MEDIA DISCOURSE: A COMPARE AND CONTRAST OF LANGUAGE USED TO
PORTRAY FEMALE OFFENDERS IN CANADA AND CHINA

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Canada and China

By
Meng Zimo

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Criminology.

March, 2019, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Approved: Dr. Rachael E. Collins

Assistant Professor

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ABSTRACT

Many studies were done to reveal that individual's perception towards certain group of
people is established and influenced by outside sources. Female is considered the vulnerable
group in the society and their presence in media is usually sensitive, especially with the case
of female offenders. Their actions are distorted and exaggerated, and a wrong image of
female offenders is delivered to the public. This phenomenon is not exclusive to one country,
but prevails in many other countries and cross different cultures. This paper aims to compare
and contrast how female offenders are portrayed by media in Canada and China. All 44
articles collected from Toronto Stars, Beijing Legal Times, and Wang Yi were categorized
and analyzed through the use of content analysis, seven themes were created to help the
researcher conclude and analyze the patterns in regard to female offender's misrepresentation
in media. The results have showed that while Canadian media is less likely to objectify
female offenders than its Chinese counterpart, both countries' media tend to adhere to
patriarchal values when depicting them.

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INTRODUCTION

Media is not a monologue; it is a conversation between the public and itself. In order to maintain this conversation, and gain more readerships, media tends to distort and sensationalize what actually happened. However, during this process, public's perception towards certain groups will be shaped and influenced by how media portrays them (Hollander & Rodgers, 2014). Female offenders are usually overrepresented by media, their actions are exaggerated and their images are distorted. This depiction has led to public's perception of an increased female crime rate, and thus broke the historically established gender stereotype and expectation that women are less capable of committing crime. This study aims to explore similar and different characteristics in how female offenders are depicted in both Canadian and Chinese media, and thus understand why they are portrayed in certain ways.

As Martinez, Marinescu, and Bohard (2009) suggest that what is produced by media is influenced by specific economic, cultural, and sociological structures. Media production may vary according to different social structures and constructions. Compare with Canada, a democratic country in the developed world; China is a socialist developing country with a population 37.8 times larger than Canada. However, despite the political, economic and geographical differences of these two countries, the historically established patriarchal expectation of female is similar in both countries. They all tend to view women as less capable of committing crime, especially violent crime. The result of this study found that media's depictions of female offenders tend to be different in these two countries with Canadian media focusing on defeminizing or dehumanizing violent female offenders, depriving their feminine characteristics and portraying them as "evil", and Chinese media

focusing on exploiting female offenders' commercial values, linking them to sex and violence.

The result also revealed that although due to the differences in their political, economic and

cultural settings, both Canadian and Chinese media portray female offenders differently,

because of their similar views of women's position in the society, media in these two

countries has all adhered to patriarchal expectations and values when depicting both violent

and non-violent female offenders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review includes articles written by both Canadian and Chinese

scholars on feminist criminology and media studies, I will analyze these articles to see how

scholars from these two countries interpret media's portrayal of female offenders differently.

Female Offenders in Canadian Media

In Cohen's Processual model, he identified four sets of important agents that contribute to the

production of moral panic: The mass media, moral entrepreneur, the control cultural and the

public (Crither, 2008). According to Cohen, it is the media that creates the most influence on

how the public perceives and targets specific groups. Sacoo states in his article, Media

Constructions of Crimes (1995) that:

   The ways in which the news media collect, sort, and contextualize crime reports help to

shape public consciousness regarding which conditions need to be seen as urgent problems,

what kinds of problems they represent, and, by implication, how they should be resolved. (p.

141)

It should be kept in mind that news media does not just convey the truth or the claims about certain problems revealed and proposed by the authorities passively, it distorts the image of what actually happened. As can be seen in Joel Best's analysis of television network news that usually news must be told in a few minutes and the topic needs to catch people's attention. That is to say, the selected topic needs to be serious enough to be chosen and presented to the public (1995). It is also important to note that media plays a primary role on the framing of social problem, since it has the ability to "legitimate some views and marginalize others" (1995, p. 149). In this way, media shapes how the public perceive certain issues and its attitude towards the targeted groups.

One example of how the media distorts and exaggerates the actual problem can be seen in the case of Reena Virk's murder. For instance, the title of many newspapers indicates the increasing trend of youth violence, and especially the increase of girl violence as Barron and Lacombe suggests (2005). Teenage violence is shocking, and when a violent or heinous crime was conducted by a girl, it became even more shocking to the public. As can be seen in the media that Ellard, who was fifteen-year-old at the time of the murder and considered the leader of the attack, was put in the center of the spotlight. Although the murder was conducted by both Ellard and Glowatski, Glowatski did not receive as much attention from media and academia as Ellard did. This phenomenon reflected the value held by the society that "boys will be boys" and that male violence towards female was normalized (Kilty, 2010, p. 158). Conversely, girls are always perceived by the society as more gentle, caring, and cooperative. They possess certain feminine traits that differ from their male counterparts, and these traits are what construct their social identity. This is why in the Reena Virk case, the

media and academia focused their attentions mostly on Ellard. Because the crime she

conducted was considered as a breach to her feminine role assigned by the society. As Collins

suggests it is because of this expectation of women imposed by the society, that female

offenders can be stigmatized twice-"as a criminal and as breaking the societal conventions of

female submission" (Collins, 2016, p.297).

