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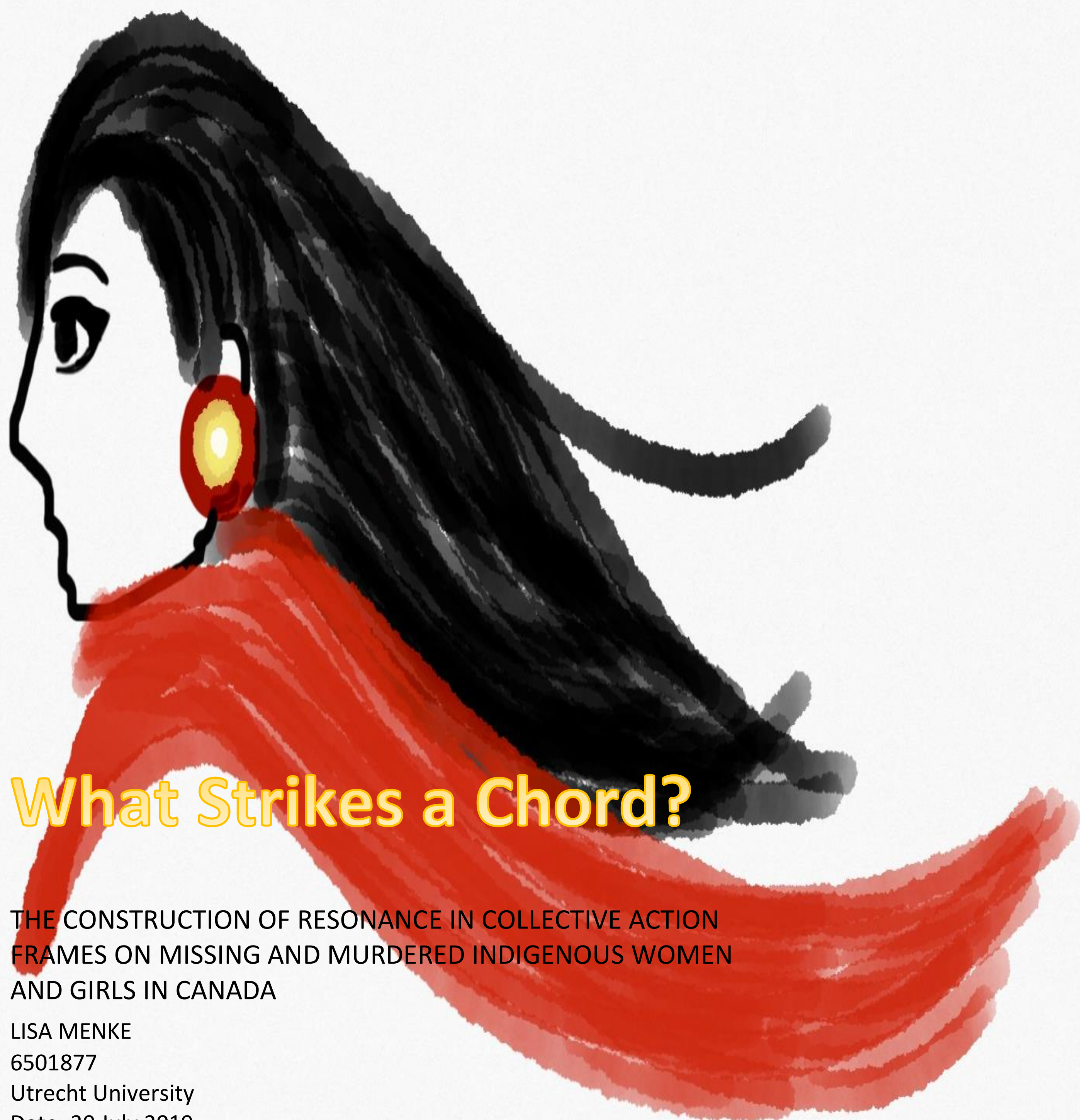

What Strikes a Chord?

THE CONSTRUCTION OF RESONANCE IN COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES ON MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CANADA

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Abstract

Indigenous activism focusses on Indigenous rights and Indigenous sovereignty. One issue that connects to both these themes is that of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and Girls (MMIWG). This issue entails the disproportionality between the numbers of Indigenous women who go missing or are murdered and that of other women in Canada. The issue is emblematic of the marginalized position of Indigenous women as a result of racism, sexism, and colonialism. Indigenous activists need to mobilize two key audiences, an Indigenous and a "White settler" audience, in order to achieve change with their activism. This research studies the resonance construction of Indigenous grassroots activists concerning the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada since 2016. Through the use of participant observation, interviews, and the use of secondary sources, such as newspaper articles and documentary film, this research provides a description of the context in which Indigenous grassroots activism on MMIWG takes place and identifies Benford and Snow's (2000) *core framing tasks* in Indigenous grassroots activism. Eight in-depth interviews serve as the basis of an analysis of resonance construction among an Indigenous as well as a "White settler" audience, the two key audiences of MMIWG activism. This research finds that conditions of colonialism, social marginalization, and lack of government response have shaped the context of activism. Additionally, activists tend to frame MMIWG as a structural issue that needs to be addressed at the root while also preventing further harm to Indigenous women and girls. This research also finds that among the sample of this research credibility, i.e. the "believability" of a frame, weighs more heavily than salience when activists construct resonance among a "White settler" audience, while salience, i.e. the "visibility/recognizability" of a frame, weighs more heavily than credibility among an Indigenous audience. This research proposes the idea of the *resonance equilibrium* to visualize this finding. There are also indications that other factors, such as space and collective identity, play significant roles in resonance construction among Indigenous grassroots activists.

