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The good and bad victim

A critical discourse analysis of the representations of missing and murdered
Indigenous women in Canadian local press

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Abstract

This thesis examines how missing and murdered Indigenous women are represented in the Canadian local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*. The purpose of the study is to research if social constructions of gender, race and class have any implications to the representations of the Indigenous women, and if these representations are based on stereotypical perceptions of Indigenous peoples. The empirical material consists of 12 news articles published between 2006 and 2012. With the help of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis it is shown that the Indigenous women are described as prostitutes, drug addicts and throwaways of society, blaming them for the violence committed against them. Simultaneously they are described as women who wanted better lives, who were wonderful mothers that cared about their family, making them assimilate to the white hegemonic femininity turning them into worthy victims. Through Patricia Hill Collins intersectional perspective, implications of race, gender and class were identified in the representations. The Indigenous women are depicted as uneducated and poor, belonging to a lower class in a middle-class society and therefore the uncivilized "other". They are hyper sexual and promiscuous, gender roles reproducing colonial notions about indigenous women as "squaws", at the same time as traditional gender roles as nurturing mothers and wives affects the representations, reproducing colonial notions of the "Indian princess". Further I discuss why the news articles are written this way, concluding that stereotypical perceptions about Indigenous women control their representations as well as it upholds white domination.

Keywords: Indigenous women, missing and murdered, social constructions, race, gender, class, Canadian local press, critical discourse analysis, intersectionality.

Titel: *Det goda och onda offret - En kritisk diskursanalys av hur kanadensisk lokal nyhetsmedia framställer försvunna och mördade urfolkskvinnor*

Den här studien undersöker hur den Kanadensiska lokaltidningen *Winnipeg Free press* porträtterar försvunna och mördade urfolkskvinnor. Syftet med studien är att undersöka om sociala konstruktioner av genus, ”ras” och klass påverkar kvinnoras beskrivningar, och om dessa beskrivningar är påverkade av stereotypa uppfattningar om urfolkskvinnor. Det empiriska materialet består av 12 nyhetsartiklar publicerade mellan 2006 och 2012. Genom Norman Faircloughs kritiska diskursanalys framgår det att urfolkskvinnorna beskrivs som prostituerade, drogmissbrukare och samhällets förkastliga, vilket beskyller kvinnorna för det våld de utsatts för. Parallellt beskrivs kvinnorna som bra mödrar, som värnade över familjen och ville ha ett bättre liv. Detta inkluderar kvinnorna i den vita hegemoniska feminiteten och gör de till värdiga offer. Genom Patricia Hill Collins intersektionella perspektiv har implikationer av ”ras”, genus och klass identifierats i porträtteringarna av urfolkskvinnorna. De illustreras som fattiga, utbildade, tillhörande en lägre klass i ett medelklass samhälle och blir därför de ociviliserade ”andra”. De beskrivs som hypersexuella och promiskuösa, könsroller som reproducerar koloniala idéer om urfolkskvinnor som ”squaws”. Samtidigt påverkar traditionella könsroller som mödrar och fruar beskrivningarna, vilket reproducerar koloniala idéer om urfolkskvinnor som den ”Indianska prinsessan”. I studien diskuterar jag även varför artiklarna skrivits på detta sättet, och sammanfattar att stereotypa uppfattningar om urfolkskvinnor påverkar hur de porträtteras i tidningen samtidigt som det vidmakthåller vit dominans.

Nyckelord: Urfolkskvinnor; försvunna och mördade, sociala konstruktioner; ”ras”, genus, klass, Kanadensisk local nyhetsmedia, kritisk diskursanalys, intersektionalitet.

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1. Introduction

Perceptions about people based on race, gender and class drawing from social norms exists in all societies. These perceptions can either include you with the dominant group, or exclude you and transform you to an outsider. This leads to social inequality and oppression of those people who does not "fit in" with the norm. In a western country like Canada, where the hegemony consists of white middle-class people, the Indigenous peoples of the country become marginalized. In a world where a man is deemed more valuable than a woman, the Indigenous women of Canada become especially exploited. Accounting for roughly 2% of the Canadian population, Indigenous women are overrepresented as victims of violence and homicide.¹ During three decades, statistics show that than 1,200 Indigenous women all over Canada were murdered and missing, whereof 200 of these cases remain unsolved. This number is estimated to be much higher, counting up to almost 4,000 women.² Motives for these murders and disappearances are believed to be racism and sexism forcing many Indigenous women to live in socioeconomic exposure, turning them into "easy targets". Although this national issue have not received as much attention as required, the case of the missing and murdered Indigenous women has been covered in both national and local news.

What becomes interesting is how the image of missing and murdered Indigenous women is presented to the Canadian population by the news. What does this image look like and how does it affect perceptions about Indigenous women? The media, as one of the richest organizations in society, create a monopoly of knowledge and through the news they decide what stories we receive about our nation and the

¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, Library and Archives Canada, E96.5 T78 2015, p. 180.

² Tasker, John Paul, "Confusion reigns over number of missing, murdered indigenous women", *CBC News*, 2016-02-16, www.cbc.ca, last received 2016-05-28.

world.³ When stereotypes of people based on their ethnicity, their gender or their social status are transmitted into routine practices such as the news, racism, sexism and classism is not often recognized by the dominant group.⁴ How these stories are presented affect how we see ourselves and other people, and thus affect how we act towards people. When the dominant culture is reinforced as the norm in the news discourse, people who are not considered belonging to the norm becomes oppressed. Due to the amount of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada and the fact that this is a national issue which requires attention, an examination of how these indigenous women are portrayed in daily news media is needed. It is of relevance to study media representations of Indigenous women and place them in the center of the analysis, in order to see if social structures of gender, race and class are being reproduced in society. This leads to the empowerment of Indigenous women by rejecting dimensions of knowledge that uphold objectification and dehumanization, and could therefore prevent oppression. The aim of this study is thus to contribute with a critical examination of the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

1.1. Purpose and issue

As affirmed above, this thesis studies the case of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. It examines the Canadian news discourse, more specifically texts from the local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*, and analyzes how Indigenous women are represented in the articles. The main purpose of this study is to research if social constructions of gender, race and class have any implications to the representations of Indigenous women, and if these representations are based on stereotypical perceptions of Indigenous peoples. In addition I discuss how these representations could reproduce structures and hierarchies in society, which could lead to oppression. Due to the large number of Indigenous women and girls that have gone missing and been found

³ Mahtani, Minelle, *Representing minorities: Canadian Media and Minority Identities*, Department of Canadian Heritage, 2001, p. 2

⁴ Mahtani, 2001, p 2ff.

murdered since 1980⁵, the thesis examines articles only covering missing and murdered Indigenous women. The methodical and theoretical framework that guides this study is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis that focuses on mass media and Patricia Hill Collins intersectional perspective of social constructions of race, gender and class. The chosen framework is thus suitable for an examination of the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women in one Canadian newspaper.

To achieve the purpose, the study of the case of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada is being regarded with a clear focus on the media representations of these women. My conclusions are only drawn upon the information I gained through the analysis of the particular material studied, and can thus not represent exactly how power structures based on social constructions of race, gender and class affect Indigenous women in Canada. However, in line with Yasmin Jiwani, I emphasize that which stories are told and how they are told in both national and local news creates a "socially constructed reality"⁶ which affirms perceptions and stereotypes of people. As stated above, the purpose is to examine the impacts of gender, race and class in the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and if the representations are drawn upon colonial stereotypes of Indigenousness. To fulfill this purpose the study asks the following questions:

- How are missing and murdered Indigenous women represented in the Canadian local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*?
- What implications do social constructions of race, gender and class have on these representations?

⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, Library and Archives Canada, E96.5 T78 2015, p. 180.

⁶Jiwani, Yasmin, "Symbolic and discursive violence in media representations of Aboriginal missing and murdered women", in David Weir & Marika Guggisberg, (Eds.) *Understanding violence: Contexts and portrayals*, Oxford, UK, Inter-Disciplinary Press; Jiwani, 2009 (1), p. 2.

1.2. Material and delimitations

In this chapter the empirical material of the study will be presented, which consists of newspaper articles collected from the internet. I will discuss what type of newspaper the articles are gathered from, what kind of news articles that will be used, how the material will be analyzed, what delimitations I have done and source criticism. In addition I will discuss which criteria I have had in the selection of the material.