Although statistic showed the rate female charged by police had dropped, the society still

perceives female offending rate as constantly increasing (Barron & Lacombe, 2005). This is

the work of what Cohen described as "moral entrepreneur". They are the ones who help to

create moral panics towards certain groups. More specifically, moral entrepreneur is an

individual or groups of people, organizations who use their position as strength to condemn

certain behaviors as deviance, target/marginalize others, and thus enforce social norms within

the society (Critcher, 2008). Barron and Lacombe suggest that crime data can be manipulated

and thus creates fear among the public. For instance, in the Reena Virk case, many "experts"

and authors all agreed on the perception that youth crime rate was increasing over the years,

especially in the case of girls' offending rate. One evidence they drew to prove this statement

was from a statistic provided by the Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, which showed that

"crime by young girls had increased 200 per cent since 1986" (Nolan, 1998, as cited in

Barron & Lacombe, 2005, p.55). Indeed, girl violence did increase according to the statistic.

However, they did not realize that this increase was mostly an increase in minor assault

which did not cause serious injury, and it was a result of the youth justice system's change in

"policy and charging practices than a real change in behavior" (Doob & Sprott, 1998 as cited

in Barron & Lacombe, 2005). As Statistics Canada revealed in 2000 that at the time of Reena

Virk's murder girls still conducted far less crimes than boys, and for murder conviction only 4.5% of the convicted were female.

With girl violence being perceived as a moral panic, it also brought about changes in the criminal justice system (the control cultural). For example, because of perceived increase in female violence, new policy was made to further criminalize women. This is reflected on the increasing rate of female charged with less violent crime due to the stricter monitoring of minor assaults (Steffensmeier et al. 2005, as cited in Collins, 2016), and the fact that since 2000 to 2009, female's charging rate is shown as constantly increasing comparing to their male counterparts (Mahony, Jacob & Hobson, 2011).

As the three previously mentioned agents (mass media, moral entrepreneur, and control culture) work together, public opinion is formed, and thus comes the moral panic. For instance, moral panic was created after the murder of Reena Virk, it was not only because of how the statistics data was manipulated to show an increase in the rate of girl violence, or the changing in law practice that reflected public desire, but also the message sent by the media that "the girl who is charged with second-degree murder could be the babysitter who minds your children" (Martin, 1998, as cited in Barron & Lacombe, 2005, p.54).

Like aforementioned, media is a conversation between the public and itself. Newsworthiness is the core value for journalists to consider before reporting the news (Oxman-Martinez, Marinescu & Bohard, 2009). In the case of crime news and gender, usually the crime reported was convicted by male offenders than female. Therefore, once a crime was conducted by female, it was considered as more newsworthy, and thus received more coverage from the media. Because of the patriarchal expectation the society imposed to

women, and the historically established gender stereotype, women are viewed as less capable

of conducting crime (especially violent crime). Therefore, once that happened, it broke the

norm and value held by the society, women would also be overrepresented by media and thus

generating a moral panic (Oxman-Martinez Marinescu & Bohard, 2009).

Media's Portrayal of Female Offenders: In the Case of Women Who Kill

According to Easteal et al. since females who committed a crime will be seen as breaking the

patriarchal expectations of women, media tends to construct female criminality in reference

of gender (2015). For instance, women who kill are categorized by media into three

categories: the mad, the bad, and the victim (Weare, 2013).

The Bad Woman

As Weare suggests, society views an individual who committed crime as being "bad", yet

when women became the criminals, they were not only labeled as bad, but also perceived by

the society as "wicked" (p. 346). This is due to the reason that women were seen as less

capable of committing crime, therefore once that happened, their behavior would be seen as a

breach to the gender norm and patriarchal values held by the main stream society. They are

labeled as bad once it is impossible to label them as either mad or victim. Weare gives the

example of when a woman killed her children and no explanations (i.e. not diagnosed as

mentally ill) could be applied to excuse her action. In this case, she would be seen as being

both "bad" for the murder she committed, and "wicked" since the murdering of her children

was perceived as breaking the gender expectation that women should be nurturing, and caring

(2013).

The Mad Woman and the Victim/Sad Woman

Unlike the Bad woman, women will be labeled by media as mad if they were diagnosed with mental illness or psychological issues. For instance, when a woman killed her abusive partner, she would be considered as lacking agency and recognized as the victim of her partner rather than an "active participant in defense of herself" (Morrissey, 2003, p. 17, as cited in Eastral et al. 2015, p.33). The American Psychologist Lenore Walker states that under constant violence perpetrated by male partners, battered women tend to develop a set of distinct characteristics such as low self-esteem, anxiety and they become more likely to blame themselves for the abuse they received (Nicolson & Sanghvi, 1993, p. 733, as cited in Weare, 2013, P.339). According to Noh, Tee and Feyley, media tends to portray battered women as "irrational or insane" since most of them suffered from mental illness or other psychological disorder (Noh, Tee & Fetley, 2010, P. 120, as cited in Easteal et al. 2015). This condition enables battered woman to be associated with madness or sadness and receive sympathy from both media and public, though her action will not be justified, it will be excused and thus allow her to receive a lenient sentence (Easteal et al. 2015).

