

# **How has The Globe and Mail described missing and murdered Aboriginal women compared to Caucasian women between 2014 and 2018?**

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## ABSTRACT

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A high number of Indigenous women in Canada go missing or are murdered every year, in part due to underlying conditions such as homelessness, poverty, and poor education. Despite this reality and national need to take action, the media have been criticized for under representing and misrepresenting such cases. By using keywords to screen 463 out of over a thousand articles published by *The Globe and Mail* between 2014 and 2018, and subsequently manually coding them using data-driven codes, this major research paper (MRP) aims to compare the reporting (of *The Globe and Mail* between 2014 and 2018) of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in comparison with such cases involving White women. I can conclude that I have potentially observed a certain negative bias towards Aboriginal women, but that there does not seem to be any significant or clearly defined discrimination by *The Globe and Mail* during the aforementioned time frame.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Canada's history and relationship with Indigenous peoples has been, and remains, greatly controversial. The high amount of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is amongst the serious concerns the country has internally been having. Newspapers such as *The New-York Times* have published about the infamous *Highway of Tears* (Levin, 2016). The *Highway of Tears* "refers to a 724 km length of Yellowhead Highway 16 in British Columbia where many women (mostly Indigenous) have disappeared or been found murdered. The *Highway of Tears* is part of a larger, national crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls." (Sabo, 2019, n.p.) The disproportionate number of missing and murdered Indigenous women is not representative of a higher number of Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> women in Canada. In fact, we can see a decrease in the ratio between Aboriginal and Caucasian women throughout the years. "Between 2004 and 2010, they [Aboriginal women] accounted for at least 8% of homicide victims, despite accounting for 4% of the total female population in Canada." (Ambler, 2014, p.10) In 2011, there were 718,500 Aboriginal females in Canada, representing only 4.3% of the overall female population that year (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, p.7). As of November 2013, Aboriginal women made up approximately 11.3% of the total number (1,455) of missing females in Canada (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, p.8). In 2016, Indigenous women made up again about 4 % of Canada's female population, while representing as much as "16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012 were Indigenous." (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016, n.p.) There is a clear over representation of Aboriginal women compared to the

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<sup>1</sup> In the Constitution Act published by the Government of Canada, 1967 to 1982, Section 35 (2), "Aboriginal peoples of Canada include the Indian, Inuk, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada", while "Indigenous is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups". (First Nations & Indigenous Studies, 2009, n.p.) In this paper, the terms "Aboriginal" and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably.

overall female population in cases of missing and murdered women. Some of the probable causes for the disappearance of Aboriginal women reported by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are unknown (37%)<sup>2</sup>, foul play (27%)<sup>3</sup>, accident (27%)<sup>4</sup>, lost or wandered off (7%)<sup>5</sup> and finally, runaways (1%)<sup>6</sup>. Unknown is further broken to create two sub-categories, suspicious/unknown circumstances (64%, 105 individuals) and non-suspicious, (36%, 59 individuals) (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, p.8). If 64% of the unknown cases are suspicious, there is a high possibility that there are more foul play cases than first anticipated.

Despite the reality that Aboriginal women frequently go missing or are being murdered, many of these cases are never released and made public and consequently, some people argue that the victims and their families have been ignored by the media. In her study, Kirsten Gilchrist (2010) states that press attention regarding missing and murdered Aboriginal women is relatively minimal and their coverage is about three and a half times less than the coverage for White women. In addition, amongst the articles Gilchrist analyzed, those written about Indigenous women were shorter and less likely to appear on the front page (p.1). Interestingly, “the Canadian media feature prominent coverage of a whale named Luna who died when she collided with a tugboat propeller, but silence enshrouds the brutal murders and disappearances of more than 32 Indigenous women

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of unknown: “the police agency has no previous record on the missing person. There is insufficient background information to enable coding the record under any of the other causes.” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, Appendix A, p.20)

<sup>3</sup> Definition of foul play: “the investigator has indicated that violence has likely befallen the missing person. A suspect may or may not have been identified and likewise charges may or may not have been laid.” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, Appendix A, p.20)

<sup>4</sup> Definition of accident: “the subject’s disappearance is a presumed drowning in a swimming or boating mishap, airplane accident, fire, avalanche, hiking fall, etc. and the subject’s body has not yet been recovered.” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, Appendix A, p.20)

<sup>5</sup> Definition of wandered off/lost: “the subject is presumed to have wandered away, in a confused state [...], become lost in the woods; has not returned when expected [...]. The difference between “accident” and “wandered off/lost” is that the subject is dead whereas “wandered off/lost” assumes the subject is still alive.” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, Appendix A, p.20)

<sup>6</sup> Definition of runaway: “the subject (under 18) is suspected to have run away from home or substitute home care” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, Appendix A, p.20).

along a prominent highway [*Highway of Tears*] in central British Columbia.” (Stillman, 2007, p.492) Furthermore, *Media Smarts*, a non-profit organization offering media literacy resources, also agrees that these crimes have not received much media attention. “Families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women have long argued that media pay less attention when missing and murdered women are Aboriginal than when they are White. Media responses have ranged from incorporating the criticisms into their coverage to a denial that the problem exists” (Media Smarts, n.d., n.p.). As a matter of fact, several newspapers such as the *Ottawa Citizen* and *Global News* have indeed outlined the uneven media coverage of missing and murdered Aboriginal women (Collie, 2019; Corbett, 2019).

In light of the situation, many, including Official Opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) Member of Parliament Romeo Saganash, pleaded for a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls (MMIWG). Despite their efforts, the former Conservative government was not willing to entertain such a request and thus, was not responsive to the demand of having the inquiry. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper “insist[ed] there have been enough studies done, and that there are other ways of dealing with the issue through the criminal justice system.” (Gwiazda, 2014, n.p.) The Federal Inquiry finally moved forward with the election of the Liberal government in 2015. The inquiry was implemented to provide recommendations of concrete actions that could be taken to address and prevent violence against Indigenous women and girls (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016, n.p.).

The aim of this research is to see if the criticism about the media reporting on missing and murdered women is founded on empirical evidence with a focus on one of the many media sources in Canada, *The Globe and Mail*. By undertaking a quantitative and qualitative analysis of how this newspaper reported cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal and Caucasian women in Canada,

I am in a better position to compare the reporting and to get a clearer understanding of the problem and the other factors surrounding it. This research's main question is "How has *The Globe and Mail* described missing and murdered Aboriginal women compared to Caucasian women between 2014 and 2018?"

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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Although cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women are not new, people and the media mainly started talking about them following the death of Tina Fontaine, a young Aboriginal girl whose murder made the headlines. Indeed, this case received a great deal of attention from the media, and "for many Canadians, her death was their wake-up call. This, paired with the shift in government [in 2015] from Prime Minister Harper to the liberal Trudeau, opened the opportunity for an inquiry." (Brammer, 2016, n.p.) On June 3, 2019, the National Inquiry into MMIWG launched its final report into two volumes, which demonstrated that the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is very high compared to the number associated with missing and murdered Caucasian women. As explained in the executive summary of the final report, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are more likely to suffer from homelessness and poverty (National Inquiry into MMIWG, 2019, p.3). Numerous reports and studies on violence towards Indigenous women in Canada have also identified "historic factors like racism, sexism and the legacy from colonialism and the devastation caused by the residential school system." (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016, n.p.) It has now been largely proven that the current socio-economic situation faced by Aboriginal women contributes to their over-representation amongst missing and murdered Aboriginal peoples (Pearce et al., 2013, p.ii). As I have read in multiple articles published by *The Globe and Mail*, other structural factors could

be responsible for the high number of these tragedies including, but not limited to, poor education, restricted access to health services, and a high prevalence of drug and alcohol use by parents. Indeed, the first report published by the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women from the House of Commons in 2014 examines these same root causes of violence, and makes several recommendations regarding awareness, support, police services, and more (Ambler, 2014). Furthermore, in 2004, the non-profit organization *Amnesty International* released “Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Violence and Discrimination against Indigenous Women in Canada”. This report, as stated in its name, explores some of the factors contributing to the violence against Indigenous women, such as the social and economic marginalization of these women, racism, and vulnerability (Amnesty International, 2004, p.2). Although focusing on Indigenous women, this “report is part of a larger, international campaign to stop violence against [all] women.” (p.3)