1.2.1. The empirical material

The thesis examines a section of the Canadian local news media, to be able to read how missing and murdered Indigenous women are represented. The empirical material for this study will thus be news articles from one Canadian local newspaper, more specifically the local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*. The reason why I have chosen articles from one local newspaper is to delimitate my study and therefore be able to give the analysis a deeper focus. *Winnipeg Free Press* covers stories from the province Manitoba, mainly from the provincial capital Winnipeg and its surroundings, as well as national and international stories. The reason for choosing *Winnipeg Free Press* is because it is one of the largest local newspapers in the province Manitoba with the largest amount of readers, and hence have a major impact on the provincial population. According to the "2014 Circulation Report - Daily Newspapers in Canada", *Winnipeg Free Press* has an average weekly circulation of 663,431.⁷ The newspaper is also well known on a national level and can thus reach out to a larger part of the Canadian population. Another reason is that Manitoba has one of the highest number in Canada of missing and murdered Indigenous women and also one of the highest numbers of unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women.⁸ This facilitates the collection of the material, since the high amount of cases in the province equals more coverage.

⁷ Newspapers Canada, *2014 Circulation Report - Daily Newspapers in Canada*, 2015.

⁸ Sisters In Spirit (SIS), *What Their Stories Tell Us*, Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010.

I am aware of that criteria such as locality, relevance, timeliness and contiguity predominate the determination of which stories are assumed newsworthy and thus control how certain stories and cases are portrayed. This criteria is a strength for the study, since the case of missing and murdered Indigenous women is a national issue in Canada and Manitoba has a high amount of cases. I am also aware that individual journalists could have opinions or values that affect the text production, which is not an issue for this study. It is rather a part of my analysis to examine what discourses the writer may be influenced by while writing the articles. Additionally it is important to point out that *Winnipeg Free Press* is a daily newspaper. The articles examined are thus news articles which present descriptions of the events covered and interviews with people relevant for the incident. In the chosen articles this can be family members, friends or the police. The focus of the analysis is the descriptions of the Indigenous women and the discourses identified in these descriptions. It is thus what the journalists chooses to include in the descriptions of Indigenous women that is of significance for this study. Therefore descriptions consisting of interviews from e.g. family members will not be an issue for the analysis. Neither is the credibility of the newspaper of relevance for this study. It is not of considerable importance if the facts presented about the crimes committed against the women are true or not, since the actual crimes are not a central part of the analysis. As stated above, I will solely analyze the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women in this study. Therefore the amount of coverage, the length of the articles and pictures of the victims will not be analyzed. It is rather the analysis of the discourses surrounding the women's roles as victims that is of importance for this study. Depending on the content of the articles, some of the articles will take up a larger part of the analysis.

I have chosen to publish the names of the missing and murdered women and other people that are mentioned by name in the articles. This because the mentioning of their names is a part of the representations of these women and therefore of relevance for my study. I am aware of the fact that it could be ethically problematic to use peoples names in the thesis, even though the names have been published in the newspaper. I do not consider this as a problem for this study, since it is unlikely that the usage of the names in my thesis will affect the women in any way.

1.2.2. Selection Criteria

The research and collections of the chosen articles have been made through *Winnipeg Free Press's* website. The keywords used to gather the empirical material are "missing and murdered women" "missing and murdered aboriginal women" "missing and murdered Indigenous women" "Aboriginal women" and "Indigenous women".⁹ The material has been delimited to only articles published between 2006 and 2012. This is due to the fact that *Winnipeg Free Press's* webpage has no articles published before 2005, and very few articles published in 2005. The ones published in 2005 were not relevant for this study, since they were too short to provide any significant descriptions for the analysis. After 2012 the articles changed in style, and tended focus on the missing and murdered women as a national issue, highlighting the Canadian state's responsibility in this issue. In some of the articles the journalists's name are not published. This is not an issue for the study since neither the writers name nor gender is the focus of the analysis. The research generated hundreds of results of which 12 have been chosen. The ones not chosen for the study have been deselected because of lack of relevance for the purpose, since the perpetrator or the police investigations have been the main focus of the stories. In the empirical material several different types of representations of missing and murdered women have occurred, all of which will be a part of the analysis. I want to clarify that this study does not claim to present a total of existing discourses and representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women expressed in Canadian local news media. Nonetheless, the choice of material can be regarded as sufficient to examine the questions at issue. To structure my analysis and be able to identify the discourses regarding the representations of the women in the chosen articles, the study will apply a critical discourse analysis on the material.

⁹ The term Indigenous is used consequently in my thesis. This is an umbrella term used to describe various First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and Nations in Canada.

2. Previous research

This chapter will present the previous research done within the field of study, and highlight the central elements identified in these studies. My thesis will study how missing and murdered Indigenous women are portrayed in the Canadian local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*, and analyze if implications of gender, race and class affects their representations. The theoretical approach applied in this study is an intersectional perspective within in the field of social constructivism. Therefore focus lays on research that has studied representations of both Indigenous women as well as other racialized women. Through the previous research and my theoretical framework I will be able to attach my thesis within this field of study. The majority of the studies uses comparative analysis to examine if the media representations differ within minority groups, between men and women, or between white women and racialized women. On the contrary this thesis will solely examine how Indigenous women are portrayed through critical discourse analysis which allows me to deepen the analysis of the discourses identified. The researchers chosen to represent this field of study are the ones who are perceived to be influential within the debate. The previous research will later be used in the analysis of the discourse practice, a part of the methodological framework that will be presented in chapter 3, and in the concluding discussion.

2.1 Research on media representations

Sherene Razack has examined how Canadian news reports about crimes committed against Indigenous women. Her focus is on sexual violence, foremost violence committed against sex-workers. She states that when women from marginalized communities share their experiences about sexual violence it is easily neglected. She argues that regarding sexual violence, racism and sexism intersect and cannot be

understood outside of colonialism.¹⁰ The ignorance Indigenous women face as victims also diminish criminal acts committed by their male perpetrators, and transfer the women into a racialized other. This dehumanization creates the notion that Indigenous women can be violated with minimal consequence.¹¹ In her study on the murder of Pamela George, a woman from the Saultaux nation, Razack argues that sexualized and racialized violence is based on existing racial hierarchies in Canadian society. This hierarchy derives from settler colonialism and maintain the thought that Indigenous peoples are subhuman and worthless to society.¹² Razack affirms that the crime committed by George's two perpetrators, who were both white, male and middle-class, was diminished because of the "zone of degeneracy" George as a sex-worker was contained in. These zones uphold hegemonic masculinities and excuses male violence against women.¹³ Colonial structures creates the notion that the body of a racialized sex-worker is considered to belong to a space where violence is a natural part of everyday life.¹⁴ Razack's research is relevant for my study since she provides a comprehensive image of the colonial and socioeconomic context surrounding the lives of Indigenous women. The discourses about prostitution and white hegemony expressed in her studies are notions I will use while analyzing the empirical material.

Yasmin Jiwani has conducted multiple studies about the representations of racialized women in Canadian mass media. In two studies she examined how violent crimes committed against racialized women were reported differently in the national newspaper *The Globe and Mail* within a seven-year period. Through a comparative analysis she studied how historical structures of gender and race affected the media discourse while portraying Canada's Indigenous women and Afghan women in Afghanistan.¹⁵ The purpose of the studies is to examine how both groups of women are

¹⁰ Razack, Sherene H., *Looking white people in the eye: gender, race, and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1998 (1), p. 59.

¹¹ Razack, Sherene, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice", in Jacqueline Low & Claudia Malacrida, (Ed.), *Sociology of the body: a reader*, Oxford University Press, Don Mills, Ont., 2008, p. 299.

¹² Razack, In Low & Malacrida, (Ed.), 2008, p. 130.

¹³ Razack, Sherene, "Race, space, and prostitution: The making of the bourgeois subject", *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 10(2) 1998 (2), p. 357.

¹⁴ Razack, In Low & Malacrida, (Ed.), 2008, p. 299.

¹⁵ Jiwani, 2009 (1) ; Jiwani, Yasmin, "Helpless maidens and chivalrous knights: Afghan women in the Canadian press", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 78(2), 2009 (2).

portrayed as victims, and how these portrayals differ from each other.¹⁶ The results of her studies is that a hierarchy of victims exists in the articles examined, where one type of victim is considered as worth more than the other. The Indigenous women were often portrayed through negative stereotypes, where they were described as criminals, drug-addicts and prostitutes. Thus, the women themselves were responsible for the violence committed against them, which creates an image of the unassimilable other. Jiwani describes this as a discursive violence, where the representations foster an image of Indigenous women as incapable of taking care of themselves, which leads to victim blaming.¹⁷ The Afghan women were also portrayed as incapable of taking care of themselves, but due to the oppression they face in Afghanistan. The articles expressed a postcolonial discourse where the Afghan women were in need of rescue and help from the Canadian state. Jiwani concludes that due to colonial structures in society, Indigenous women are portrayed as hopeless and therefore less worthy of rescue. Because of the same structures Afghan women are seen as victims worth saving, although incapable of saving themselves, since they are not the cause of their own oppression.¹⁸

Together with Mary Lynn Young, Jiwani studied how the case of missing Indigenous women are covered in the Canadian local newspaper *The Vancouver Sun*. They examined 128 articles published between 2001 and 2006, and focus on how the missing women are portrayed in comparison to their male perpetrators. The coverage of the examined cases tends to have an individual focus on the perpetrators, who are portrayed as monsters due to their hyper masculinities.¹⁹ Jiwani and Young argue that stereotypes rooted in historical perceptions about women, Indigenousness and prostitution shape the representations of women in news media and creates the notion that Indigenous women are hyper sexual.²⁰ This neglects the violence done to their bodies and also creates an image of Indigenous women as being more receptive to violence. Jiwani and Young also identified counter frames or discourses in their

¹⁶ Jiwani, Yasmin, "Report Race and Media: A Retrospective and Prospective Gaze", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol 34, 2009 (3), p. 737.