Compare with the "bad woman", media portrays female who was labeled as mad or sad (victim) as more feminine than bad woman who broke the patriarchal norms and values by committing violent crime that cannot be justified or excused. For instance, Berrington and Honkatulkia suggests that media tends to incorporate the mad and sad woman's feminine appearance in their descriptions of the story, and "frame their act within an adherence to traditional female traits and fulfillment of domestic responsibility and/or as sexually and religiously pure" (Easteal et al. 2015, p. 32).

What is Created by Media's Misrepresentation of Female Criminality

With girl violence being perceived as problematic, it brought about changes in the criminal

justice system as mentioned earlier (the control cultural). Additionally, after the murder of

Reena Virk, teenage girls, more specifically, the "nasty girls" were perceived by the society

as the new "folk devils". As Barron and Lacombe discussed that girl violence is not a new

phenomenon, it is the attention they received is new (2005). This attention occurs because

nowadays more and more girls no longer fit into the patriarchal expectations for women, and

with girls involve in violent crime, it has threatened the norms and values held by the society.

As women conducted violent crime, they had broken the boundary between the male and

female expectation historically established by the male-dominant society. They no longer fit

into the patriarchal description that states female should be gentle, sweet, and caring. This

breach of expectation is exactly what the public is afraid of; not the girl violence itself, but

the fact that girl violence has reflected an overthrow of the old ideology towards women

presented in the 50s, and a change in social, political and economic status of women (2005).

It is important to note that those norms and values held by the patriarchal society are

exactly what the feminists are fighting against, and all the changes and improvements on

women's statues are the products of the feminist movement in the 1960s. Therefore, the

increase of girl violence is also seen as being produced by feminist movements. Just like

Barron and Lacombe state that "the moral panic over the Nasty Girl is part of a backlash

against feminism" (2005, p.64).

Female Offenders in Chinese Media

With the development of China's economy and technology, news media, which used to serve as a tool to convey the truth, and popularize legal knowledge for the public in case of crime news report, has now entered into the market economy. The operation of commercialization has resulted in the alienation of the news value (Huang, 2016). Nowadays, a large number of news media begins to see itself as the tool for entertainment. In order to attract people's attention to gain more profit, women are objectified and commercialized to satisfy the audience's desire and curiosity. During this process, different labels have been applied to women and thus exacerbated the gender stereotype in the society.

In the traditional Chinese society, women were used to be seen as subordinate to men, they were described as the Earth that should be nurturing and caring at home to support the Sky (their husbands). However, even with the establishment of new China, and under the new ideology that everyone should be treated equally, the old patriarchal value and norm developed under the feudal patriarchal system which states that men are superior to/stronger than women is still prevalent in the current patriarchal society. Women are still in a disadvantaged position in the society, and gender equality is not yet achieved. Therefore, patriarchal expectations that women should be submissive, weak, dependent, and nurturing are still applied to female (Zou & Chang 2014). Under this situation, Huang discovers that public usually expects women to be the victims of crimes reported by media; thus when they appeared as the perpetrators of crimes, they would receive a larger amount of attention from the public (2016). As mentioned previously, media tends to seek a conversation with the public. Therefore, when media discovered the increased attention paid to female offenders by

the public, it would further objectify and commercialize female offenders to satisfy the

public's desire and curiosity (in order to make more profit) (Huang, 2016). It is important to

note that this objectification and commercialization has led to an overrepresentation of female

offenders in media. It caused the public to perceive female offending rate as constantly

increasing, and had even exceeded male offending rate, despite the fact that the crime ratio of

male to female offender is 90 : 10 (Jiang, 2007).

Huang suggests that the overrepresentation of female offenders in media is actually a

reflection of the self-value chosen by the media. In case of crime news, every crime report is

to report the event itself, and every event is originated from an individual's behavior.

Therefore, a crime event is actually the product of that individual (offender), and this specific

individual is the leading actor in the crime event. As media reporting the crime event, it is

also constructing and framing the individual (offender) who created this event. With media

emphasizing its value and objective on gaining commercial profit, news report will aim for a

higher commercial value. This is to say, the top priority of media is to attract as much

audience as possible, and thus maximize the commercial profit. According to this kind of

value, the ways the individual (who created the event) is constructed and framed by the media

should and will also reflect the consumer's needs and desire. Under this influence, female

offenders are also constructed and framed in certain ways to satisfy the audience's desire and

curiosity (Huang, 2016, p.17).

The Construction of Female Offenders in Media in China

Following her analysis of how media's pursuit of market economy leads to the objectification and commercialization of female offenders, Huang further suggests that it is because of women's historically established gender role and their social position, female offenders are much easier to be constructed in relate to sex, violence, family ethics, and vulnerability. According to Freud, he stated that scopophilia is originated from human's voyeuristic nature. The more private something is, the more voyeuristic desire human will generate. Similarly, violence is originated from human's death instinct, and death is what humans are afraid of. Yet, Freud also suggested that it is what brings people fear, brings them curiosity (Freud, 2014, p.73).