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) published a report in five different volumes. The Commission of Inquiry investigated how the relationship between Aboriginal peoples [...], the Canadian government, and the general population evolved through time. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, v.1, p.12) The report proposed various policy recommendations, in the short and long term, that aimed to increase the life quality, independence, and self-reliance of Aboriginal peoples as well as ways to improve their educational and economic situations. “As long as other Canadians appropriate the stories, experience, culture and spirituality of Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal people will remain stereotyped, misunderstood and ultimately unheard.” (v.3, p.583) For the most part, however, this report was ignored by the government (Nerenberg, 2019). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), which closed in December 2015, published various reports and documents, which are available on

its website: <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>. Somewhat similar to the report published by RCAP, the TRC's final report makes various calls for actions regarding child welfare, education, language, culture, health, and justice (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). After its closure, The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) from the University of Manitoba took on the work of the TRC and aims "to preserve the memory of Canada's Residential School system and legacy." (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d., n.p)

Another source reporting on missing and murdered Aboriginal women is the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). With funding from the federal government, NWAC began the *Sisters in Spirit* initiative in 2006, which is "a multi-year research, education and policy initiative [...] designed to [...] better understand racialized, sexualized violence against Aboriginal women and girls." (NWAC, 2009, p.3) This database, which was the first one in Canada addressing cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women funded by the government, also aimed to gather important statistics and raise awareness on this issue (It starts with us, 2017, n.p.). The association has also published various fact sheets about the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls and the root causes of the violence against them. "In 2010, the NWAC's report identified 582 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from across Canada." (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016, n.p.) One of its latest fact sheets reports on the National Inquiry into MMIWG and provides various information, such as the fact that Indigenous women and girls are 16 times more likely to be murdered or go missing than Caucasian women (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2019, n.p.) Similarly, the report published by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in 2014 was an initiative to help understand the situation of missing and murdered women in Canada, by providing some numbers. The report states that there were "1,017 Aboriginal female homicide victims between 1980 and 2012, and 164 Aboriginal

women currently considered missing. Of these, there are 225 unsolved cases of either missing or murdered Aboriginal women.” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, p.7) The RCMP’s report also outlines the over-representation of Aboriginal females amongst victims of homicide or missing individuals compared to other females in Canada. Indeed, the 164 missing Aboriginal females as of November 2013 make up approximately 11.3% of the total number of missing females, which is “far greater than their representation in Canada's female population” (p.8-9). Interestingly, when I was searching for potentially relevant sources on the internet, I noticed that the majority of them seemed to be about Indigenous peoples, and very few were about Caucasian women or women in general. Nevertheless, The Daily webpage, from Statistics Canada, provides statistics on homicide in Canada through time without focusing on Aboriginal women. Its most recent update indicates that in 2018, there were 140 Indigenous victims of homicide in Canada, which is 22% of all homicide victims. However, this source mixed women, men, and ethnicities (Statistics Canada, 2019, n.p.).

Apart from organizations and the government, there are also authors who conducted studies related to this topic. As mentioned in the introduction, Kristen Gilchrist undertook a research regarding newsworthy victims and how some victims are ignored by the media. In her work, she explains that “while the press demonstrated a continued, committed, and compassionate response to the White women, depicting them as «the girl next door», the Aboriginal women were largely ignored and thus relegated to the status of invisible «Others».” (Gilchrist, 2010, p.374) Interestingly, the author also states that “depictions of the Aboriginal women were [...] more detached in tone and scant in detail in contrast to the more intimate portraits of the White women.” (p.373)

Ar dovini-Brooker and Caringella-Macdonald studied the question from another interesting point of view as they examined how the race and social class of rape victims and their offenders can affect their exculpation or vilification by the media (2002). To do so, they analyzed various cases and concluded that in many articles, “the victims were heavily blamed for the rape when [they] were acquainted in some fashion with the man/men who attacked them”. (p.11) They also found out that when victims were in the working class and their offenders in the upper class, the former were more often blamed for the crime and noted a “devaluation of the crimes’ severity when poor people of color are targeted by crime”. (p.15) With similar conclusions, the author García-Del Moral argues that “the discursive construction of [Aboriginal women in Canada and Mexico] as social waste simultaneously organizes the narratives of Canadian and Mexican newspapers, as well as the historically grounded social construction of gender and race in these two countries.” (2011, n.p.)

There are also some studies that are analyzing the concept of media framing in various contexts. These studies reveal that media do tend to focus their attention on certain types of events, ideas, or people in order to gather more attention from the public and reach a wider audience. For instance, Marian Meyers reached the conclusion that the “local news is more likely to report violence against women than is network news, which tends to be limited to the most sensational or celebrity-linked cases.” (1997, n.p.) Cynthia Carter’s 1998 article adds the idea that when something extraordinary becomes ordinary, common or repetitive, newspapers will be less likely to mention it, even if it is something as important and shocking as sexual violence (Carter, 1998). On the same note, Dietram Scheufele and David Tewksbury explain that “framing effect occurs when audiences pay substantial attention to news messages”. (2007, p.13) The report published by the RCAP actually offers a good example of media framing. In its volume three, the Commission

explores how the non-Aboriginal media have framed the *Oka Crisis* with repetitive images of *the warriors*, which promoted violence (see Appendix II). “For many Aboriginal peoples, the warriors depicted by the non-Aboriginal media blurred the distinction between actively promoting Aboriginal land and treaty rights and initiating armed confrontation.” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, v.3, p.583) Nonetheless, the *Oka crisis* still had positive impacts despite this image. For instance, it played a big part in the creation of the RCAP and raised awareness among Canadians on Indigenous rights and ongoing issues (Marshall, 2019, n.p.).

One common type of media framing is called the *missing white girl (or woman) syndrome*, a term often used by media commentators or social scientists. Sarah Stillman and Zach Sommers both explore this concept in their studies. “The phenomenon typically involves round-the-clock coverage of disappeared young females who qualify as 'damsels in distress' by race, class, and other relevant social variables.” (Stillman, 2007, p.492) In other words, we can describe this syndrome as the tendency of the media to talk more about the disappearances and murders of young White girls rather than individuals of other gender and ethnicities. Sommers’ study reaches the conclusion that this syndrome is very much real and that missing and murdered persons with certain characteristics are more likely to attract media attention than others (Sommers, 2016, p. 313-314). In the first edition of her book *Media & Crime* (2004), Jewkes concludes that “when a woman goes missing, several factors influence the news response. [...] If the missing woman is young, White, conventionally attractive, and from a “respectable” home, the news media are more likely to report her disappearance.” (Jewkes, 2004, as cited in Gilchrist, 2010, n.p.) A perfect example of this syndrome, and of media framing for that matter, is the disappearance of Madeleine McCann in comparison with Shannon Matthews’. Despite the fact that both children were British citizens and disappeared around the same time, Madeleine McCann’s media coverage and public

attention was incredibly high compared to Shannon's, and the difference of attention given to each disappearance is often compared. In 2008, *The Guardian* posted a very insightful article outlining theories as to why these two little girls did not receive the same attention from the media and the public, namely, the families' class in the societies, the parents' profession and the girls' physique (see Appendix I) (The Guardian, 2008).

In sum, there are multiple articles, dissertations, and research on missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. Although these studies are of high importance and very relevant to this work, I noticed that there were not many studies comparing the coverage of missing and murdered Aboriginal women with the coverage of Caucasian women in Canada. Basing myself on those previously mentioned sources, I aimed this research to help filling this gap by finding out how *The Globe and Mail* has described murdered and missing Canadian Aboriginal and Caucasian women between 2014 and 2018. Answering this question has allowed to know if missing and murdered Aboriginal women are victims of discrimination in *The Globe and Mail* when their disappearance or murder is reported in this specific newspaper.

## METHODOLOGY

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The objective of this research is to explore how *The Globe and Mail* newspaper described and portrayed missing and murdered Canadian Indigenous and White women and girls between 2014 and 2018, in order to determine whether there are identifiable differences in the reportage of both groups.