¹⁷ Jiwani, 2009 (1), p. 9.

¹⁸ Jiwani, 2009 (1), pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ Jiwani, Yasmin & Young, Mary Lynn, "Missing and murdered women: reproducing marginality in news discourse", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 31 2006, p. 901.

²⁰ Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 901.

analysis, which contradicted the representations of the missing women as people who were "asking for it". Some articles focused on the missing women's roles as mothers, wives and daughters - roles that makes the women worth saving. These representations reinforce stereotypes of white feminine and masculine hegemony. In other words these portrayals fall within the white norm, which creates a more humane image of the women. This confirms to hegemonic values, where the women counts as newsworthy if they are more like "us", where "us" becomes a discursive move that values women through social recognition. Jiwani and Young's studies provides an image of the media discourse surrounding Indigenous women which will help me interpret my empirical material. During the analysis I carry with me the discourses about victim blaming expressed in their studies, to study how this relate to the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women in *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Similar to the research presented above, Kristen Gilchrist examines in her study how missing and murdered women are represented in Canadian local press. She compares local press coverage of both Indigenous and white women to examine if there are any differences in the representations between the two groups. Her research shows that Indigenous women received considerable less coverage than white women. In addition, the articles about Indigenous women were shorter and seldom on the first page.²¹ In comparison the white women gained a continued, committed and compassionate coverage.²² This racial bias in press coverage creates an invisibility of Indigenous women and makes the violence committed against them less serious. Gilchrist highlights that this ignorance creates an otherness and links this to the judgments made by news organizations of what constitutes a victim worthy of attention. Due to colonial structures in Canadian society, white middle-class women are seen as more newsworthy cause they are not to blame for the violence committed against them. In line with Jiwani and Young, Gilchrist concludes that the lack of press coverage of Indigenous women reveals the existence of a news hierarchy.²³ Her focus lays on the amount of press coverage the Indigenous women receive versus the white women, and not how the women in the articles are portrayed. Contrary to Gilchrist, my thesis

²¹ Gilchrist, Kristen, "'Newsworthy' Victims?", *Feminist Media Studies*, 10:4, 2010, p. 385.

²² Gilchrist, 2010, p. 384.

²³ Gilchrist, 2010, p. 385.

focuses on *how* missing and murdered Indigenous women are portrayed in one Canadian local newspaper. Although this differs from my study, it is important for this thesis to consider how the lack of coverage reproduce social hierarchies. Her study is also of relevance since it gives an understanding of how the lack of press coverage affects the representations of these women.

In her doctoral thesis, Ann-Lill Ledman, studies how Sami women were portrayed in Swedish and Sami press during the years 1966, 1986 and 2006. Through a post-colonial intersectional perspective of ethnicity and gender, she identifies discourses about the construction of "the Sami woman" represented in the press. She identified that stereotypes that characterizes "Saminess" often occurred in the representations, in the Sami press as well as the Swedish press, and that these stereotypes emphasized a notion of "differentness".²⁴ These stereotypes were compared to the notion of a "normal" Swedish woman, and the Sami women's position as non-Swedish women became central to the idea about Sami identity. Her research also shows that discourses about femininity and masculinity dominated the representations. The discourse of gender framed the "typical" Sami woman as only partially active in reindeer herding, but increasingly politically active.²⁵ Ledman concludes that the representations of Sami women recreates images about what it means to be Swedish and Sami, and the idea that these two identities are not compatible. The representations also construct knowledge about what it is to be a Sami woman, since most of the Swedish population learn about Sami culture, history and society through press or social media. This issue is according to Ledman a contributing factor to the social construction of "the Sami woman" as someone at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Ledman is relevant for this thesis due to the identified discourses about femininity and masculinity identified in her study. Even though this is research about the Sami population in Sweden, her study is important to receive a larger image of Indigenous portrayals in the press. The gender roles she identifies in both Swedish and Sami press are of relevance to understand representations of Indigenous identities.

²⁴Ledman, Anna-Lill, *Att representera och representeras: samiska kvinnor i svensk och samisk press 1966-2006*, Institutionen för idé- och samhällsstudier, Umeå universitet, Diss. Umeå : Umeå universitet, 2012, Umeå, 2012, p. 223.

²⁵ Ledman, 2012, p. 224.

Minelle Mahtani criticizes, in her study about representations in the media, the current literature analyzing press coverage of minorities. The existing research on representations of minorities in Canadian press often focuses on "mis-representations" and "under-representations" in news articles. According to Mahtani research should focus on analyzing representations of cultural diversity in the newsroom and other sites of media production. She stresses that gendered and racialized hierarchies within media production affects which norms and structures permeates the production of articles, tv-shows and movies. For example, mis-representations or under-representation of Indigenous women in news articles are not accidental, they are a product of structures in society gathered by (white) people in privileged positions.²⁶ Mahtani also emphasize how important media representations are for identity construction. When minority groups are excluded and marginalized in the media it contributes to a sense of "otherness" for these people, since the dominant culture is reinforced as the norm in the media.²⁷ The media is an important source of information where citizens gain knowledge about their country. When negative stereotypes about minority groups is presented in the media it suggest who is and who is not included within the notion of Canadianess, which could lead to the subordination of people.²⁸ Conducting an examination of the structures behind media production is nothing I am able to do in this thesis. However, Mahtani's research is relevant for my study since I will discuss which discourses the journalists may have been influenced by while writing the articles and why representations the media are significant for the construction of identities.

2.2 The positioning of the study

Recurrent elements in these studies are the binary of "us" and "them", and the discourse of the white norm. All research presented in this chapter has identified that the women represented in all the newspapers examined are constantly compared to a feminine hegemony dominated by whiteness. As especially Jiwani and Gilchrist showed, this

²⁶ Mahtani, 2001, p. 20.

²⁷ Mahtani, 2001, pp. 2-5.

²⁸ Mahtani, 2001, p. 3.

exemplifies how a hierarchy of voices exists within the world of news media, where some voices are more privileged than others. This naturalizes social inequalities and legitimizes the existing status quo where racialized women are seen as the "throwaways of society".²⁹ Due to this fact, it is relevant to further study how racialized women are portrayed as victims. As mentioned above, a majority of the researches conduct comparative studies, which differs from the study carried out in this thesis. My thesis only studies the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which gives me the opportunity to broaden the analysis of racialized and gendered structures in news portrayals. It does however, analyze the representations of the missing and murdered women through a theoretical knowledge about white hegemony. This since these images of these women always are, as we have seen above, constructed through a white lens.

I emphasize that this thesis will study *how* Indigenous women are represented in the news articles. My thesis will solely focus on the descriptions of the missing and murdered women who are represented in the empirical material. The amount of coverage, the length of the articles and pictures of the victims will not be analyzed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, neither will the actual crimes committed against the Indigenous women be a central part of the analysis. It is rather the analysis of the discourses surrounding the women's roles as victims that is important for this study.

²⁹ Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 903.

3. Method and theory

This chapter gives a presentation of the methodological and theoretical framework used in the thesis. The methodological approach is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The theoretical perspective is Patricia Hill Collins intersectional framework drawing from social constructions of gender, race and class. The following chapter will discuss how the methodological and theoretical framework will be used, comply with each other and why they are relevant for this study.

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The purpose of this study is to analyze how missing and murdered Indigenous women are portrayed in Canadian local news media. As stated above the thesis is delimited to study one local newspaper, *Winnipeg Free Press*. The chosen method for this thesis is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis that focuses on mass media. This method will help me to examine the empirical material through a critical lens, and fulfill the purpose of this study. The purpose of the critical discourse analysis according to Norman Fairclough is to acknowledge how our use of language are bound by causes and affects society in ways we are not always aware of. Additionally the use of language, knowledge construction and the exercise of power are closely connected.³⁰ He also states that language is shaped by society as well as it is shaping society.³¹ In other words language construct social identities and perpetuates existing social relationships. This method acknowledges the specific context in which the empirical material has been produced, and can therefore relate the discourses identified in the texts to hierarchies in society. Critical discourse analysis is thus well applicable to my material and to this study, since my purpose is to analyze how missing and murdered Indigenous

³⁰ Fairclough, Norman, *Media discourse*, Edward Arnold, London, 1995 (1) p. 54.