As media relating female offenders with sex and violence, it has successfully met audience's scopophilia desire and satisfied their curiosity. It is important to note that all four aforementioned factors together (sex, violence, family ethics, and vulnerability) made women the perfect merchandize to sell to satisfy public desire. Because of this reason, female offenders are misrepresented in media. Their relations with violence, sex, and ethics were exaggerated, and the truth was distorted (Huang, 2016). Under current patriarchal society, Female offenders were constructed by media in ways that could satisfy consumer's desire and curiosity. The wrongly established image of women in media became the commodity for men to purchase, enjoy and comment on.

In addition to Huang's claim, Yu also suggests that despite the actual frequency of the types of crime committed by women, media tends to report more female-conducted violent crime. She states that it is because of public's special curiosity towards women, that when

they saw a female offender was related to a violent crime, it broke the patriarchal perceptions

and expectations of women. This will result in an increased attention of female criminality

paid by the public, and at the same time increase people's attention paid to the media (they

tend to search for similar event to satisfy their curiosity). As media receive the benefit from

reporting female criminality, they will further construct women's image in relate to violence

and sex, and thus objectify female and shape people's perception towards women. For

instance, only a small portion of female in China committed violent crimes. However, media

has emphasized on reporting female violence than other types of crime (which actually

happened more frequently). This increased public's attention on female criminality,

influenced people's perception on women as a collective, and caused them to form false and

one-sided recognition of women (Yu, 2012).

Yu believes that the cause for the overrepresentation of female violence in media is due to

the characteristic of mass culture, which sets the production of happiness as its top principle.

Under this principle, consumerism exacerbated human's desire of indulgence which lies in

our instinct, consumer hedonism began to prevail in the society. With more and more people

accepting this hedonism culture, female offenders in media are also objectified and became a

symbol for material enjoyment (2012, p.150).

Apart from the fact that media tends to relate female offenders with sex and violence to

satisfy public desire and curiosity, many Chinese scholars also suggest that media will

emphasize the gender of the offender both in the title and content only when offenders were

female   (Du, 2017; Zhu, 2003; Zhu, 2006). For instance, in a news report (regard to a female

doctoral student murdered and dumped her victim's body) analyzed by Du, she discovers that

the title of the news paper has directly pointed out the identity of the offender as "female doctoral student". Even in the article the identity and title of the offender is mentioned several times, this has resulted to the public perceive this event as a murder committed by a "female doctoral student", rather than by another human being.

Du also discovers that the article does not even mention the offender's mental condition at the time of murdering, but focus solely on her gender and title as a female doctoral student. This exacerbates public's sarcasm on highly educated women, and further the patriarchal norms and values towards women (Yu, 2017).

According to Zou and Chang, they suggest that the reason for media to distort female offenders' image is in part because of the commercial value they held, the seed of this distortion and objectification is also rooted in the society. Because of the patriarchal nature of journalism in China, there are very little female personnel in the industry of news production. Although this phenomenon is getting better, it still has not changed the male-dominated situation. Most female employees in the media industry are located in the lower or middle place of the hierarchy, they have no power to make decisions. Therefore, the image of women is usually constructed from a patriarchal perspective by men. With female losing their voice in the media industry, it disabled the ability to report events in relate to women from their own perspectives, and it caused misrepresentation and stereotyping of female offenders in media (Zou, Chang, p. 59, 2014).

Conclusion

After analyzing the literatures, it is clear to see that in both Canada and China, the image of female offenders is distorted and their actions are exaggerated. For instance, both Canadian and Chinese scholars suggests that when a woman committed a crime, her action would be seen as breaking the gender expectations held by the male-dominated society, and it would lead to an overrepresentation of the female offender in media with an increased attention on female violence from the public.

In Canada, this is referred to the generation of a moral panic towards female criminality and violence. Women who committed violent crime without any external factors to excuse their actions will be portrayed in a "unfeminine" way, and thus lead to misrepresentation of female offenders in the public, and the creation of moral panic (Easteal etal, 2015). It is interpreted by many Canadian scholars that this panic towards female offenders is actually panic towards the fact nowadays women no longer fit into the old patriarchal gender expectation, and the change in social, political and economic status of women. As Barron and Lacombe suggest, moral panic over female criminality/violence is actually part of a backlash against feminism (2005).

In China, a different perspective is employed by many scholars to explain female offender's overrepresentation in the media. Unlike their Canadian colleges who look at this issue in a sociological perspective, Most Chinese scholars adopt the concept of marketing in explaining the issue. They believe that it is because women's historically established gender expectation, that they are seen as more gentle, caring, weak, and less capable of committing crime (Huang, 2016; Yu, 2012; similar perspective can also be found in Collins, 2016).

Therefore, when women became the perpetrators of crime (rather than victims), they would receive increased attention from the public, and when media realized the market value of female offenders, the images of these women were distorted by media; their depictions were usually being related to sex and violence in order to satisfy audience's desire and curiosity, and thus maximize the profit.