The articles were retrieved using the Canadian Major Dailies online newspapers database on ProQuest and a selection of over a thousand articles was made amongst all the articles published

by *The Globe and Mail* reporting murdered and missing Indigenous and White women, between 2014 and 2018. The following key words were used to narrow down the results of all *The Globe and Mail*'s articles published between 2014 and 2018: murder or homicide or vanishing or kidnapping or disappearance and women and *The Globe and Mail*. It is important to note that most articles written about Caucasian women were not specifically saying the individual was Caucasian. In such instances, independent research was conducted on those cases to confirm the ethnicity of the person and ensure she was classified in the right category. In cases where it was impossible to determine the ethnicity, the articles were classified in a separate category and not included in this research. Once I screened out 463 articles out of the 1,000 and more articles published in that period of time by making sure they were talking about a missing or murdered Caucasian and/or Indigenous woman, each article was carefully read to ensure it was relevant to the research question and then separated into five categories for analysis: Caucasian women (83 articles), Aboriginal women (107), both Aboriginal and Caucasian women (24), both Aboriginal women and men (6), and both Caucasian women and men (43). For the latter two categories, I have focused on the part of the articles related to the women and disregarded the parts of the story related solely to the men.

In this paper, *coding* is the act of assigning codes to text and, the technique of conducting word-based search of the articles (Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives, 2017-2020, n.p.). The word *codes* refer to the analytical categories used while coding (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., n.p.) Therefore, when I say codes, I mean the group of words that were counted and quantified in each article. The codes used in this research will be outlined in the next paragraph. Of note, the codes were only applied to the five aforementioned categories in the previous paragraph. However, five other categories were created for quantification and statistical

purposes only. There were 77 articles mentioning the inquiry for missing and murdered Indigenous without talking about specific cases, 17 articles primarily focusing on the arrest or process of a suspect in the disappearance or murder of Aboriginal women, 31 articles primarily focusing on the arrest or process of a suspect in the disappearance or murder of Caucasian women, 54 articles involving female children (below 13 years old) and 21 articles making reference to females of unknown ethnicities. These categories will be briefly explored in the discussion section of this work, but will not be analyzed the same way as the other five categories.

I have used Gilchrist' research as a starting point to find the codes since it is addressing a very similar question (Gilchrist, 2010). I looked at the group of words she has used in her work to give myself an idea of adequate wording for this type of research. I also used grounded theory, which is "the discovery of emerging patterns in data. [It] is the generation of theories from data." (Glaser in Walsh et al., 2015, p.593) Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss argue that by looking at the data of social research, grounded theory generates a theory suited for its use (Glaser & Strauss, 2017, p.3). I have used grounded theory to create the codes by reading through the articles to find relevant words through patterns, which is a process creating data-driven codes (Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives, 2017-2020, n.p.). Based on my observations when reading each article during the selection process, the initial codes were the following words; vulnerable, risk, education, educated, victim, wealthy, rich, poverty, poor, beautiful, pretty, kind, soul, love, cherished, strong, dedicated, mom, mother, sex, prostitute, drug, substance, indigenous, native, Aboriginal, Inuit, Inuk, Métis, White, Caucasian, non-Aboriginal, non-Indigenous, mishandled, unfair, missed, target, prey, mental, depression, and unemployment.

Following this, I used the codes above to do a manual word search in every article to count how many times each word was mentioned. In order to avoid counting words that would be out of

context, each mention or quote of one of the words was reviewed by myself to ensure it was applied to murdered or missing women specifically. In addition, thorough attention was paid to determine whether the codes were used to define the victims by the medium itself, or if it was a quote or word made by or taken from a third-party. As per grounded theory, the codes did evolve along the analysis process, when the words “substance” and “unemployment” were added because I saw they could lead to potentially relevant results. When such changes were made, I made sure to go back to previously analyzed articles and include them in the word search. In addition, I realized at the end of my research when reviewing the methodology that some words (dedicated, soul, victim, unfair and mishandled) seemed not relevant or appropriate for this research. This happened because I realized that they were not gathering the results they were meant to and that my understanding of how the words were going to be used in the articles was not appropriate. Therefore, these words were removed from the analysis, and I will expand further on this in the discussion section. This gap, as well as the reasons why each of these words were removed, will be explored further in the discussion section of this work.

Of note, only Indigenous and Caucasian Canadian women over the age of 13 were retained in the study. Individuals below the age of 13 are not commonly considered teenagers or adults<sup>7</sup>, and based on my own interpretation of the articles, the death or disappearance of young children often seem to be related to different issues than for teenagers and adults, such as family conflict. For that reason, they were excluded from this research. I have tried to avoid a different bias in the way victims are portrayed. In other words, young children, regardless of their ethnicity, are a different category of victim coming with its own vocabulary and representation. Comparing

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Lexico dictionary powered by Oxford, a teenager is an individual aged between 13 and 19 years and an adult is a person who has reached the age of majority (Lexico, teenager, n.d.; Lexico, adult, n.d.).

children's cases with teenagers and adults' cases would be out of this research paper's scope and were therefore excluded from the research.

Finally, the choice of the newspaper has been made according to the availability to access the archives and the language. English was used because it is the primary language used in *The Globe and Mail*, and because searching in both Canada's official languages would have complicated the coding and possibly inserted translation and interpretation mistakes. The time frame of 2014-2018 was chosen for practical reasons for the five most recent years at the time of starting the research in order to limit the number of articles to be searched. Indeed, it is important to remember that everything was done manually without the help of a machine or any programming. Thus, choosing a longer time period would have made the research more complicated and beyond the desired scope.

#### IMPORTANT NOTES

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This section will outline a few important notes that the reader should keep in mind throughout the reading of the rest of the paper.

1. In this work, "codes" refers to the group of words that were counted and quantified in each article. In addition, some codes that were similar and/or synonym, like "vulnerable" and "risk", are analyzed together. They can be referred as a "sub-section" of the codes.
2. "Quoted" or "quotes" mean that the word are not coming from *The Globe and Mail* and the article's author. Specifically, they are words either said by third parties

(community, friends, families, etc.), or taken from a report (like the RCMP's). They are coming from other sources than the medium.

3. When a sub-section of the codes contains more than one word, it is not necessary for both words to be in one article to count as a quote or a mention. I calculated the number of articles mentioning at least one of the words per sub-section (for instance, when looking for “vulnerable/risk”, if at least one of these words was mentioned in the article, I would count that as one article), as well as the number of times the codes were mentioned (e.g., “vulnerable/risk” is mentioned three times in four different articles, etc.).
4. The various words in the codes were taken into account only when they were directly defining one or several murdered or missing women. Words referring, for instance, to Indigenous women in general were not considered. In addition, words referring to the general violence or vulnerability experienced by Aboriginal women were also omitted. This research specifically addresses murdered or missing women, and violence is a much broader term. Therefore, if one was to count the total amount of times the words in the coding are being used in the articles without making those distinctions and omissions, they would reach much higher numbers than what I have indicated in this work.
5. *Medium* refers to *The Globe and Mail* specifically. Also, this research was made on articles published from 2014 and 2018. Therefore, when I am talking about my observations, conclusions, and when I am making statements, it is implied that I am solely talking about the reporting of this specific medium during that time frame.

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

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This section will highlight and describe the main quantitative findings of the research. The results in this section will be analyzed and interpreted in the discussion section. The first part of the findings will consist of comparisons between the two main categories: Caucasian and Aboriginal. In the second part of the findings, I will look at the codes in the category containing articles that included both ethnicities. Following this, I will explore the findings noticed in the category containing both Aboriginals women and men. The last category that will be analyzed is the one with both Caucasian women and men.

### First Part - Comparison of Caucasian vs Aboriginal women

The first important finding has to do with the number of articles in each of the two main categories. There are 83 articles in the Caucasian women category and 107 articles in the Aboriginal women category, representing almost 30% more article in the latter category. Although it is not an absolutely striking difference, it is still significant. In addition, it also contradicts what I have found out when conducting the literature review: that there is more reporting of Caucasian women compared to Aboriginal women. Another very important finding is in regard to the total number of articles. Considering that five years were taken into account (thus including thousands of articles), the numbers of article in each category, although similar, are surprisingly low. As explored further below, the cases covered in the articles are also very often the same.

Thus, I can conclude that there is a higher number of articles in the Aboriginal category, and that the total number of articles in each category is low. I would have expected more articles in both categories considering the number of missing and murdered women cases in Canada.

### **Codes related to ethnicity**

81.3% (87) of the articles in the Aboriginal category mentioned (at least once) one of the following words; “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal”, “Native”, “Inuit”, “Inuk”, or “Métis” in relation to a missing or murdered woman. Therefore, 28.7% of the articles did not identify that the women were Aboriginal. As mentioned in the methodology section of this work, this is when I had to conduct an independent research to identify the women’s ethnicity. In total, these words were quoted 66 times and mentioned by *The Globe and Mail* in 145 instances.