³¹ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 55.

women are represented in one Canadian local newspaper to see if social constructions of gender, race and class have any implications to the representations these women. With the help of critical discourse analysis I will firstly determine how the articles portray Indigenous women and secondly I will examine which prevailing discourses underlies these representations.

Fairclough describes discourse as the use of language in the representation of a social practice from a certain point of view. Discourse therefore consists of thoughts about our idea of knowledge and hence lead to knowledge construction.³² He also explains that a discourse analysis consists of three aspects: text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. To be able to understand discourse one have to analyze all three aspects since they interact with each other.³³ Within critical discourse analysis of mass media there are two perspectives applicable to the analysis: analysis of communicative events and analysis of the order of discourse.³⁴ The analysis of communicative events seeks to analyze the relationship between the text, the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice,³⁵ and the analysis of the order of discourse seeks to analyze how discourses are structured, and how different discourses interact with each other.³⁶ For this thesis it is not necessary to analyze the discourse order since the analysis of the communicative events is sufficient to fulfill the purpose of the study. The order of discourse partially coincide with both the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice, since it is through these dimensions I will analyze how the identified discourses are constructed. In other words the discourse practice and sociocultural practice will analyze whether the representations of missing and murdered women in *Winnipeg Free Press* helps reproduce existing power structures or challenge them.

The relationship between the three aspects of the analysis of communicative events is maintained by the discourse practice. The discourse practice mediates between the text and the sociocultural practice,³⁷ however the three aspects are

³² Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 56.

³³ Fairclough, Norman, *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*, Longman, London, 1995 (2) p. 74.

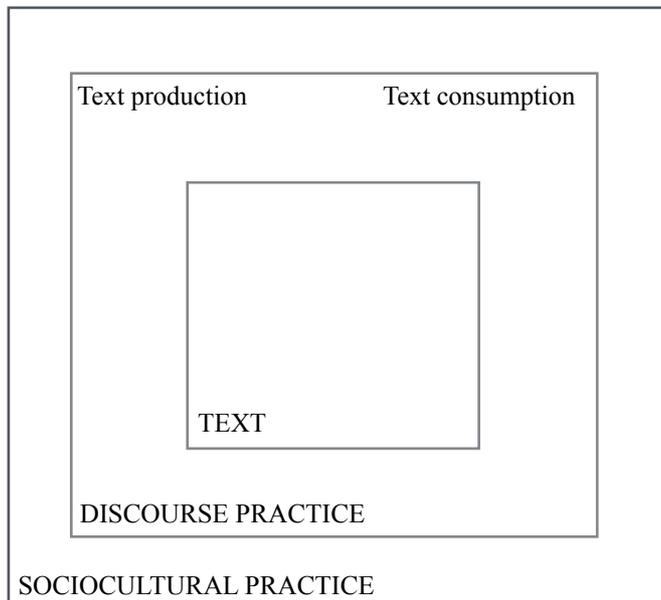
³⁴ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 56.

³⁵ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 57.

³⁶ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p.62.

³⁷ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 59.

analyzed separately followed by a conclusion about the construction of the text, which underlying discourses that exists within the text and if a social hierarchy affects the production and consumption of the text. The relationship can be understood through this diagram:³⁸



During the analysis of the first aspect, the text, the empirical material is examined. According to Fairclough this can be an examination of the structure of the text, the grammatical construction of sentences and the order of words in a sentence. Further the analysis can focus on the representation of people, how their identities are constructed and how relationships between people are portrayed.³⁹ My analyze will focus on this, since my study will analyze the representation of missing and murdered Indigenous women and what identities these women are attributed based on social constructions of gender, race and class. During the textual analysis quotes from the chosen articles will be examined to study the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women and will thus help me identify the most frequent discourses in the articles. The textual analysis can in addition be used to study existing facts in a text as well as absent phenomenons.⁴⁰

The second aspect, the discursive practice, can be seen as the practice of text production and text consumption. While analyzing the discourse practice the reader

³⁸ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 59.

³⁹ Fairclough, 1995 (1), pp. 57 - 58.

⁴⁰ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 58.

examine which genres and discourses influenced the writer during text production, and what traces these influences left for us to consume in the text.⁴¹ The writer could be unaware of these influences while producing the text because of norms in society, or the existing discourses in a text have been chosen consciously by the writer. The reader as well as the writer can be influenced by social norms while consuming the text⁴² which means that one text can be interpreted in many different ways. This is important to be aware of, along with the fact that media discourse practice is constantly changing. During this aspect of the analysis I will discuss the discourses identified in the articles, which discourses the journalists writing the chosen articles could be affected of and how this affects the consumption of the text. Additionally I will relate my results with the previous research within this field of study.

The last aspect of the critical discourse analysis is the sociocultural practice. The sociocultural practice shapes texts through the discourse practice, and consequently it affects how we produce and consume text. The sociocultural practice is affected by different dimensions of society, such as economical, political (power and ideology) and cultural (norms and identity).⁴³ This means that norms and social hierarchies can affect how an article in a newspaper is constructed. During the analysis of the sociocultural practice the writer of a study is given the opportunity to apply a theoretical perspective on the empirical material. The chosen theory for this thesis is Patricia Hill Collins intersectional perspective on social constructions of race, gender and class. By applying this perspective on the empirical material it can be explained if the journalist could have been affected of social hierarchies during text production. In other words the theory contextualize the articles and examined why the texts has been produced in a certain way, and hence why they can be consumed in a certain way. It is also during the analysis of this dimension I will discuss how and why the articles produce and reproduce social structures through the theoretical framework. The theory and method of this study will thus interact closely with each other.

I am aware of the criticism against the usage of critical discourse analysis. The usual criticism directed against critical discourse analysis is that by examining

⁴¹ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 61.

⁴² Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 58.

⁴³ Fairclough, 1995 (1), p. 62.

specific discourses expressed in quotations of articles through a sociocultural perspective it is possible to draw very generalized conclusions. It is important to highlight that this thesis can only answer questions specifically asked to the empirical material. It is a delimited material that consequently gives delimitating results. I am aware that the discourses identified in the articles are not necessarily representative for the whole media discourse in Canada. I am also aware that a different method would have produced different results. Despite this I have come to the conclusion that this method is suitable for this thesis, since my purpose is to examine implications of social constructions of gender, race and class in media representations which in turn creates hierarchies in society.

3.2. Patricia Hill Collins intersectional perspective

Intersectional perspectives on social constructions of gender, race and class exists in different versions and are often applied on similar studies that analyzes representations of minorities (see chapter 2). This enhance the usage of this perspective in the thesis since the previous research focus on interlocking dimensions of gender, race and social class in media representations. The perspective I have chosen for this study is Patricia Hill Collins intersectional theory and I will thus define social constructions of gender, race and class according to her. Collins perspective will, as explained above, be applied during the third dimension of the methodological framework - the sociocultural practice.

I emphasize the importance of an intersectional approach when analyzing representations of Indigenous women, to validate my choice of perspective. In line with Collins, "race, class and gender remain the foundations for systems of power and inequality"⁴⁴ and all three dimensions affects all aspects of people's lives. Social constructions of gender, race and class also appears different to different people. Gender

⁴⁴Andersen, Margaret & Collins, Patricia Hill, "Why Race, Class and Gender Still Matter", in Andersen, Margaret L. & Collins, Patricia Hill (red.), *Race, class, and gender: an anthology*, 8. ed., Wadsworth, Belmont, Calif, 2013, p. 1.

is always racialized and race is always gendered, and this in turn produce classism.⁴⁵ Together historical notions of these categories create perceptions and stereotypes of people that leads to oppression. Collins feminist intersectional approach highlights that traditionally White middle-class women are the ones who have been seen as "good" for society. These historical perceptions of women exist today and creates an ideology of human superiority and inferiority.⁴⁶ Collins titles this "dominant gender ideology" that upholds hegemonic femininity. For this hegemony being able to exist someone has to be marginalized, i.e white supremacy requires black subordination. This puts minority women at the bottom of the social hierarchy and compares them to white women in everything they do. The dominance of whiteness creates the perception that everyone who is not white are not as beautiful, as good mothers, as smart or as funny as white women.⁴⁷ This underlines the valuing of some lives over others and becomes a justification for racial, gender and class-based oppression. Hill Collins stresses that all women are seen as the devalued Other in comparison to the hegemonic masculinity. Women are always compared to men. However, this comparison becomes dual regarding minority women, as white middle-class femininity becomes the normative yardstick within groups of women.⁴⁸

As stated above, racism is according to Collins a gender specific phenomenon which affects all minorities. The intersection between racism and sexism creates classism and vice versa, and thus lead to social problems such as unemployment, poverty, sexual/domestic violence, drug abuse, incarceration, etc.⁴⁹ The analytical framework Collins applies to examine social structures of gender, race and class, and thus used to study the social problems minorities are exposed to, is titled the matrix of domination. This means that interlocking levels of domination affects peoples knowledge about other people, and thus affects interactions between groups of people. By not including minorities in the ruling paradigm and within knowledge construction these people will be objectified. The Eurocentric masculinist worldview prevent groups

⁴⁵ Collins, Patricia Hill, *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*, Routledge, New York, 2004 p. 7.