Sometimes, it is only when one steps outside the circle, will he/she see the entire picture, and understand the reason why things happen in a certain way. With conducting content analyses on media's depiction of female offenders in Canada and China, it allows one to uncover the similarities and differences in how they are portrayed in different countries, and by interpreting what contributed to these similarities and differences, the reason for women to be portrayed in certain ways will also be pushed to the surface.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study will adopt a feminist theoretical framework developed by Elizabeth Comack in analyzing what actually happened behind media's depictions of female offenders in both Canada and China. According to Barron and Lacombe, they states that we are living under a patriarchal society. Despite the efforts made by many women during feminist movement, female still received unequal treatment by the society. For instance, because of the white male dominated media industry (Fourie. 2001) the image of women in media is usually constructed by male from a patriarchal perspective. Therefore, the representation of female can not reflect their true image.   Similarly, Chinese scholars also reveal that since there are not enough female employees in the media industry or a higher position in the hierarchy; women have

lost their voice against their misrepresentation and stereotype in media (Zou, Chang, 2014).

Additionally, women's behaviors are monitored. Their actions are watched, judged, and

depicted under the values and expectations of this patriarchal society.   Comack

explains that it is from the external discourses that individual's image is built and reflected.

Therefore, media's depiction of female offenders have reflected how the majority in the

public viewed women who committed violent crime, and by distorting and exaggerating what

actually happened, it delivered a wrong image of female offenders to the public. For instance,

according to Comack, she explains that female offenders are divided into three categories, the

Bad, the Mad, and the Victim by media. According to her interview with 18 female offenders,

although they agreed with these labeling in some degrees, there were disagreements.

Comack discovered a clear breach between the media's depiction and how the female

offenders view themselves from these interviews. She explains that this breach is created due

to the fact that media has only looked at the action (the crime) itself rather than the entire

picture (the environment they lived in, why they chose violence etc.); they ignored the

importance of social context. It is because the majority still views women in a patriarchal

perspective, that media takes this view for granted, and further criminalize female offenders

for breaking both criminal law and natural law.

As Comack states that discursive categories frame our knowledge about criminalized

women, by adopting her feminist theoretical perspective to analyze the language used by

media in depicting female offenders, it allows one to see how women are represented in

media (what themes or words they are usually related to), and understand the reason why they

are depicted in certain ways and received such an overrepresentation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION

As Hollander and Rodgers revealed in their 2014 study that individual's perception towards certain group of people is shaped and influenced by how media portrays them. Female is considered the sensitive group in the society; their actions are watched and judged under the value of patriarchal expectations. Much research was done in the western world or more specifically, in Canada, to analyze how female offenders are portrayed by media. However, only a few amounts of similar research were done in China.

Martinez, Marinescu and Bohard once suggest that specific economic, cultural and social settings will influence media production. As a Chinese student who is now studying in Canada, it occurred to me that with two entirely different cultures and sociological structures, the way media portrays certain group of individuals may also be different. In this research, I will answer the question as to how Chinese media depicts female offenders differently than its Canadian counterpart by firstly reviewing existing research on media discourse study (in regard to female offenders) in both Canada and China to give an overview of how researchers in these two countries interpret media's depiction of women who committed crimes. Then newspaper articles collected from both countries are categorized into different themes, and the prevalence for each theme is calculated and analyzed. Finally, the prevalence of each theme in both countries will be compared to find the similarities and differences in Canadian and Chinese Media's portrayal of female offenders.

METHODOLOGY

Data

This research used a content analysis to analyze the similarities and differences in how Canadian and Chinese media portrays female offenders. I used Toronto Star in Canada and Beijing Legal Times in China as the sources for my data collection and analysis due to the similarities between these two cities (they are both very developed, very representative, and with a large population), and that they are both the dominant local newspapers in these two cities. Because of time and resource limitation, this study only included crimes committed by female offenders over a three-month period for both newspapers. The year and months of the newspapers were randomly generated by computer program (in a year range from 2010 to 2016 due to a resource limitation); as a result, the sampled year and months were 2016, May, September, and November. A total of 39 crime articles with female offenders were collected for both newspapers, with Toronto Star yielding 8 articles on murder cases and Beijing Legal Times 3.

Since murder is considered as the most serious crime under the criminal law (Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, 2016), it will be interesting to see how media portrays female offenders who committed such heinous crimes. In order to balance the number of murder cases reported by both newspapers to get a thorough view on how media depicts women who kill, I used the same computer program and generated three numbers (with the same year range): The results were 2010, 2014, and 2016. These numbers were later used as the years for me to select 5 well known first or second degree murder cases reported by media in China (Wang Yi).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique used to collect qualitative data in documents and human communications to be analyzed systematically, so that in later analysis certain patterns can be deducted from the chosen sources (Haggarty, 2009). The collected data will be coded into different categories, such as words, short sentences or themes, and to be examined by the researcher.

When tracing back the history of content analysis, it is worth noticing that the first systematic analysis of text occurred during theological studies in the 17th century. It was with the advance in mass media and communication (more specifically, newspapers) in the beginning of the 20th century, that an increased interest in public opinion and scientific objectivity had been raised among many researchers. As Krippendorff (2004) suggested, this phenomenon gave rise to content analysis. Later, during 1950s, content analysis as a research technique was popularized by Berelson, who defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952). Since then, not only sociologists, but psychologists, historians, and anthropologists etc. all began using this methodology in their own studies (Krippendorff, 2004).