For the most part, these words were used to define the women. Some examples of this use are; “the native woman’s remains” (Purdy, 2015), “Aboriginal teen’s body” (Puxley & Lambert, 2014), or “slain native women” (Renzetti, 2014). However, not a single article classified in the Caucasian category mentioned the words “Caucasian”, “White”, “Non-indigenous”, or “Non-Aboriginal”.

### **Vulnerable/Risk**

The words “vulnerable” and “risk” were used with the intention to see if the women were portrayed as being responsible for their fate in some way. In the Indigenous category, the codes were mentioned a total of 21 times in relation to missing and murdered Indigenous women. In these articles, missing and murdered Indigenous women were described as being vulnerable, at risk or living a high-risk lifestyle. In 15 occasions, those words were from quotes and the other six times, they were mentioned by the medium. On the other hand, only four articles in the Caucasian category mentioned at least one of these two words. On two occasions, those were from quotes and the other three times, the medium mentioned them.

### **Target/Prey**

The words “target” and “prey” are used in alignment with “vulnerable” and “risk” and for similar reasons. In the Aboriginal category, the codes “target/prey” were mentioned six times by the medium and quoted 11 times in a total of six articles. In the Caucasian category, there were two quotes reported in two different articles

### **Education/Educated**

“Education” and “Educated” were used to see if an emphasis was put on the women’s level of education. There is no article in the Indigenous category mentioning either of these words to refer to murdered and missing Indigenous women in particular. Looking at the Caucasian category, the results are similar with only one mention by the medium, describing the woman as “university-educated” (Ha, 2014).

### **Wealthy/Rich**

The codes “wealthy/rich” were applied in an attempt to see if the women were being defined as people that are well off, which could alter the way the public would portray them when reading the article. Indeed, there is a known general tendency of people to have a heightened esteem of people financially at ease (Weinger, 1998, p. 110; The Book of life, n.d., n.p.). However, this subsection of the codes had no mention in either category.

### **Poverty/Poor**

The codes “poverty/poor” were other adjectives utilized to see if the women were described in a more negative way. The fact that a woman is living in poverty does not change anything to the fact that she is missing or has been murdered, but might make the article pejorative. I will come back to this in the discussion part of this work. However, in the Aboriginal category, these words

were mentioned in three articles, with only one mention by the medium and quoted twice. There was no mention nor quote in the Caucasian category.

### **Beautiful/Pretty**

I made use of the codes “beautiful/pretty” to see if the women were described in a positive way. Mentioning words like beautiful and pretty could influence the way the public perceives the individuals and make them more empathetic to their disappearance or murder. The results show that the medium never mentioned these words in neither category, but there were six quotes in six different articles in each category.

### **Kind**

The code “kind” was also used to see if the women were described positively. It was quoted three times in separate articles for the Aboriginal category. As for the Caucasian category, “kind” was quoted five times also in separate articles.

### **Love/Cherished**

“Love” and “Cherished” were added to the codes to see whether the article would be reporting the women as being loved by their loved ones. These codes are useful if we assume that most women had relatives (friends, families, colleagues) that loved and cherished them. Starting from this assumption, it is interesting to see how many are depicted as being loved. Portraying someone close to their friends and family and being loved by them might increase the public’s empathy for the woman and make it more receptive to her disappearance or death.

These words were reported a little bit more times than most of the other sub-sections in the codes. I calculated 16 mentions by the medium and 16 quotes, in a total of 19 articles in the

Aboriginal category. In the Caucasian category, they were quoted significantly more with a number of 33 quotes, but with only six mentions by the medium, in a total of 29 articles.

### **Strong**

The word “strong” aimed to capture whether the women were portrayed as powerful individual, rather than being vulnerable. In the Aboriginal category, the code “strong” was mentioned four times by the medium and quoted twice, for a total number of six articles. For the Caucasian category, “strong” was quoted twice in two different articles.

### **Mom/Mother**

The codes “mom/mother” were another attempt to see if the article was appealing to the public’s maternal instinct by describing the women as mothers and outlining the fact that they have children. In the Aboriginal category, these words were mentioned in 17 articles with a total of 27 times by the medium and there were 10 quotes from other sources. In the Caucasian category, they were mentioned 26 articles. The medium mentioned them 41 times, and there were nine quotes.

### **Sex/Prostitute**

The codes “sex/prostitute” were used because as per grounded theory, I observed that these words were very recurrent in the articles and therefore. This sub-section was added to see if it truly was common for the women to be referred to as prostitutes or to mention that they were sex workers. In the Aboriginal category, the medium mentioned these words 27 times and there were 20 quotes in a total of 19 different articles. In the Caucasian category, the medium mentioned them eight times and there were four quotes in a total of nine different articles.

### **Drug/Substance**

The codes “drug/substance” were also used because it was noticed that these words are mentioned in many articles. What I wanted to see was not if the women were often referred to as drug users, but rather if the possible drug consumption of the women was often mentioned. In the Aboriginal category, these words were mentioned in 14 articles, 10 times by the medium and 10 times in quotes. In the Caucasian category, there were five mentions by the medium and three quotes.

### **Missed**

The code “missed” was retained because I wanted to see if, when the family was mentioning they are missing the disappeared or murdered woman, the article was including this fact. “Missed” was quoted twice in two different articles for the Aboriginal category, and quoted three times in three different articles in the Caucasian category.

### **Mental/Depression**

This sub-section of the codes was retained to see if the article was outlining the fact that the women were suffering from mental issues, namely from depression. “Mental/depression” did not appear in the Aboriginal category, while in the Caucasian category, they were mentioned in 10 articles for a total of 13 times by the medium and five quotes.

### **Unemployment**

The code “unemployment” was, again, used to analyze whether the article was portraying the women in a pejorative way. This word was quoted once in one article in the Aboriginal category and was not mentioned at all in the Caucasian category.

## Second Part – Analysis of articles with both ethnicities, and articles including men

This second part of the findings will explore the relevant information and results that I gathered from my analysis of the other three categories, which are articles including both Aboriginal and Caucasian missing and murdered women, articles including Aboriginal missing and murdered men and women, and articles including Caucasian missing and murdered men and women. In this section, I made a general analysis per category unlike the first section where I created a sub-section for each of the codes.

### a) Articles including both Aboriginal and Caucasian missing and murdered women

For this category, containing 24 articles, I made a distinction between Caucasian and Aboriginal women. When a code was mentioned, I tried to find if it was used to define a Caucasian or an Aboriginal woman. Of note, it was not always possible to do, and, in these instances, I will specify when I was unable to make the distinction. As soon as the ethnicity of at least one Caucasian and one Aboriginal woman was identified (either because the article names the ethnicity or because I found out the ethnicity during my independent research), the article was classified in this category. However, it does not mean that every single woman mentioned in the article was identified.

Firstly, it is important to note that there was no mention or quote for the codes “education/educated”, “wealthy/rich”, “beautiful/pretty”, “kind”, “strong”, “kind”, “missed”, and “unemployment”. Moving on, the sub-section “target/prey” and “love/cherished” were mentioned once each by *The Globe and Mail* in reference to both Indigenous and Caucasian women. The codes “mom/mother” were mentioned six times by the medium, among which two times referred to a Caucasian woman and two times referred to an Aboriginal woman. I was unable to identify the ethnicity of the women to which the codes referred to in the three remaining mentions. In

addition, the words “mom/mother” were quoted three times, once in reference to a White woman and two to an Indigenous woman. Furthermore, the sub-section “mental/depression” was quoted three times in three different articles, but in reference to the same individual, Leslie Cohen, who is Caucasian.

The first sub-section that led to some interesting results is “sex/prostitute”. These words are mentioned 23 times in 12 different articles, with five times being quotes and the rest being mentions by *The Globe and Mail*. On 14 occasions, I was either unable to identify the ethnicity of the woman to whom the codes were applying to, or the codes could be applied to both Caucasian and Aboriginal women. Eleven mentions of the codes referred to Indigenous women and eight to Caucasian women.