⁴⁶ Collins, Patricia Hill, *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1990. p. 199.

⁴⁷ Collins, 2004, pp. 185 -199.

⁴⁸ Collins 2004, p. 193.

⁴⁹ Collins 2004, p. 7.

of people gaining access to institutional power and privilege, and consequently upholds subordinations of people.⁵⁰ In other words, what you know shapes how you behave, as well as how you think, about yourself and others. The matrix of domination sees the intersection of social structures and places minority women in the center of the analysis. This leads to the empowerment of these women by rejecting dimensions of knowledge that foster objectification and dehumanization. Therefore it is important to highlight the representations of Indigenous women in news media to be able to prevent oppression.

I have chosen to base the theoretical framework on three different books written by Collins: *Black Feminist Thought*, *Black Sexual Politics* and *Race, Class and Gender*. The third book is an anthology Collins has written together with Margaret L. Andersen, and this thesis will only use the introducing chapter composed by the two of them. The thesis will primarily use the first two books in the analysis, however the anthology is important to understand Collins position within the field of social constructivism. Collins has in her studies focused on the oppression based on social constructions of race, class and gender against African Americans. Although the oppression African Americans experience differs from the oppression Indigenous peoples in Canada experience, Collins perspective is according to herself, applicable on all minorities.⁵¹ This enhances the usage of her perspective in this thesis.

⁵⁰ Collins, 1990, p. 221ff.

⁵¹ Collins, 2004, p. 14.

4. Analysis

In the following chapter I will analyze the chosen material, which consists of 12 articles from the local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*. The analysis will follow Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and its three dimensions, the textual analysis, the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice. The textual analysis will examine the empirical material, where quotes from the articles will be used to highlight the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women in local news media. The quotes will thus be the focus of the textual analysis, and will answer one of the questions at issue: How are missing and murdered Indigenous women represented in the Canadian local newspaper *Winnipeg Free Press*?. The textual analysis will evolve into the analysis of the discourse practice, where I will discuss which discourses may have affected the writer and during text production and consumption, and relate it to the previous research made within this field of study. During the third dimension I will apply Patricia Hill Collins intersectional framework on the sociocultural practice and thus analyze how social structures of gender, race and class impacts on the production and consumption of the news articles. The second and the third dimension will answer the last question at issue: What implications does social constructions of race, gender and class have on the representations of missing and murdered Indigenous women? In addition the thesis will investigate how these structures constructs discourses that could result in the production and reproduction of power hierarchies within a society.

4.1 The textual analysis

”Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute”⁵². This quote is a headline of an article about Leanne, a woman who went missing and was later found murdered. It is clear that the first information the reader receive about Leanne is the fact that she was a prostitute. The headline also clearly indicates that even though this is an article about the case of Leanne, her family is the main focus. The journalist continues with:

The mother of a woman whose body was found (...) is urging parents to get help for their drug-addicted children, before it’s too late. For Connie Benwell, it’s advice that’s seared into her soul after the discovery of the body of her daughter, Leanne 27, (...) on June 21.⁵³

In the first sentence Leanne is only referred to the body of a nameless woman who suffered from a drug addiction. Along with the headline the sentence focuses on Leanne’s mother, instead of Leanne herself. Even though her name is mentioned in the second sentence, the journalist writes it in passing following another reference to Leanne as being the body of the daughter of her mother. In contrast, her mother’s full name is mentioned in the beginning of the second sentence followed by a comment about how she feels the need in her soul to give advice to other parents, whose children are drug abusers, or else they could end up murdered. Instead of blaming the murderer for the death of Leanne, the drug abuse and hence the drug abuser becomes responsible. The use of the word ”soul” is an example of the emotive language surrounding the narrative of the mother, that in combination with the words ”grieving family” in the headline is used to create compassion of a woman who lost her daughter. The language surrounding Leanne is monotonous and the focus of the narrative is not on her. This in relation to the references to her nameless body, her drug abuse and that she was a prostitute could indicate that she is not as newsworthy as her mother. The discourse

⁵² ”Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute”, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁵³ ”Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute”, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

about namelessness recurs in an article about Rachel Quinney, where the introducing sentence reads like this: "Gentle weeping from the family of a murdered prostitute was the only sound in court (...) at the murder trial of Thomas Svekla (...)"⁵⁴. The only information we receive about Quinney is the fact that she was a prostitute and she stays nameless while her murderer is mentioned by full name. The namelessness objectifies her, and indicates that she is not as newsworthy as her perpetrator.

In the article about Leanne the narrative changes and focuses on her appearance. Two examples are stated below:

On Monday, over three dozen friends, family and aboriginal community members came together to mourn the death of the beautiful, dark-wowed woman (...).

A photograph of Leanne taken seven years ago (...) showed a beautiful young woman, her face still unlined by the hard drug abuse evident in a more recent photo (...).⁵⁵

In these two quotes the writer highlights the beauty of Leanne and describes her with attributes such as "beautiful" and "dark-wowed". In the second quotation her younger self is compared to the person she became due to the drug abuse. Her young "unlined" self is clearly described as more beautiful than her drug abused self, something the journalist may underline to show that she has not always been a burden to society. The emphasis of her beauty is an objectification, that indicates that due to her pretty face she deserved a better life, and thus becomes newsworthy. The discourse expressed in these quotes contradicts the monotone narratives in the beginning of the article, however they still create an image of Leanne as an object. The fact that Leanne was a drug abuser is highlighted throughout the article as an excuse for her murder, at the same time as it puts the blame on Leanne, since she was the one who abused the drugs. This is emphasized in this quote:

⁵⁴ "Trial sets to begin in Edmonton for man accused of killing prostitutes", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2008-02-18, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁵⁵ "Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

While many may simply want to write off her daughters as another dead prostitute, Benwell said her daughter doesn't deserve that (...). "I'm thinking it has more to do with drug trade" she said.⁵⁶

Here the journalist tries to address the problem of portraying Leanne as a prostitute, however it is done in a way that dehumanizes prostitutes. The quotation indicates that prostitutes are not worthy of recognition, and do not deserve to be mourned in the same way as women not involved in prostitution. It is also contradictory since the headline, hence the first thing the consumer of the text reads, highlights Leanne as a prostitute and in turn reproduce a discourse of her as "another dead prostitute". The writer also highlights how Leanne is remembered "as someone whose slumber parties with friends would often turn into baking marathons"⁵⁷. This quote about her personality is used to show that Leanne was something "more" than a prostitute. The reference to Leanne's love for baking indicates her femininity, a big contrast to her "dangerous lifestyle" and shows that she could be as much of a "normal" woman as any. Instead the "drug trade" is blamed for Leanne's murder, something that is probably underlined with the intention not to blame the victim, but at the same time takes the blame away from the perpetrator. The journalist also emphasizes the need to express that even though Leanne suffered from addiction she "wanted a better life"⁵⁸. The fact that Leanne did not want to be a prostitute and a drug addict implies that her life was not totally worthless, and thus that "only" being a prostitute makes you less of a human being. The fact that she was a prostitute and a drug abuser becomes the only probable cause for her murder. Why she ended up becoming a prostitute or the reasons for her addiction is never addressed, neither from the journalist or Leanne's family.

The discourse about prostitution and addiction recurs in several of the articles. One article commences with "The killing of a young sex trade worker in Winnipeg"⁵⁹, referring to a women named Fonassa Lynn Bryere as the sex trade worker.