Content analysis as a research technique is usually adopted when researching on mass communication. It allows data collected in mass media to be categorized, and patterns of the discourse to be deduced and analyzed. Additionally, unlike structured interview or questionnaire, content analysis allows the researchers to remain objective and the research to be unobtrusive. Krippendorff stated that it is due to the fact Content analysis is "context

sensitive", that the data collected can have different contextual meaning to the individuals who read/process them. With that being said, the inferences made by each individual may also be different because "they (the users) proceed by reference to contexts of their own" (Krippendorff, 2004).

Coding and Themes

As the National Institute of Justice (2017) defines that violent crime is where a victim "is harmed by or threatened with violence". For example, robbery, sexual assault and murder are all considered as violent crime. On the other hand, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2004) suggests unlike violent crimes, a non-violent crime will not involve the use of violence or cause physical harm to the victim, such as drug trafficking, fraud, and bribery.

The collected articles were first divided into two categories depending on the types of crime (violent or non-violent). Under each category, different themes were created; article was analyzed to see if its depiction of female offenders fits into the description of a specific theme (or themes). After distributing articles into different themes according to their discourses, they were classified into 2 categories: the ones that fit into at least one theme (or multiple themes), and those that did not fit into any themes.

Themes for both Violent and Non-violent Crimes

(1) Sexual implication: The description of female offenders being linked to sexual implication or suggestiveness, or the highlight of appearance and body shape, such as 'beautiful woman'; 'young and pretty'.

(2) Enforcing patriarchal expectations: Criminality being linked to individual's specific identity. For example, when a mother committed a crime, she was seen as breaking the

patriarchal expectations, and thus described as a 'bad mother' or 'irresponsible mom'.

Additionally, an emphasis may also be placed on the offender's title or occupation, thus

hinted at how this title or occupation differed from patriarchal expectations of women/highly

educated individual. One example can be seen in Du's (2017) research where she describes

the title (Doctor) of a female offender was constantly mentioned and emphasized by the

media.

Themes for Violent Crimes Only

(1) Victimization: The offender is seen by media as the actual victim, her action is depicted

as the result of her constant suffering (from an abusive partner, in the case of battered

women).

(2) Madness: Violent offenders who committed crimes under mental illness or

psychological disorder. These offenders are usually portrayed by media as irrational or

insane.

(3) Dehumanization: Language used to deprive offender's positive human qualities, and

demonizes her as evil, dangerous, and abnormal. This includes   words or sentences such as

'wicked', 'evil', 'remorseless', and 'happy and proud about what she had done'.

(4) Defeminization: Descriptions of unfeminine behavior (such as 'aggressive') or

language that portrays offender's appearance as unfeminine ('messy hair').

(5) Violence: Excessive and detailed descriptions of the victim's condition of injuries, tools

and techniques used in the crimes etc. Some examples are: 'battered and bloodied'; 'she used

a Pulaski axe to chop their heads off'.

RESULTS

Of the 39 crime articles with female offenders collected during the 3 month period (Toronto

Star: n=21; Beijing Legal Times n=18), the types of crime (violent or nonviolent) were first

identified for each article; the results yielding 18 violent crimes and 21 non-violent crimes in

total. Then same thing was done again for each newspaper, and the percentages of articles in

regard to which types of crime they belonged to were calculated for each source combined

and separately. Later, this data was used to calculate the prevalence of each theme based on

the type of crime reported in the news article.

Table 1. Final sample of newspapers.

Source	Total articles	Violent	Non-violent
Both Sources	39	18 (46%)	21 (54%)
Toronto Star	21	11 (52%)	10 (48%)
Bejing Legal Times	18	7 (39%)	11 (61%)

Since there are 5 more murder cases reported by Toronto Star compare with Beijing Legal

Times, I collected another 5 first/second degree murder cases reported by Wang yi (a Chinese

news media) within the same year range I generated earlier (2010, 2014, 2016) to balance the

outcome. Therefore, in this case a total of 44 articles were collected from three sources

(Toronto Star, Beijing Legal Times & Wang Yi), and 12 violent cases reported by Chinese

media were collected in total (see table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Final sample of newspapers 2.

Source	Total articles	Violent	Non-violent
All sources combined	44	23 (52%)	21 (48%)
Toronto Star	21	11 (52%)	10 (48%)
Chinese media combined	23	12 (52%)	11 (61%)

*This is the final data set used to calculate the prevalence for each theme.

Each article was analyzed to see if it fits into any themes developed earlier, the numbers of

article that fit into the description of a specific theme were recorded (one article could fit into

multiple themes). After this categorization, prevalence of each theme was calculated and

compared based on the type of crime it was classified into (see table 2 for Toronto Star and

table 3 for Beijing Legal Times & Wang Yi).

Table 2. Prevalence of themes in media discourse of female offenders in Canada.