I noticed a similar trend in the use of the codes “vulnerable/risk”, “poverty/poor”, and “drug/substance” to the one noted in part one of the findings section. Indeed, most articles that contained these codes in this category alluded to the lifestyle that Aboriginal and sex workers women are living, as well as the potential underlying factors leading to their disappearance or murder. The only mentions applying specifically to individuals were made in regard to three women and one girl who were murdered by the serial killer Robert Pickton. Two of these women were Aboriginals, and the third woman and the girl were Caucasians. The article stated that all four individuals “fit a familiar profile of vulnerability” (i.e., a common profile), and then developed on the fact that for these victims, this vulnerability came in the form of poverty and addiction (“Legebokoff convicted on four counts”, 2014, p.1). Four other articles mentioned that the three women were living in poverty and were drug-addicted or drug users. A fifth article had a quote referring specifically to an Aboriginal woman, also Pickton’s victim, as a drug addict.

Lastly, 10 of the 11 mentions and two of the three quotes for the codes “Indigenous/Native/Aboriginal/Inuit/Inuk/Métis” and “White/Caucasian/Non-Aboriginal/Non-Indigenous” referred to Robert Pickton’s victims. This can be explained by the fact that nine of the 24 articles in this category referred to Pickton and his victims. Finally, the codes “mental illness/depression” were quoted three times in three different articles. All the quotes referred to the same individual, who was a 15-year-old girl with post-traumatic depression, bipolar disorder, and mental defect.

b) Articles including Aboriginal missing and murdered men and women

For this category, containing only six articles, I have focused on the parts of the articles related to the women and disregarded the parts of the story related solely to the men. Of note, since there are only six articles in this category, the reach of my conclusions is limited. Looking at the codes, there was no mention nor quote for the words “wealthy/rich”; “poverty/poor”; “education/educated”; “beautiful/pretty”; “kind”; “strong”; “missed”; “mom/mother”; and “mental illness/depression”. The codes “love/cherished” were mentioned once by the medium and quoted eight times, in three different articles. Seven of these quotes were mentioned in the same article and were referring to the same individual, Tina Fontaine, whom I mentioned in the literature review section of this work. The codes “vulnerable/risk”, “sex/prostitute”, and “target/prey” were quoted once each in two different articles, and “drug/substance” were mentioned once by the medium in two different articles, all referring to Tina. Finally, the codes “Indigenous/Native/Aboriginal/Inuit/Inuk/Métis” were quoted three times and mentioned 20 times by the medium in all the articles of this category.

c) Articles including Caucasian missing and murdered men and women

Just like the previous category, I have focused on the parts of the 43 articles related to the women and disregarded the parts of the story related solely to the men. In this category, there was no mention nor quote for the codes “vulnerable/risk”; “education/educated”; “poverty/poor”; “beautiful/pretty”; “strong”; “White/Caucasian/Non-Aboriginal/Non-Indigenous”; “unemployment”; and “Indigenous/Native/Aboriginal/Inuit/Inuk/Métis”.

The codes “wealthy/rich” and “missed” had only one quote each, and “sex/prostitute” had one mention by the medium. The code “kind” had three quotes in three different articles. The codes “mom/mother” had one quote and four mentions by the medium in four different articles, and “drug/substance” had three mentions by the medium and one quote in two different articles. For the codes “mental/depression”, there were two mentions in the medium in two different articles, including one mention referring to the fact that there was no sign of mental illness. For the codes “target/prey”, there were four mentions by the medium, including one mention pointing out the fact that the woman was not the intended target and five quotes, including one referring to the woman as a target of opportunity. The mentions and quotes were in six different articles and all but one mention by the medium referred to the same case. Finally, the codes “love/cherished” had the most mentions and quotes in this category. Indeed, I counted four mentions by the medium and 10 quotes, in a total of 10 different articles.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

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As seen in the literature review, there is a common belief in Canada that missing and murdered Canadian Indigenous women and girls are more often falling into oblivion or being

ignored by the medium and the public than non-Aboriginal Canadian women. Considering the results obtained with this research, I would be unable to confirm if the belief is founded on empirical data. Indeed, the number of articles in both Aboriginal and Caucasian categories is very similar, with the number of articles talking about Aboriginal women being even higher. Nonetheless, getting accurate statistics on missing people is difficult because of the absence of a national data sources on missing persons in Canada, and data about Indigenous homicides and missing-persons cases started being compiled by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) only in 2011. “The missing and murdered numbers could be higher, Det. Supt. Truax said, because indigenous identity might [also] not be known in some cases.” (D’aliesio & Grant, 2015, p.2) Even Statistics Canada did not report the victim’s ethnicity in 20% of the cases (at least in 2014), which makes it trickier to have an accurate knowledge of the numbers (Roach, 2014, p.1). In addition, it is possible that the initials key words that I used to screen out articles published between 2014 and 2018 unintentionally screened out relevant articles that would have changed the numbers. I will get back to this in the limitation section of this work.

Furthermore, when counting how many articles were in each category, I did not take into consideration all the articles that focused on the Federal Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, which would then increase the number by at least 75 articles. Looking at the categories “murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men” and “murdered and missing Caucasian women and men” in the second part of the findings, sub-sections b and c, there are definitely much more articles in the latter category (six vs 43). However, these counts could be influenced by the presence of men in the articles. Indeed, even though I did not count the mentions and quotes referring to the men, the way the articles are written and the choice of words used in them may have been altered when men were also included. Looking at the articles strictly

mentioning either Aboriginal women or Caucasian women, I can conclude that missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls have definitely been referred to in numerous articles published by *The Globe and Mail* between 2014 and 2018, and no less than Caucasian women.

Nonetheless, when I look at the general tone and purpose of the articles in the Aboriginal category, I noticed that many of them aim to denounce racist profiling, to plea for the authorities to take the investigations more seriously, and to support the Federal Inquiry into MMIWG. In addition, most articles in the Aboriginal category seemed to focus on the reasons and underlying factors leading Aboriginal women and girls to have higher odds of disappearing or being murdered, without necessary talking about a particular case. This was surprising, as I expected more articles to be about the disappearance or murder in itself. In other words, I did not encounter any article simply describing the victim, stating what is known about the disappearance or murder and asking the public for help. Possibly, *The Globe and Mail* does not do such reports, and other tools and media are used for this purpose (e.g., Facebook, Police websites, etc.). Nonetheless, since it is a journal aimed for the public, it would be quite natural for it to not limit its articles to a simple report of the facts but to give personal details to make the readers more involved. If I had come across such articles, it might have been easier to classify them into categories and look specifically for the descriptions. In addition, I can infer that there were a lot more articles in the Aboriginal category than anticipated because of the attention given to the Federal Inquiry on MMIWG. Potentially, doing the same research on articles from 10 or 20 years ago would have resulted in different numbers.

Looking at the results, I can also establish that most of the criticism is towards the RCMP, the police, the authorities, the court and even the general population, but not so much the media. Examples of this were found when looking for the codes “Sex”, “Prostitute”, and “Kind”. Indeed,

in one article, it was quoted that The Crown referred to Ms. Gladue as a “prostitute” (Blaze Baum, 2017, p.1). In another article, Ms. Gladue's mother, Donna McLeod, said that the court and judge kept calling her daughter a prostitute. Ms. McLeod said that her daughter “was so much more than that, she has a name.” (Giovannetti & Blaze Baum, 2016, p.2) When referring to Loretta Saunders’ investigation, whose ethnicity is Inuit, it was quoted that “Saunders’ case was taken more seriously than other indigenous” but it was implied later that this was because “she [was] a young, smart, pretty university student, not ... involved in drugs, the sex trade” (Taber, Feb 2014, p.2). In another article, still talking about Saunders, her family said that people were kind and sweet to them because they did not look native (Tutton, 2017, p.1). In another instance, there was a quote referring to the general public brushing off disappearances and murders of Indigenous women because “it's easy for people to say okay, they were on drugs. It's okay, they were a sex trade worker.” (Taber, March 2014, p.1)

If we dive further, we notice a few interesting aspects regarding the chosen codes. Indeed, the fact that the words “vulnerable” and “risk” are mentioned 21 times in the Aboriginal category and only five times in the Caucasian category supports my earlier point that many articles about Aboriginal women focused on the factors rendering them more vulnerable. Interestingly, these codes are not mentioned nor quoted in the last two categories, “murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men” and “murdered and missing Caucasian women and men”. This might be because most of the codes referred to both the men and the women, not just the women, and men (Aboriginal and Caucasian) might not be perceived as vulnerable. Further research would need to be conducted to reach that conclusion. An interesting point of conversation, albeit maybe a bit delicate, would be to wonder about whether there is a relation between this over expression of the vulnerability of Aboriginal women in media and their actual situation. Are Aboriginal women

more “at risk”? Is it possible that all this talk about Aboriginal women being vulnerable and this public reporting of them being “at risk” makes them even *more* at risk? In other words, it removes a layer of protection they were enjoying because predators may be more inclined to choose them as victims if they see how easy it can be to assault them and how the authorities are apparently reacting when an Aboriginal woman goes missing or is being murdered. Whether they are or not, the public sees these women as being at risk, vulnerable individuals.