⁵⁶ "Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁵⁷ "Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁵⁸ "Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁵⁹ "Manitoba native group call for dedicated police unit for missing, murdered women", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-09-05, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

Her name is mentioned after a sentence highlighted that "aboriginal groups to call for the creation of a task force"⁶⁰, indicating that Fonassa was Indigenous and is the only reference to her ethnicity. This is followed by an explanation from her family emphasizing how Fonassa, in line with the article about Leanne, was more than a prostitute. This is shown in the quote below:

(...) as the family of (...) Fonassa Lynn Bryere broke their silence, saying they had tried to save her from a dangerous lifestyle. (...) the teen's aunt made a tearful plea for the media to stop referring to her niece as a prostitute. 'We also want people to know we attempted to prevent her choices' said Carla Bryere. 'Who she was and what she was trapped in this time are two different people'.⁶¹

This quote indicates that the life Fonassa was living was chosen by herself, by using the words "lifestyle" and "choices". The socioeconomic problem she may have faced, that lead to her making the "choice" to become a prostitute, is not addressed. This gives the impression that her "dangerous lifestyle" is to blame for her murder, and thus blaming Fonassa herself. Additional examples of victim blaming is found in another article about Fonassa. In this article the police describe her as a "chronic missing person"⁶² and expresses that "'Some of these people that lead this high risk lifestyle don't keep a nine-to-five (job)'"⁶³. Using the phrase chronic missing person indicates that she may have wanted to runaway and that she is to blame for her eventual kidnapping. Her high risk lifestyle and herself also becomes responsible for the police's inability to solve her murder. Although her life situation is described as a choice, the journalist highlights that she was trapped and incapable of becoming freed without rescue from her family. A similar discourse about victim blaming recurs in an article about missing and murdered Indigenous women, where it is stated that "Their addiction drives them to make dangerous choices by putting themselves out on the street and exposing themselves to

⁶⁰ "Manitoba native group call for dedicated police unit for missing, murdered women", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-09-05, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶¹ "Manitoba native group call for dedicated police unit for missing, murdered women", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-09-05, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶² "Justice officials target serial killers, critics urge Ottawa to do more", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-09-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶³ "Justice officials target serial killers, critics urge Ottawa to do more", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-09-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

'stranger danger'".⁶⁴ In this quote the use of the word "choice" and the phrases "putting themselves" and "exposing themselves" illustrates that the women are the ones responsible for the committed violence against them. The reasons that caused their addiction is never mentioned, and creates an image that these women are actively seeking danger instead of focusing on the violence committed by their perpetrator.

It is also emphasized in the quote about Fonassa that the family wants the public to know that the person she was as a prostitute was not the "real" her. She had another personality and another lifestyle. This is underlined to prevent an objectification of Fonassa, but nevertheless dehumanizes sex-workers as non-worthy victims. The journalists choice to highlight the aunts plea for the media to stop referring to Fonassa as a prostitute seems paradoxal, since the first sentence of the article describes her as just that, and no other descriptions of Fonassa's personal interests occurs.

In two articles about Cherisse Houle several already identified discourses reappear. The headline reads "'She had a million-dollar smile' - But mean streets may have caught her in the end"⁶⁵. This headline clearly underlines her appearance and beauty, and hence innocence, at the same time as it emphasize her relationship to the "mean streets". The spatial reference to "mean streets" indicates that she struggled with drug addiction and may have been involved in prostitution, which creates an image of guilt. Her milliondollar smile is mentioned once again in the article⁶⁶, which implies that her beauty is important for her description. Cherisse's smile is mentioned next to a description of how her body was found, "The girl lying face down in the creek"⁶⁷, marking that her smile is gone. The focus on her appearance in the articles creates an image that her beauty determined her value, implying that because she was beautiful she deserved a better ending. However, this leads to an objectification which neglects her as an individual.

⁶⁴ Jewell, James G, "Time to get victims of the streets", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2012-06-27, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶⁵ Godbout, Arielle, Owen, Bruce, "She had a million-dollar smile", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2009-07-04, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶⁶ Cherisse's smile is mentioned again in an editorial article about missing and murdered indigenous women, once again confirming to her objectification as a victim. Mitchell, Catherine, O'Brien, David, Sampert, Shannon, Samyn, Paul, "A public shame", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2009-06-07, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶⁷ Godbout, Arielle, Owen, Bruce, "She had a million-dollar smile", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2009-07-04, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

The article continues with "Friends of Houle said she has been sexually exploited on the street, but was trying to get away from that life." which further explains the usage of the word "mean streets". However, the journalist stresses that she had been sexually exploited, which illustrates Cherisse's innocence by underlining that working the mean streets is never a choice. The word exploited brings attention to the underlying social problems that leads to drug addiction and prostitution. The fact that Houle wanted a better life is brought up in the second article, emphasizing her relationship to her family:

She really wanted to change her life, better herself, so she could be a better parent to her son, said Barbara Houle.

"I can't believe someone would have that much disregard for a human being," he said. "That's somebody's daughter. That's somebody's mom. (...)"⁶⁸

The first quote highlights motherhood as the reason for Cherisse's want to a better life. The emphasis on motherhood creates an emotional, and thus humane, image of Cherisse, connecting her to a traditional gender role. Since the role of motherhood has historically been seen as a natural part of a woman, Cherisse becomes more like "us" the typical woman, and less like "them". The second quote focuses Cherisse relationship to others, also stressing her traditional role as a mother. In addition, it establishes her value to someone else, instead of highlighting her own value as *someone*. This produce the notion that without being recognized as a mother or daughter her own life is devalued.⁶⁹ Once in the article Cherisse's own personal interest are mentioned, where it is highlighted that she "loved to listen to music and write"⁷⁰. However, this fact is mentioned in a superficial and fleeting manner followed by descriptions of her as a sex worker and runaway, neutralizing its meaning.

⁶⁸ Giroday, Gabrielle, "Awful questions on top of grief", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2009-07-27, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁶⁹ The discourse about motherhood is found in several of the articles. An article about missing and murdered Indigenous women highlights that "(...) the first step to ending the violence is to recognize that women who are involved in the sex trade are someone's mother, daughter and sister (...)", in "March highlights plight of sex-trade workers", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-09-21, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁷⁰ Giroday, Gabrielle, "Awful questions on top of grief", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2009-07-27, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

The discourse about motherhood recurs in an article about Aynsley Kinch, where also women's roles as wives are emphasized. This is shown in the quote below:

But there wont be any vanguard coming forward to help vulnerable women until they're seen as real people with children, parents, sisters, brothers, and husbands and not just "sex-trade workers known to police", said Rob McDonald.⁷¹

In this quote it is affirmed that "real people" are peoples with either children, husbands, parents or siblings. The fact that some of these women could have wives instead of husbands is not mentioned, highlighting the heteronormative world we live in. These women's own life or personal interests are not highlighted, illustrating as above how the women's value has to be determined by someone else. If they are not determined by someone else the women becomes "just sex-trade workers". The sex workers referenced to in this quote becomes the "unreal" people, which illustrates prostitutes as non-humans, and creates an image that their life is worthless. In another quote from the same article it is stressed that to be able to reach change in the issue of exploited Indigenous women "'we need a strong male voice' to stand up to the johns and the drug dealers".⁷² Her it is emphasized that women are incapable of advocating for and reaching change. To be able resist the Johns (a nickname for white middle-class men) and the drug dealers, another man is needed. This because women are perceived as being not as strong as men, and there not as forceful in changing social issues. This illustrates that women are week and passive, and objectifies them as incapable of making decisions.

The discourse about prostitution continues, however it is not as frequent. In three articles about Claudette Osborne, the fact that she was a prostitute was only mentioned once. The discourse about drug addiction is nonetheless recurring.

⁷¹ Sanders, Carol, "Crack dealer likely killed Aynslyn Kinch...and she's not his only victim", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-19, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁷² Sanders, Carol, "Crack dealer likely killed Aynslyn Kinch...and she's not his only victim", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-19, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

Claudette Pricilla June Osborne, who also goes by the names "Tyo or "Penny" was last seen July 24 (...). Claudette is a sex-trade worker and has been struggling with addictions since she took up "street life" at age 12, her sister said.⁷³

In this article, Claudette Osborne's full name and nicknames are mentioned. The mentioning of her nicknames before her involvement in the sex-trade was highlighted, creates an image of her personality and a personal attachment between the reader and Claudette. A humane image of Osborne is presented where she as a person is the focal point of the article. This differs from the impersonal descriptions stated above, where the women have been mentioned by name in a superficial way, and their role as prostitutes have been a central part of their representations. Claudette's drug addiction is however mentioned frequently with the reference to her living the "street life", something that caused her to "leave her family behind"⁷⁴. To state that she left her family gives the reader the impression that she left willingly. In relation to the fact that she has four children she gets blamed for being a bad mother, instead on focusing on the social problems leading up to her exploitation and addiction to drugs.