Theme	Violent	Non-violent
Sexual implication	0	0
Enforcing patriarchal expectations	0.273	0.300
Victimization	0	
Madness	0.090	
Dehumanization	0.818	
Defeminization	0.364	
Violence	0.545	

Table 3. Prevalence of themes in media discourse of female offenders in China.

Theme	Violent	Non-violent
Sexual implication	0.333	0.182
Enforcing patriarchal expectations	0.750	0.727
Victimization	0	
Madness	0.083	
Dehumanization	0.583	
Defeminization	0	
Violence	1.00	

It is worth mentioning that only 4 articles in Toronto Star and 1 article reported in Beijing

Legal Times (all non-violent) did not fit into any themes.

Differences in Language Used to Describe both Violent and Non-violent Crimes

Committed by Female Offenders

From the data shown in both table 2 and 3, it revealed that Chinese media was more likely to

use sexual implication and enforce patriarchal expectations for both violent and non-violent

crimes when describing female offenders. It is also worth noticing that all of the articles

reported in Toronto Star, none of their discourses of female offenders matched the theme of

sexual implication (p=0).

Differences in Language Used to Describe Violent Crimes Committed by Female Offenders

Data has shown that Canadian media tends to dehumanize and defeminize female offenders more than its Chinese counterpart. Additionally, although the depiction of violence can be seen in both countries' media discourse, compare with the Canadian source, detailed graphic description of violent crimes was found in every article reported by Chinese media on female offenders (p=1).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data showed both similarities and differences in the way Canadian and Chinese media depict female offenders. For instance, despite the fact that no sexual implications can be found in Toronto Star, every other themes presented in both country's media discourse but with different prevalence.

Themes for both Violent and Non-violent Crimes

Like aforementioned, no Canadian media discourse could be categorized into the theme of sexual implication, and the results also suggest a significant difference in media discourse regarding to whether the language enforced patriarchal expectation of women in Canada and China. These differences may occur due to the unique social and cultural settings in these two countries (Oxman-Martinez, Marinescu & Bohard, 2009).

The feminist movements in the 60s brought changes in women's social, political and economic status (Barron & Lacombe, 2005). With more and more people devoted in

feminism, gender equality has become a very important topic in the western world. One of the problems many feminists fight against is the objectification of women. With sexual implication used in media discourse, it has objectified female figures, treating them as commodities to sell for profit, and as a means for more readerships. Final results have shown that such implication/objectification could not be found in Canadian media discourse; it may due to the fact that feminism as an ideology is more developed and advanced in Canada than it is in China. The authors in Canada understood what they would be facing if strong sexual implication or objectification was found in their articles. On the contrary, feminism has not been fully explored in China. Most people still subjected to the old patriarchal values that were prevalent in the traditional Chinese society. Girls are taught to be gentle, caring. They are expected to respect and always support their husbands and children. It is because women in China do not perceive their portrayals in media as problematic, it gives media the chance to further objectify female figures for profit.

Similarly, although the theme of enforcing patriarchal expectations did also occur in Canadian media, compare with its prevalence in China, there is a significant gap. More than 70 percent Chinese articles had this theme presented in them, yet in Canada, the prevalence is much lower (p=0.273 for violent crimes, and p=0.300 for non-violent crimes). This result has shown that women in these two countries are still being viewed under a patriarchal perspective, yet due to the development of feminism in Canada, Canadian media is less likely to enforce patriarchal expectations on female offenders.

Themes for Violent Crimes Only

As Weare suggests, media tends to categorize women who committed violent crimes into
three categories: the bad, the mad, and the victim (2013). Under these three categories, once a
female offender could not be categorized as "the mad" or "the victim", she would be labeled
as "the bad". In other words, if a female offender's criminality was not caused due to the
instability of her mental state, or that she was not victimized by her surroundings (such as an
abusive partner, or her socio economic status) which may contribute to her conducting of
crime, then she would be seen as the "bad woman" for breaking both criminal and natural
law.

Additionally, according to Berrington and Honkatulkia, when it came to the "bad woman",
media tends to deprive her feminine characteristic, and dehumanize her. Portraying her as the
"wicked". This happens due to the fact that the "bad woman" had broken the patriarchal
expectations/norms, and that her actions could not be explained by objective reasons (such as
mental disorder). These female offenders were seen by media as someone whose criminality
could not be justified or excused, thus they deserved to be labeled as wicked and punished.

When viewing table 2 (Canadian media), results have shown a certain level of consistency
with what Berrington and Honkatulkia suggest on the defeminization and dehumanization of
female offenders who were lableled as "the bad". From all of the collected articles (Toronto
Star), only one article (p=0.090) labeled female offender as "the mad woman". Her action
was excused due to her mental disorder, and no trace of defeminization or dehumanization
could be found in the article.

With that being revealed, 81.8 percent articles dehumanized female offenders. Some

articles described the offenders as 'remorseless', 'venom', and 'calculating'; while others

chose to highlight offender's certain behavior, making them seem wicked and thus more

blameworthy. Examples are 'she seemed happy and proud about what she had done';

'looking into the camera and appearing relaxed, she calmly stated her name for the record and

said, "That's it?"' (Hudes, 2016: 11). Pursuing this further, 36.4 percent articles defeminized

the female offenders, portraying them as aggressive and manipulative. One article described

the offender as the 'alpha wolf' (DiManno, 2016: 5) in the pack, and thus deprived her

feminine traits. Although Chinese media has a similar prevalence for the theme of

Victimization and Madness, significant differences in prevalence can be found for

Dehumanization and Defeminization.