Although the codes “target/prey” are not mentioned many times, it still reveals something interesting. While all of the mentions and quotes in the Aboriginal category are referring to the fact that these women are likely to fall “prey” or that they are an easy “target”, the two quotes in the Caucasian category refer to the fact that the women were *not* the intended target of the attack. These quotes are: “Edmonton police stress that Ms. Duong was not Mr. Phu's intended target” (Giovannetti, 2015, p.2) and “[...] was the intended target of the shooting and [...] Ms. Navarro-Fenoy was an innocent bystander” (Goffin, 2016, p.1). This goes back to the codes “vulnerable/risk” and refers to the fact that Aboriginal women are portrayed as being more vulnerable and more “accessible”. On the other hand, I obtained different results when comparing the categories “murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men” and “murdered and missing Caucasian women and men”. Indeed, there are more mentions and quotes in the Caucasian category this time, and among nine mentions and quotes, only two point out to the fact that the woman in question is not the intended target. This can be explained by the fact that most of these mentions and quotes were made in articles talking about the murders of the Sherman couple, who were well-off, and the police claimed they were targeted because of their money and fame. This high-profile double murder increases the number of counts for this sub-section of the codes in this category.

As previously mentioned, codes that were not applied specifically to missing and murdered women were omitted in the analysis, and this is why I said in the findings section that the codes “education/educated” were not mentioned at all in the Aboriginal category. In fact, four articles mention either of these two words, for a total of eight mentions by the medium, but they do not apply specifically to murdered or missing women. Also, the context in which these words are said is very important. Indeed, all eight mentions refer to a lack of proper education and that a low level of education is a precursor for violence or murder for Indigenous women. This observation applies to other codes, such as “poverty/poor”, “sex/prostitute”, and “drug/substance”, and goes back to my statement saying that many articles referred to the underlying factors leading to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, without talking about a specific case.

The sub-section “mom/mother” of the codes is amongst the most used ones. However, there is a significant amount of mentions that were referring to the victim’s mother. I had to pay considerable attention to the context to screen out when the victim was not the one described as a mother. Indeed, what I wanted to see with these codes is whether the medium was trying to appeal to the public’s sympathy by referring to the victim as a mother. When I did the comparison between the Aboriginal and the Caucasian categories, there was a considerably higher number of mentions by the media in the Caucasian category. The same pattern is observed between the categories of “murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men” and “murdered and missing Caucasian women and men”. Therefore, it is possible that *The Globe and Mail* has put, voluntarily or not, a bigger emphasis on the fact that Caucasian women were mothers. However, there might be a difference in the number of mothers between the Aboriginal and Caucasian women. If a woman does not have children, the codes “mom/mother” cannot be used to describe her, so there might be a bias if one category included more mothers than the other. Nonetheless, in 2014, 87% of the 582

missing and murdered Aboriginal women cases in the database studied by the House of Commons' Committee involved a mother (Ambler, 2014, p.12).

Looking at the codes "sex/prostitute", it appears that there are more medium mentions in the Aboriginal category. Granted, *The Globe and Mail* is sometimes using the codes to indicate that the individual is "not just another sex worker" (Renzetti, 2015, p.1), or that it does not know if she was involved in the sex trade (Carlson & Mahoney, 2014, p.2). There is even a quote saying that a mother was "certain her daughter was not a sex worker" (Carlson, 2014, p.5). While these mentions can be looked at positively, I would rather argue that they simply reinforce the stigma that Indigenous peoples are "often prostitutes", agreeing with the earlier statement that they lead a "risky life-style". Explained differently, the fact that the medium, and to some extent the people quoting these words, feel the need to precise that the victim is not a prostitute or that she was having sexual relations with the aggressor, killer, or suspect, is in itself reinforcing the idea that (missing and murdered) Aboriginal women and girls are promptly thought to be prostitutes. Looking at the category of articles including both Aboriginal and Caucasian women, the results are similar with a slightly higher number of mentions and quotes referencing Indigenous women. Interestingly, this trend is not followed between the categories "murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men" and "murdered and missing Caucasian women and men". Again, this might be because most of the codes referred to both the men and the women and the choice of words could be different in these types of articles.

In regard to the codes "love/cherished", there are many more mentions in the Caucasian category. However, I have to acknowledge that these results might be biased by the following sentence "odd woman out in a love triangle". Indeed, this sentence is included in nine different articles, but all written by the same author (Casey, Dec 06, 2017, p.1; Dec 08, 2017, p.1; Nov 2,

2017, p.1; Nov 28, 2017, p.1; Nov 30, 2017, p.1; Oct 24, 2017, p.1; Oct 25, 2017, p.1; Oct 28, 2017, p.1; 2018, p.1). We can notice a pattern and a potential media framing, as mentioned in the literature review section of this work. Similarly, the codes are mentioned and quoted more often in the categories “murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men” and “murdered and missing Caucasian women and men”. In addition, amongst the eight quotes in the category with both Aboriginal women and men, I noted that seven of these quotes are mentioned in the same article and are referring to the same individual, Tina Fontaine, which can nullify the importance of the number of these quotes.

The codes “poverty/poor” appear by default more often in the Aboriginal category, since there is no mention nor quote in the Caucasian category. As mentioned in the findings section of this work, the codes, when used, may pejoratively portray the people they are referencing to. However, it is important to note that the financial situation of a woman is not necessarily connected to the fact that she is missing and it might not need to be mentioned, but it could also have a connection with her disappearance (it might imply that she lives in a poor neighborhood or is having financial issues driving to dangerous choices, etc.). In any case, this is a grey area and the article is not necessarily pejorative by saying if the woman was poor, and could actually be said in defense of the woman who disappeared or who was murdered. This does not nullify the importance of these codes, but it is important to take this perspective into consideration.

The final codes that I would like to address in this part are “mental/depression”. I noted previously that they do not appear in the Aboriginal category, while in the Caucasian category, they are mentioned 13 times by the medium and in five quotes. One of these mentions refer to the victim as a mental-health worker, while all the other mentions and quotes refer either to Traci Genereaux or Laura Babcock, two young women who suffered from mental-health issues. The fact

that most mentions and quotes refer to the same two individuals would, again, nullify in part the results.

Another very relevant and interesting finding of this research is the mention of the women's ethnicity. In the Aboriginal category, I noticed that the women's belonging to the Aboriginal ethnicity was mentioned in 81.3% (87) of the articles, among which *The Globe and Mail* is responsible for 145 mentions. These words were, for the most part, used to define the victim(s). Some examples of this use are; "the native woman's remains" (Purdy, 2015, n.p.), "Aboriginal teen's body" (Puxley & Lambert, 2014, n.p.), or "slain native women" (Renzetti, 2014, n.p.). All of these three uses were included in the title of the articles. However, what is strikingly different is that the women's belonging to the Caucasian ethnicity was never mentioned in the Caucasian category. The same trend is observed between the categories "murdered and missing Caucasian women and men" and "murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men". The continuation of this trend in these two categories reinforces it. Indeed, there are 43 articles in the former category and only six articles in the latter, which would lead us to believe that there would be less chances for the codes to be present in the "murdered and missing Aboriginal women and men" category. As stated in the methodology section, I often had to conduct further research to determine the woman's Caucasian ethnicity. An interesting question comes out of this finding: why does *The Globe and Mail* feel the need to specify that a woman is Aboriginal, Métis or Inuit? Without making any assumption, this could lead to think that being Caucasian and White is the normality in Canada, and thus there is no need to specify it, while being Aboriginal is *different* and somehow requires the specification. Playing the devil's advocate, I would argue that yes, White people, without being the "normality", are the majority in Canada. Therefore, if someone of any other ethnicity was murdered, saying their ethnicity would make sense in order to describe them since

Caucasian may be considered the “default” setting. However, is it really the reason why the ethnicity is mentioned almost systematically in the Aboriginal category? Is the point behind it just for description, or to fit the victim in an archetype? Further research, such as looking if other ethnicities (African American, Asian, etc.) are also mentioned in similar articles, would need to take place to be able to answer these questions.