The discourse of victim blaming changes in the second article about Claudette's disappearance, where she is described as a "woman who is missing, and almost certainly at the hands of a man with violence"⁷⁵. In this quote the journalist underlines that male violence against women is one of the issues in the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and not the women themselves. In the third article about Claudette the discourse about her drug addiction in relation to her role as a mother recur. However, this time it is in positive manner highlighting that even though Osborne battled a drug addiction, she "was a "wonderful mother" who impressed her energy onto her three children"⁷⁶. Nevertheless this indicates that her being a good mother gives her life importance and makes her worthy as a victim. This creates the notion that good motherhood determines her value as a human being. The third article also present

⁷³ Turner, James, "Family fears for missing woman", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2008-08-08, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁷⁴ Turner, James, "Family fears for missing woman", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2008-08-08, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁷⁵ Rollason, Kevin, "Concert held to hike reward for missing mother of three", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2009-01-25, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁷⁶ Martina, Melissa, "Hope lives on for missing woman", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2011-01-24, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

discourses about Indigenoussness and national identity, which occurs as well in the article about Leanne. This is demonstrated in these quotes:

A hand-drum, a song, and an offering of tobacco carried the family's prayers for an answer. And not just answers for Claudette, but for all of the approximately 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women who have been plucked from Canadian streets and homes in the last 40 years. "It's an atrocity for a great country like Canada to have this going on", Claudette Osborne's fiance Matt Bushby said (...).⁷⁷

The church, an inner-city parish (...), was dotted with aboriginal symbols, including drums, eagle feathers and a tall candle supported by three upright snowshoes at its base.⁷⁸

In both the case of Claudette and Leanne, the drum becomes a symbol of Indigenoussness in the article. In the case of Leanne the eagle feathers and the candle illustrate Indigenous spirituality. In connection to the song and the offering of tobacco, this produces an image of the Indigenous community and presents it to the reader. The journalist also connects Indigenoussness and Canadianess, by highlighting that the women have been taken "from Canadian streets and homes" which offers the sense of close community. A feeling of surprise is also expressed. Surprise that this could happen in a country like Canada, a developed welfare state where multiculturalism is fundamental. The discourse about Canadian nationality is identified in another article. Contrary to the article above, this states how different Canadians and Indigenous peoples are from each other:

What is clear is that the lives of aboriginal women and girls are so much different from other Canadians (...) that by they might as well be living in another country.

⁷⁷ Martina, Melissa, "Hope lives on for missing woman", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2011-01-24, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁷⁸ "Grieving family holds memorial service for woman identified as prostitute", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2007-07-23, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

They are likely to be less educated than other Canadians. They are poorer, less healthy, more likely to have addiction problems and more likely to be in the sex trade.⁷⁹

In the first quote the journalists suggests that the lives of Indigenous women and the rest of the Canadian population differs extensively, to the extent that Indigenous women could be living in a different country. The journalist also underline in the second quote that Indigenous women are subjected to social problems. This is done in an attempt to highlight exploited Indigenous women as a national issue, however it is done without mentioning the reasons for the social problems these women face. It creates a binary of "us" and "them", and instead of fighting the notion that all Indigenous women have a lower social status or class in the Canadian society it reproduces it.

4.2 Analysis of the discourse practice

In this section an analysis of the discourses identified in the articles, related to the results of my previous research, will follow. I will also discuss how these discourses could affect the writer and the reader in the text production and consumption, regardless if the writer was aware of it or not.

One of the discourses that recurs in several of the articles is the one about prostitution. In the case of Leanne, Qinnay and Fonassa it plays a significant role since the fact that these women were prostitutes is the first information the reader receives. Their names are always published after this fact is stated and, as in the case of Leanne and Qinnay, the names of family members or the perpetrator seems to be of greater importance for the narrative. In line with Gilchrist, this illustrates an invisibility of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, constructing them as less newsworthy and perpetrating a hierarchy of voices in the press.⁸⁰ Together with the discourse about prostitution, the discourse about addiction is mentioned several times in the articles. In all the cases it is highlighted that the women are addicted to drugs, by emphasizing that

⁷⁹ Bramam, Daphne, "Native women under siege", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2006-07-02, www.winnipegfreepress.com, last retrieved 2016-05-28.

⁸⁰ Gilchrist, 2010, p. 385.

they are living high risk or dangerous lifestyles, working the "mean streets". Referring to their lifestyle as high risk automatically labels the missing and murdered women as "high risk people", implying that violence occurred to them because of their bad choices and therefore they put themselves at risk. This discourse thus blames the women and makes them responsible for the violence committed against them. Expressing that the missing and murdered women were taken by the "mean streets" or living the "street life" embed the view that these women were located beyond civilized society, creating stereotypes of Indigenous women as vagabonds, always on the search for drugs and money. This stereotype reproduces notions of nomadic irresponsible behavior, connected to Indigenousness, marking these women as naturally missing and murdered.⁸¹ This places these women in what Razack calls "zones of degeneracy", where violence against Indigenous women are seen as a part of everyday life and therefore legitimate.⁸² Describing the missing and murdered Indigenous women represented in the articles as drug abusers, prostitutes, chronically going missing and living a life on the streets becomes an example of what Jiwani refers to as a discursive violence, which leads to an impression of blameworthiness.⁸³ They are blamed for the crimes committed against them as well as their inability to take care of themselves, and thus are perpetrated as both helpless and hopeless. This is seen in the case of Fonassa, who needed rescue from her family to get away from her dangerous lifestyle. This creates an image of missing and murdered Indigenous women as victims less deserving of rescue, and more as unvalued bodies. In addition this illustrates a natural connection between Indigenousness and violence when the issue of racism and colonialism is ignored in the news discourse, while discussing why a large percentage of Indigenous women live in socioeconomic exposure. Although one of the articles highlighted the missing and murdered women as exploited, ignoring that colonial legacies produces racism and sexism and causes this exploitation may implement the idea that these issues derive from Indigenous peoples inability to assimilate to Canadian society.⁸⁴ Consequently, Indigenous women portrayed as prostitutes and drug addicts become societies "others".

⁸¹ Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 897 - 902.

⁸² Razack, 1998 (2), p. 357

⁸³ Jiwani, 2009 (1), p. 7.

⁸⁴ Gilchrist, 2010, p. 384.

At the same time as the Indigenous women are represented as prostitutes and addicts, a discourse about improvement and change permeates the articles. For example, identified in the case of Leanne and Cherisse, where it was stressed that the women "wanted a better life" and "really wanted to change" and "better" themselves. These discourses were often highlighted together with a traditional gender role, where the women were described as wonderful mothers, daughters and/or wives who loved baking. Personal interests such as writing and listening to music also appeared in the article about Cherisse, but these descriptions became neutralized due to the fleeting use. The women's physical appearances also become an important part of their descriptions, underlining their beautiful smiles and pretty faces, affirming a discourse about femininity which is used to make Indigenous woman as "ordinary" as possible.⁸⁵ This objectifications indicate that due to the women's want to change, their roles as mothers/daughters/wives, personal interests and beauty they become more valuable. The Indigenous women are portrayed as "real" people, implying that sex-workers and drug addicts are not real people. In the articles the value of the women always had to be confirmed in relation to their role as daughters or because of their beauty. This to prevent them to become devalued because of their role as prostitutes. According to Jiwani and Young this is a discursive move to make "them" more like "us", designed to making these women more deserving of societal recognition.⁸⁶ Instead of being presented as sex workers, and hence the runaways and throwaways of society who are not worth saving, these women's more "respectable" roles are highlighted. If they are portrayed through a hegemonic feminine frame that makes these women more intelligible, and thus like "us", they become worthy as victims. This illustrates a dichotomy of good and bad, where the bad women can be traced to the colonial notion of the lascivious "squaw", a portrayal of an Indigenous woman who does what white men want for money and in this case drugs. The good woman can be connected to the notion of the "Indian princess", who heals the sick and aids those in trouble, and thus try to act like white women.⁸⁷ Even if the descriptions of the missing and murdered Indigenous women as mothers and daughters wanting better lives tries to portray them

⁸⁵ Ledman, 2102, pp, 223-224

⁸⁶ Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 904.

⁸⁷ Jiwani, 2009 (1), p. 4.

in more sympathetic ways, it still presents them in gendered and racialized ways. This highlight the binary of "us" and "them", objectifying the women who's value is determined by someone else and dehumanizing them as prostitutes and abusers.