Compare with their Canadian counterpart, Chinese media is less likely to dehumanize and

defeminize female offenders.

As Huang suggests, Chinese media now begins to see itself as a tool for entertainment. In

order to attract readerships and gain more profit, media needs to give the readers what they

want. Women are always considered as the vulnerable group in Chinese society, thus once

they committed crimes, a considerable amount of attention is drawn from the public. Huang

states that it is because the media has realized the commercial values held by female

offenders, their images are constantly distorted and they are usually overrepresented in media.

Additionally, since sex and violence can satisfy reader's scopophilia desire and curiosity, and

that because of women's historically established gender role and social position, they became

media's perfect merchandize to sell (2016). Therefore, as the final result indicates, none of

the collected articles (Beijing Legal Times and Wang Yi) defeminized female offenders, since

they need to link offenders with sexual implication to better sell their stories.

One interesting phenomenon reveled from the analysis is that when it came to the murder
cases, all Chinese articles would have three themes (enforcing patriarchal expectations,
dehumanization and violence) present at the same time. One example can be seen from an
article reported in Wang Yi (Cao, 2016):

After Zhang was murdered, Cheng did not panic, what she needed to consider for the
moment was how to deal with the body. Cheng was small and weak, and Zhang's body was
too big for her to carry. That was when Cheng used a cleaver to sever the body into small
pieces and put them in a suitcase.

In this paragraph, Cheng was described as a coldblooded, calculating murderer. There was
excessive violence in the article highlighting the tools and techniques used in the crime.
Additionally, throughout the paragraph Cheng's identity as a "female doctoral student" was
mentioned several times to remind the readers that "the offender was not just a female but
someone who was highly educated". In Chinese society, most people still have prejudice over
highly educated women. With media highlighting Cheng's degree, it exacerbated public's
sarcasm on educated women, and thus enforced patriarchal expectations.

The theme of violence occurred in both countries' media discourse with more than half of
the articles. However, its appearance in Chinese media was far more frequent than it was with
Canadian media (p=0.545). All of the 12 articles reported by Chinese media had descriptions
of excessive graphic violence. Again referring back to what Huang suggests that readerships
and profit are very important to Chinese media, thus it frequently relates female with sex and
violence to satisfy reader's desire and curiosity. This may also explain the reason as to why

description of excessive violence can be seen in all 12 Chinese articles.

It is important to notice that indeed integrating violence in media discourse as a way of gaining readerships can be applied into explaining its appearance in both countries' media, yet in Canada, association of violence with female offenders can also be explained through what Weare suggests about media's categorization of female offenders. Once a female offender could not be categorized into "the mad" or "the victim", she would be seen as the woman who was both bad for breaking the criminal law and wicked for breaking the natural law. Dehumanizing/defeminizing them and linking them with excessive violence all give media the chance to portray these female offenders as more blameworthy to the readers.

Additionally, data revealed that no articles in both countries' media had the theme of Victimization occurred in them. It may due to the limitation of this research that not enough data could be collected for a thorough analysis, yet it also showed the fact female offenders were less likely to be categorized as "the victim" than be seen as "the mad" or "the bad".

There are similarities and differences in Canadian and Chinese media discourse towards female offenders, results of this study suggests that while Canadian media tends to dehumanize and defeminize violent female offenders, depraving their feminine characteristic and portraying them as wicked and evil; Chinese media is more likely to link female offenders with sex and violence, and exploits their commercial values. However, it should also be kept in mind that when depicting both violent and non-violent offenders, Canadian and Chinese media both adhere to patriarchal values, though its prevalence in Canada is lower than it is with Chinese media.

Canada, a democratic country located in the west; China, a socialist country emerged in the

east. These two countries were shaped by different histories, shared different political views, and flourished with different cultures… They are different in so many ways, yet the amounts of similarities they share are also remarkable. One of the similarities is that both Canadian and Chinese are still living in a patriarchal society where women's behaviors are watched, judged, and depicted under the patriarchal values and beliefs. Just like Comack suggests that individual's image is built on and reflected from the external discourses. Therefore, media's depiction of female offenders is actually a reflection of how the majority of the public viewed them, and it is through media discourse that the wrongly established image of female offenders and the patriarchal values are produced and reproduced.

The result of this study has shown a certain level of consistency with other scholar's research. However, due to time and resource limitation, the result may be more accurate and promising if more data can be collected from multiple sources over a longer year range. For instance, many Chinese newspapers do not have an online archive, and some websites would automatically ban any access from foreign IP address. What is more, even when the researcher successfully entered the online archive of Beijing Legal Times, older issues (prior to 2010) were lost due to lack of website maintenance. Future research could adopt more newspapers as the sources for data collection, and with a longer time range. This will lead to a more accurate and promising result. Researchers were also suggested to use computer programs designed to help with data collection, since it will save a considerable time, and allow the researcher to spend more time on analysis.

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