (Elghawaby, 2021). One can see how the crossover between messages posted on social media sites and print media also help generate a collective interpretive community. In her article, Elghawaby mentions previous incidents of violence against Muslims with a lead in, stating: "Even before the mass murder of the Afzaal family, Canada's Muslim communities have been on edge." Similarly, Noor Javed, another journalist wrote a piece in *The Toronto Star*, titled "Are you scared mama? Years of anti-Muslim hate chip away at you. The killing of the Afzaal family in London broke me" (Javed, 2021), which was subsequently retweeted by many. In that account, Javed references other incidents such as the murder of Mohamed Aslim Zafis in another small town in Ontario, the Quebec Mosque shooting, and the hate directed her through comments that she received after publishing her stories. One can see here the cascade effect of these news articles as they get retweeted and reposted on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The intertextuality of these posts – reflecting the reposting of content from other social networking sites and printed news stories demonstrate an ambient affiliation that is characterized by fear and resistance to Islamophobia, as well as an ambient collective affect of grief (Zappavigna, 2011).

On June 10, the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) issued a petition calling on the government to convene a National Action Summit on Islamophobia. In a tweet posted on June 11, the petition had already accumulated 48,925 signatures. Another tweet posted the same day also exhorted its followers to support the call for the Summit. AH retweeted the NCCM's post which asked for signatories to the petition, mentioning that already hundreds of organizations had signed an open letter to the government.

Fig. 8. Instagram call to action on National Action Summit on Islamophobia

This call was soon joined by others, as for example, 'Fearless Minds' whose image ran with the description, "We at Fearless Minds invite you to contribute whatever you can to fighting for true justice for the victims involved with not only the London Attack, but for all those who have been robbed of their humanity because of their culture, ethnicity, and/or religion." The 'we' reflects an affective alignment with the victims and others who are discriminated against.

Thereafter, the Muslim Association of Canada posted its call for action against Islamophobia for June 18. These ripples continued with other actions occurring concurrently. On June 19, Canadians Against Oppression & Persecution called for a Twitter Storm, identifying in their poster the relevant hashtags that people could use. The call was posted on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

On June 11, just days after the attack and in response to the groundswell of grassroots, civil society groups and NGOs articulating demands for justice, the Government of Canada announced that it would convene an "Emergency National Action Summit on Islamophobia" (Patel, 2021). The Summit subsequently took place on July 22nd 2021.

Fig. 9. Instagram call to join a Twitter Storm

CONCLUSION

The murders of the Afzaal-Salman family members activated the chain reaction that resulted in the Summit on Islamophobia. This was made possible by the personalized and collective messages of sorrow, fear and political mobilization that were embedded in the tweets posted by different users, retweets, and transversal of these messages across different platforms. Posts on Instagram and Twitter concerning the Afzaal-Salman murders reflect Entman's (1993) frame elements of diagnosis, evaluation and prescription in terms of how the immediate situation was defined, the causal interpretation that highlighted the connections between physical difference and moral valuation, and the transnational dimension of Islamophobia, along with its recurrent pattern. As well, the posts offered a prescription in terms of calling for action to end systemic Islamophobia through various means.

However, the affordances of Twitter and Instagram facilitated an amplification and virality of messages. In this sense, they were conducive in launching a volley of tactics against systemic Islamophobia; symbolic interventions that temporarily destabilize the myth of the harmonious and multicultural Canada, or in Debord's terms, the spectacle that is Canada. The tactics mounted

through Twitter handles like #OurLondonFamily and the various Instagram accounts that posted messages and compelling images reflect the users' ways of 'making do' – using whatever is available to subvert, critique, invert and counter the dominant frames. As tactics, they expressed a disalignment with the official discourse. At the end of the day, making do is what tactics enable, and as de Certeau (2000, p. 169) pointed out, tactics take "accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment."

Notwithstanding the amplifying power of the social media platforms that were utilized, a host of other actors and factors added gravitas to these messages. These included the clout and credibility of major NGOs with huge followings that amplified the messages posted on their social media platforms; journalists of print media who tweeted their opinion pieces and news items; the captivating images which artists and organizations posted that added volume and enhanced the transferability of these images, and of course the political elites who also tweeted about the tragedy and offered their solace to the victims and all those impacted. In this sense, the political mobilization that culminated in the official recognition of Islamophobia was due in part to the 'WUNC' (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment) factor (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), of various groups and individuals, all of which were made possible by the affordabilities of social media that allowed individuals and groups to 'make do' with what they had at their disposal.

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