The discourses identified and presented are all discourses that could affect the reader perceptions of Indigenous women in the consumption of the articles. A person who reads the articles without a critical lens could unintentionally receive the messages transmitted by the articles, and therefore reproduce the notions expressed in the articles. Someone who's unaware of power hierarchies in society will probably not reflect on how structures of race, gender and class affects the representations of Indigenous women, but can nonetheless be affected by the same structures while reading. In the production of the text the journalists could have been affected by colonial perceptions of Indigenous women while writing the text. I am aware of that journalists have to relate to a specific framework during text production to be able to publish their articles, which indicates that they are not allowed to be controversial. Controversial in this sense could mean to oppose existing norms in society. However, norms about whiteness, femininity and class affects all people, even if you are unaware of it or not. Thus this also affects journalists while describing Indigenous women. In line with Mahtani, mis-representations of Indigenous women in news articles are not arbitrary, they are a product of white privilege people working in news production affected by structures in society.⁸⁸ This have been demonstrated through the analysis of the text and the discourse practice, and will be further discussed in the analysis of the sociocultural practice.

4.3 Analysis of the sociocultural practice

In this section the third dimension of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, the sociocultural practice, will be analyzed. Through Patricia Hill Collins intersectional perspective on social contractions of gender, race and class, the sociocultural practice will examine why the discourses identified in the empirical material are used in the

⁸⁸ Mahtani, 2001, p. 20.

descriptions of missing and murdered Indigenous women. It is also during the analysis of this dimension I will discuss how and why the articles produce and reproduce social structures.

The most reappearing descriptions of the missing and murdered Indigenous women identified in the analysis are the ones of the "bad and the good" woman. The bad woman is described as the addicted prostitute responsible for the violence committed against her, while the good woman is described as the mother, sister or daughter who wanted a better life and therefore becomes a worthy victim. This binary of bad versus good can be found in most articles examined, appearing at the same time. The journalists thus often described the women as good and bad in the same article, shifting between the dichotomy of victim blaming and worthy victim in the representations of one woman. They are also described as poor and uneducated, attributing them a lower social status. The social and historical issues such as colonialism, sexism and racism is never addressed as reason for the women's socioeconomic exposure which creates an image of Indigenous women as naturally belonging to a lower class.

A possible explanation for these descriptions can be traced to the notions of social constructions of race, gender and class. These structures represent an ideology where certain assumed qualities are attached to racialized women, in this case Indigenous women, qualities which are used to justify oppression. Collins proves an important point emphasizing that race, class and gender remain the foundations of power structures and inequality, which continues to be the most significant social facts of people's lives.⁸⁹ Presenting descriptions of Indigenous women as the racialized other, may it be as the "good" worthy victim trying to be like "us" or the "bad" helpless/hopeless victim, maintains notions of white middle-class supremacy and Indigenous subordination. These descriptions produce stereotypes, which constructs knowledge about Indigenous women that makes it easier for the dominant white norm to rule, thus promoting the notion of a hegemonic woman who is white and middle-class. This leads to racial and sexual injustice which are fundamental causes of racialized women's poverty, eventually suppressing Indigenous women.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Collins, 1990, p. 7; Anderson & Collins, 2013, p 1.

⁹⁰ Collins, 1990, pp. 3-5.

As shown through the analysis of the text and the discourse practice, gender roles are a large part of the descriptions of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, and thus affects the constructions of these women. These gender roles places the Indigenous women either in the domestic sphere as beautiful mothers, wives and daughters or out on "the streets" as unattractive drug abusers and sex workers. According to Collins, traditional gender roles derives form the notion of the white nuclear family, which emerged with the growth of the modern state where the woman stayed at home and the man went to work. Here the notion about the white wife and mom as the alleged one grew. The white mother became the good, nurturing and caring mother, less likely to be found in Indigenous communities due to poverty.⁹¹ In socioeconomically exploited communities where both the men and the women have to work, racialized women tend to be regarding as inept mothers unable to take care of their children. Due to this stereotype the journalist highlight the missing and murdered Indigenous women's role as good mothers or wives, as mentioned in the analysis of the discourse practice, to present them more like white women (us). This to create a more humane and civilized picture of them, and not portraying them as "nomadic" as they have would been if they did not have children. The journalists, whether unaware of it or not, are convincing the readers that the Indigenous women are as suitable for the nuclear family as white women. However, these illustrations also shows dehumanizing images of Indigenous women as throwaways of society. While underlining that Indigenous women as mothers are "real" people just like us, they imply that prostitutes and addicts are not real people. When describing the Indigenous women as sex workers and drug abusers they make them into societies "others". They become hyper sexual and promiscuous⁹², drawing from historical notions about Indigenous women as "squaws", and therefore deserving of violence. Theses images are controlling, creating ideas that poverty and violence are a normal and inevitable part of the everyday life in Indigenous communities. Portraying Indigenous women as dehumanized objects is according to Collins a necessity for upholding white domination.⁹³ Illustrating Indigenous women like "us" is necessary to a certain extent, but if it becomes to much they can become a

⁹¹ Collins 1990, p. 47.

⁹² Collins 2004, p. 30.

⁹³ Collins 1990, p. 68.

threat to the existing social order. The representations of the missing and murdered Indigenous women as both good and bad depict them as the "others" of society who can never really belong. Creating marginalizing images of Indigenous women is nevertheless essential for the survival of white sovereignty and the maintaining of the current status quo because "those individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries".⁹⁴

The articles analyzed in this thesis could create knowledges about Indigenous women which are not consistent with the reality, based on social constructions of race, gender and class. What you know about someone frame how you behave towards that person and how you think about yourself and others. In accordance with Collins, maintaining racist and sexist images of Indigenous women provides an ideological justification for race, gender and class based oppression, which in turn reproduces racialized and gendered hierarchies rooted in colonial perceptions.⁹⁵ The lack of portraying these women righteously shows that social problems based on structures in society could affect Indigenous women in Canada, and reproduce them same structures.

⁹⁴ Collins, 1990, p. 68.

⁹⁵ Collins, 1990, p. 68.

5. Concluding discussion

This thesis has only examined 12 news articles, chosen from one Canadian local news paper. Due to the limited empirical material it is difficult to establish conclusions that represents the Canadian news discourse. Neither has this been the purpose of my study, which has been to research if social constructions of gender, race and class have had any impact on the representations of Indigenous women in one daily newspaper, followed by a discussion whether the representations could be based on stereotypical perceptions of Indigenous peoples.

Through the help of the questions at issue I conclude that the missing and murdered Indigenous women are described as both "the good and bad victim". The bad victim is described as the prostitute, the drug abuser, responsible and deserving of the violence committed against due to her bad choices in life. The good victim is described as the woman who wanted to "better herself", as the mother, daughter, wife, or sister who warned about her family above all and therefore becomes a worthy victim. With the help of the theoretical framework and the previous research implications of race, gender and class are identified in the representations. The bad and good victim is a woman who is uneducated and poor, belonging to a lower class in a middle-class society and therefore depicted as uncivilized. She is hyper sexual and promiscuous, gender roles reproducing colonial notions about indigenous women as "squaws", at the same time as traditional gender roles as nurturing mothers and wives affects the representations, reproducing colonial perceptions of indigenous women as the "Indian princess". This creates a binary of "us" versus "them", which illustrates that the good and bad victim is always somewhat of a burden to society who does not really belong within the Canadian identity because of their Indigenousness, devaluing them as people.

As seen through the analysis of the sociocultural practice, and as both Fairclough and Mahtani affirms, texts and news articles are produced in a certain way for a reason. This implies that the descriptions of the missing and murdered women in the articles demonstrates existing perceptions of Indigenous women in Canadian

society. Since this is expressed in some parts of the Canadian news discourse, the perceptions of Indigenous women are being reproduced in again and again. The uncritical reader might not reflect over these descriptions and how Indigenous women are represented in the articles, and could be affected by the views expressed. Through this the perceptions of Indigenous women can be entrenched in society, at the same time strengthening the notion of the white norm and contributing to a knowledge construction incompatible with reality. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the media has the power to create a structured reality and thus affect peoples thoughts of other people. This establishes that the media, to some extent, is a part of the creation of stereotypical notions. The media also could contribute to the construction of identities. When negative stereotypes about Indigenous women are presented in the media it also suggest who is and who is not included within the notion of Canadianess. This in turn leads to exclusion, which leads to the subordination of people creating a perceptions that they are worthless to society.

To be able to change peoples perceptions of Indigenous women and thus become one step closer to ending oppression, this is an issue that needs to be further addressed. Studies about Indigenous representations in all media, not only the news media, are necessary to identify and fight social inequality and change the domination of the white west. For future research it would be interesting to examine who Indigenous women are represented in popular culture, for example in movies, literature and music. Additionally it would be interesting to conduct a more extensive study, on a larger amount of articles from several both daily and nightly news papers, which would provide broader results. The foremost important is to continue to place Indigenous women in the center of analysis, and thus empowering these women by rejecting dimensions of knowledge that foster objectification and dehumanization. Finally, my hope is that this thesis in some way, however small, will affect how people consume news media. This to remind everyone that Indigenous women who are missing and murdered in Canada are important and valuable because of who *they are* as human beings.

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