The next element that I would like to address in this section are the codes that were calculated, but that I decided to remove from the analysis because my understanding of how the words would be used in the articles was not appropriate, and thus, they turned out to be irrelevant for this work. The first code that was removed is “dedicated”. While it was initially chosen to analyze if the women were portrayed as being motivated individuals with ambitions, dreams, and goals, and apart from one quote in the Caucasian category, the results show that this code was not used in that way. The quote, made by the woman’s brother, says that his sister was a dedicated community member (Dhillon, April 2014, p.1). Otherwise, “dedicated” is not use specifically to define a missing or murdered woman and in most instances where this word is used, it has one of its other possible meanings. Nonetheless, it may be interesting to show in which way this code is actually used. One quote in the Aboriginal category is made by a constable and refers to the search team in regard to the investigation: “we have been very motivated and dedicated to this investigation” (Puxley, 2015, p.2). The other one is: “Tina’s tattoo, which was dedicated to her father” (Blaze Baum, Dec 2015, p.1). One mention by the medium was used as a synonym of “assigned” and is therefore not what the coding was meant to gather. In sum, these results are not conclusive because I was aiming at gathering personal descriptions of the women, but the code was not used this way in the articles.

Similarly, the word “soul” was first added with the intention to see if the article was appealing to the women having a good personality and intentions, with a “good soul”. However, after reflection during the analysis part, I came to the conclusion that it needed to be removed because it seemed unlikely to appear and potentially too religiously-related and therefore, possibly biased.

The next codes that were removed from the analysis are “unfair” and “mishandled”, which were poor choices of codes. Indeed, I initially included them to see if the investigation related to a woman was considered mishandled or unfair. However, after reflection during the analysis part, I realized that these two codes did not refer to how the medium was describing missing and murdered women. Including them would have divert the analysis from this research’s objectives.

The last code that was removed from the analysis is “victim”, which was meant to see if the women were accused in a way of being responsible of their fate, or if they were “just” an unfortunate victim. However, looking back at the code, I do not believe it truly helps to demonstrate this. Indeed, the word “victim” might simply have been used because of a lack of synonyms or words to describe a person who experienced something horrific, but without any underlying thoughts. Calling someone a “victim” does not necessarily make the article pejorative nor does it denigrate the individual. This code is widely used, as it has 46 mentions by the medium and 13 quotes in the Aboriginal category and the results are similar in the Caucasian category with 44 mentions by the medium and seven quotes. Nonetheless, I concluded that it was better to disregard this code, because the word is very commonly used and does not necessarily infer that the victim had no responsibility or was unfortunate.

The last thing I would like to address in this section is how many cases referred to the same individual. Even though there were over 107 articles solely about missing and murdered

Aboriginal women and another 83 articles solely about missing and murdered Caucasian women, many cases were talked about and covered over and over. This trend could be seen above in the numbers of quotes and mentions referring to the same individuals. Indeed, there are over 36 articles about Tina Fontaine, whose death “led to demands for a federal inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.” (Conn, 2019, n.p.) The next most famous case in the Aboriginal category is Loretta Saunders, the young Inuit who did not correspond to the usual stereotypes attributed to the First Nation peoples, which are to be poor, drug users, uneducated, alcoholics, etc. (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2015, n.p.; Facing history and ourselves, n.d., n.p.) The next most mentioned cases are Cindy Gladue and Hanne Meketech, with about six references each. There are approximately<sup>8</sup> 60 other cases, but they were only referred to once or twice each. Considering that in 2014, the RCMP noted that there were over 164 Aboriginal women currently missing and 225 unsolved cases, it is possible to see how some cases are much more prominent than others (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014, p.7). A similar trend can be noticed for the Caucasian cases. Among the approximate 81 cases mentioned, Julie Paskall and Laura Babcock were the most talked about. The former was the mother of a hockey player who was killed in a parking lot while waiting for her son. In addition, the various victims of famous serial killers such as Robert Pickton and Cody Legebokoff were also mentioned on multiple occasions.

Interestingly, only Tina Fontaine seems to have an article written about her on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, which is a source providing information on Canada’s history, stories, culture, and people (The Canadian Encyclopedia, n.d.). The article is accessible at this link:

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<sup>8</sup> The word *approximately* is employed because as previously mentioned, it was not always possible to identify a woman as Aboriginal or Indigenous and thus, the number of cases could be slightly higher. When an article did not count any woman that I could identify as Aboriginal or Caucasian, I disqualified these articles. However, when an article counted at least one woman that I could identify as Aboriginal or Caucasian, but one or more unidentifiable ethnicity, I was not disqualifying the article and this is where the count could have been higher.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/tina-fontaine>. While her murder gathered the media and the public's attention, and consequently created a lot of changes in Canada, one can ask why only her? Is it really because of the impacts her death has caused, or are there other reasons why other victims do not *qualify* to have a profile? Perhaps it is precisely because of the changes that followed her murder. In other words, maybe the article is not about her in particular, but rather what her death triggered and changed in Canada, but the article with her name in large letters at the top suggests otherwise. Further research and analysis would need to be conducted to have answers to these questions. However, it does show that the media are framing which cases get their attention based on the background story of the victims and how the murder and or disappearance happened. A "normal, average girl"<sup>9</sup> who simply disappears will not be as interesting to the public as someone who was brutally murdered by a serial killer. This selection of the most sensational stories might seem natural, as media have to pick their stories and decide what to publish. After all, their reporting is what creates their reputation. They cannot possibly cover every disappearance and murder. Nonetheless, this feels unfair to all the forgotten victims, and perhaps the media should try to cover more stories rather than write profusely on a few dramatic ones, but this is another issue entirely and beyond my scope of research.

#### FINAL ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

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So far in this work, I have provided my input on the general belief that missing and murdered Aboriginal women cases tend to go unnoticed. I have then outlined the main findings of the

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<sup>9</sup> This is not a representation of my opinion, but merely a depiction of what is generally considered a normal, average girl. In other words, I am referring here to someone who is not famous and whose disappearance or murder was not spectacular compared to other disappearances and murders.

research and discussed their significance and interpreted them. With all that information, I am now in a better position to answer my main question: How has *The Globe and Mail* described missing and murdered Aboriginal women compared to Caucasian women between 2014 and 2018? The information gathered during this research allow to concluded that in general, the medium often defines the Aboriginal women as being strong, sex-workers, often sexually involved with their murderer. As for the Caucasian women, they are often described as being mothers. However, no important difference was observed and I did not notice a clear prejudice in how Aboriginal women were described in comparison to Caucasian women.

Based on this, I can conclude that Aboriginal women are not victim of discrimination in *The Globe and Mail's* choice of words and adjectives for the period of time covered by this study (2014 to 2018). Even for the codes that were the most mentioned for Aboriginal women, the difference between the number of mentions for Caucasian women was not large. Nonetheless, *The Globe and Mail* does seem to put the emphasis on the reality lived by Indigenous women (e.g., poor education, high level of drugs and prostitution, etc.), and on the ethnicity of the victims when they are Aboriginal.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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While conducting this research, I saw many opportunities for other connected studies that would complete this one. First of all, the time frame chosen, which coincide with the implementation of the Federal Inquiry into MMIWG, might have resulted in more articles in the Aboriginal women category. To mitigate this effect, I classified all the articles solely talking about the inquiry into a separate category and I have not been coding them. This made sense since the

research's purpose was to determine how *The Globe and Mail* was describing missing and murdered Indigenous and Caucasian women, while most articles about the Federal Inquiry were addressing issues related to Indigenous women, and sometimes men, in general. Considering the inquiry and all the information it brought up, the government and authorities have to be aware of the issues that affect the life and safety of Indigenous people, such as poverty, a low education, and a high level of substance abuse. It would be very interesting to do a research looking more closely at these factors rendering Indigenous people more vulnerable than the rest of the Canadian population, and to investigate if some actions have been taken to address them. Secondly, it would also be relevant to do a research similar to this one, but with an older time frame to see if the number of articles published about a missing or murdered Aboriginal women was influenced by the national attention given to the Federal Inquiry, and how the MMIW inquiry has affected the reporting or the number of reports published on the subject. As previously mentioned, there were 77 articles discussing the Federal Inquiry without mentioning specific disappearance or murder cases. It is probable that the results of this research would have been affected by the time period chosen. In older times, the way those crimes were portrayed might have been different, and the media attention might have been lesser. It would be pertinent to conduct such a study and compare it with this one, as it would allow to know whether the reportage of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the media has gone better in recent years. In addition, while reading the articles, I realized that it would have been interesting to do a research on Aboriginal men as well. Although they are suffering from similar problems and conditions as Aboriginal women, the inquiry (and most documents and articles) focus their attention on women. It would be very compelling to look more into this side of the story and into the statistics for missing and murdered Aboriginal men. Another very interesting study would be to compare the investigations for

murdered Aboriginal women to the ones conducted for Caucasian women. Indeed, as mentioned previously, many articles suggested that the RCMP and investigations are not as thorough for Indigenous people than they are for people of Caucasian ethnicity. Looking more closely at the steps taken during investigations for each ethnicity would be very enlightening in knowing if these allegations are true.

Throughout this work, I have alluded multiple times to some of the limitations and challenges encountered during this research. One challenge that I faced is the fact that I underestimated the time it would take for me to screen the articles and go through them to create the coding, then going over them again to calculate the number of times each code was used. I also needed to read over some of them to recover the meaning of a code's use. This is, in part, due to the fact that I was not accustomed with grounded theory. As per this theory, my methodology has evolved through my investigations as I did not at first take in consideration all the possible meanings of the codes, so this required me to go back and apply the new codes to previously analyzed articles. In addition, most steps of the research were done manually rather than by computer, which means human interpretation and possible mistakes are to be taken into account. In sum, I thought that conducting the preliminary research and coding would only take me a few weeks, but it actually took nearly half a year because I wanted to be precise and consistent in my methodology. The analysis then took several more months.

In addition, as stated in the discussion part, the fact that the media only focus on a few cases biased my results by inflating the number of times certain codes are used. For instance, although the codes "mental/depression" are mentioned fairly often in the Caucasian Category, I am unable to say that the medium is describing Caucasian women as having mental-health issues or as being depressed because most of these mentions refer to the same two individuals. Making this statement

and reaching this conclusion would be wrongly analyzing the results. It is therefore challenging to see how *The Globe and Mail* is defining missing and murdered women when it is talking about the same cases and often re-using the same information and sometimes the same sentences in multiple articles.

As one can infer from the discussion section, I have also had difficulties with the choice of codes. Many of them were not actually used in most articles, and I did not give enough consideration to the different meanings a word could have and be used for prior to selecting which codes would be used. A more extensive preparation on how to develop strong codes and a more lengthy and careful selection and creation of my codes would have probably saved time and efforts in the following parts of the research and might have yielded better results. It was also difficult to predict which synonyms of a word would be relevant or used in the articles, and including all of them would have significantly increased the necessary time to complete this work. Having stronger and better codes may have helped reaching higher numbers of quotes and mentions and consequently helped in my analysis. Furthermore, my methodology consisted of counting the total amount of times the codes were mentioned and quoted, and in how many articles. Another interesting way to conduct the study would have been to limit the use of a code to once per article, or maybe once per victim. Most likely, I would have reached different conclusions and potentially this method would have drastically reduced the amount of mentions and quotes reported, but it would have avoided the bias of having many mentions and quotes for a certain code referring to the same individual. It could have been interesting to look at the pros and cons of each method.

Another point worth mentioning is that *The Globe and Mail* is a fairly liberal newspaper. Although I already explained in the methodology section of this work why I chose this particular medium, the reporting of missing and murdered Aboriginal and Caucasian women, and the results

of this research would have potentially been different using another newspaper. However, the scope and time allowed to do this research only allowed me to do a limited research on the subject, and it is not aimed to make a generalization on the reporting of all media, nor making a case that there is no discrimination at all in reporting.

The last limitation I would like to outline is the initial keywords that I have used to screen out articles published between 2014 and 2018. As a reminder, the keywords chosen were; murder, homicide, vanishing, kidnapping, disappearance, women, and *The Globe and Mail*. Using these words, I screened thousands of articles and selected 463 articles amongst those, and I subsequently divided them into categories. Most likely, it is possible that these initial keywords unintentionally screened out relevant articles that would have changed the results and my conclusions. For instance, during the analysis part of the study, I realized that I should have looked at the keyword “woman”, instead of just women. It was unfortunately too late at this point of the analysis to add this keyword.

In sum, I do believe that this major research paper has allowed me to learn the basics of grounded theory and become familiar with this qualitative research method. In spite of the fact that I do think I spent an enormous amount of time on this work that surpasses its scope and purpose, this knowledge and experience will allow me to be better prepared when conducting similar studies in the future and to avoid potential biases in the methodology and analysis. Although I am satisfied with this study, I would have ideally liked to be able to reach a deeper analysis, maybe by finding ways to increase the number of relevant articles to study to reach more solid conclusions.

## CONCLUSION

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In this major research paper, I have first identified some documents and sources relevant to this work, such as the RCAP's, MMIWG's, and TRC's reports and Kirsten's study. I have then explored the concepts of media framing and the missing White girl syndrome, which are both interesting and relevant to this study. The methodology consisted of revising 463 articles published by *The Globe and Mail* between 2014 and 2018 and coding each article. I then counted the number of mentions and quotes and analyzed the results to find trends and disparities that would help finding out how *The Globe and Mail* described missing and murdered Aboriginal women compared to Caucasian women between 2014 and 2018, and whether missing and murdered Indigenous women were victims of discrimination in this medium during that time frame.

The various codes used while coding the articles allowed to show that *The Globe and Mail* often defines missing and murdered Aboriginal women as being strong individuals. Frequently, the paper also defines them as being sex-workers and prostitutes. As for the missing and murdered Caucasian women, they are often described as being mothers, but none of the other codes were particularly mentioned by *The Globe and Mail*, and this emphasis is not present in the articles about both Caucasian and Aboriginal women, nor in the articles about both women and men (second part of the findings). I have also established that 81.3% of the articles in the Aboriginal women category were specifying the woman's belonging to the Aboriginal, Indigenous Inuit, Inuk or Métis' ethnicity, while no article in the Caucasian category mentioned their belonging to the Caucasian ethnicity. This research has also shown that missing and murdered Indigenous and Caucasian women have a very similar number of articles published about them (in the categories excluding men) and therefore, missing and murdered Aboriginal women cases are not less reported in *The Globe and Mail*. Rather, it seems like the criticism reported by the people in the articles

were more targeted towards the lack of seriousness of the investigations for these Aboriginal women than on the media's coverage.

One fact that I have briefly raised before is that there was no article simply reporting the disappearance of a woman. Rather, they were all in retrospect, once a body was found or someone admitted committing the crime. I believe it would be helpful and pertinent to have an article written when a woman disappears. This would raise awareness and more people would be looking for the individual. Understandably, the medium may not see the interest in publishing about all the cases of missing or murdered women. Indeed, the public might become overwhelmed with this gruesome and depressing journalism, but we are talking about someone's life. *The Globe and Mail*, and other newspapers and media, would do Canada a favor by reporting disappearances as soon as they happen, and by either not specifying the victim's ethnicity unless it is to describe the people when they disappear, or precise it for every cases. This would ensure less-biased media reporting.

In addition, this study allowed me to have a glimpse at the conditions in which Aboriginal peoples are living in, and how investigations for missing and murdered Indigenous peoples are perceived by these communities. It is clear that the way police officers are investigating these cases is largely being criticized and some of these investigations conducted for the disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women in Canada are seen to be sloppy, racially biased with a lack of vigilance and rigorousness. In addition, policing services in these communities do not benefit from sufficient financial and human resources (Ambler, 2014, p.31). Maryanne Pearce conducted a very enlightening research on how the Canadian justice system responds to missing and murdered vulnerable women, and she stated that "women's Aboriginal and human rights organizations, as well as media and researchers, have long argued that the police have done little and cared less about the fate of women in high-risk situations." (Pearce et al., 2013, p.666) Although *The Globe*

*and Mail* may have not ignored and discriminate missing and murdered Aboriginal women between 2014 and 2018, Canada still has some work to do to address the differences in the living conditions and investigations between Aboriginal and Caucasian peoples of Canada.

APPENDIX I

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Shannon Matthews



Madeleine McCann



(Allen, 2008)

APPENDIX II

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(Wurst, 2017)

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