Keywords: Framing, Frame Resonance, Indigenous Activism, Grassroots Activism, MMIWG, Canada

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Introduction: Indigenous Grassroots Activism on MMIWG

"And can you imagine […] when you have these emotions evoked from you, you question like 'oh my gosh, I would never be able to deal with that, they're so strong' or 'how do they, you know, they go on'. And then more than that: 'I want to help in some way now. No one should feel that'. You don't want people to be hurting. And to know that it's going on, you're like 'ok, how do we stop this?'"[1] said one of my respondents when explaining how he connected the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to the daily lives of a non-Indigenous audience.

In 1992, a group of women from different races, nationalities, and ages, many of whom were Indigenous[2], took to the streets of Vancouver's Downtown East Side to protest the deaths of the women in their neighborhood. The public did not look onto this kind of "disruptive" behavior too kindly. Passersby shouted verbal abuse and the protesters were struck by trash flung at them from passing cars. The protesters persisted and eighteen years later, during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, their march, which had become an annual occurrence, boasted a record number of participants, despite the city's best efforts to halt that year's march. DTES's women inspired one grieving daughter in Ontario to act to bring attention to the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls to the Canadian federal government. She hosted a vigil on Parliament Hill on October 4th. The DTES women march until this day and Bridget Tolley and Families of Sisters in Spirit (FSIS) still occupy the steps of Parliament every October 4th.

These women are protesting what Amnesty International (2014) called a "national human rights crisis" (2). This "crisis" relates to the violence perpetrated against Canada's Indigenous women and girls. Four percent of Canada's female population is Indigenous, yet Indigenous women make up sixteen percent of the women murdered between 1980 and 2012 (Government of Canada 2018, par. 1). A recent study estimates that over 1,181 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing or been murdered (RCMP 2014). A report by CEDAW (2015) charges the Canadian Government with consistent failure to provide effective

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[1] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019

[2] I use the term Indigenous to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals and groups in Canada. The term is capitalized per common usage in official government documents. The capitalization also serves to recognize Indigenous peoples as a group that has its own sovereignty. I refer to an Individual's specific nation or group as much as possible. I recognize that the term "Indian" is derogatory and the term will only be used to cite historical documents, and in cases where it is a legal term, such as in *Indian Act* and "Indian status".

protections for Indigenous women and girls (53). Indigenous women continuously challenged the Harper government, which was in power from 2006 until 2015, to recognize the seriousness and systemic nature of the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The Harper government considered the issue to be a case of individual crimes and argued that there was no need for further research as the issue had been "studied to death" already (Saramo 2016, 208). One of the major calls for action during this time was that of a national inquiry into the issue of MMIWG (see for example Printup 2015).

"And then Trudeau came in on his white horse"[3], one of my respondents narrated sarcastically. Current PM Justin Trudeau ran on a platform that promised the establishment of a national inquiry. This inquiry was officially established in 2016 and its final report was published in June 2019. Many admit that the National Inquiry was an important step in recognizing that MMIWG is a systemic issue that needs to be addressed on a national scale[4] (NWAC 2018). The focus of many national organizations can be said to have shifted to the National Inquiry since its establishment. Many of the activists I spoke with, however, were dissatisfied and hence they continue to hold vigils, organize meetings, and march to bring justice to MMIWG.

Indigenous activism in Canada more generally consists of two broad themes: Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous rights (Dyck and Sadik 2016). Indigenous rights refer to Canada's (lack of) recognition of the UN treaty on Indigenous people's rights, while Indigenous sovereignty encompasses not only the recognition of Indigenous governing bodies, such as the AFN, but also the protection of Indigenous lands and a commitment to processes of decolonialization (Dyck and Sadik 2016). The focus of many well-known Indigenous campaigns is on either environmental protection, Indigenous sovereignty, land rights, or Indigenous women's rights. Indigenous sovereignty, see for example Idle no More, and the issue of violence against women are currently prominent themes (Coulthard 2014, 177). MMIWG activism connects to Indigenous activism more broadly, because violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonialism and racism (Bourgeois 2014, 75). Decolonialization and the realization of Indigenous sovereignty are thus a key part of resolving MMIWG (ibid).

MMIWG also links to feminist activism. Not only can the issue be linked to violence against women, it can also be connected to domestic violence, the sex trade, and human trafficking (Bourgeois 2014, 76). MMIWG therefore fits into a tradition of feminist activism.

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[3] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[4] Interview with respondent 1 conducted on 7 March 2019

Indeed, this is evidenced by the fact that many MMIWG events are organized around days that are significant to feminism, such as International Women's Day. It must be noted here that some Indigenous activists deliberately choose to pursue change for MMIWG and other Indigenous women's rights separately from mainstream feminist movements. Indigenous women do not only suffer from patriarchy but also from racism and colonialism (Bourgeois 2014, 76). This intersectionality makes that a "one size fits all" approach does not work for Indigenous women. MMIWG is a complex issue and rectifying sexism without decolonization will not work just as decolonialization without addressing patriarchy will not resolve MMIWG (Bourgeois 2014, 77).

The Research Puzzle: On Convincing a Diverging Audience and Framing

I quickly realized that researching the issue of MMIWG from a standpoint in which Indigenous women were primarily positioned as victims would be unsatisfactory. I would first of all be doing similar work to the National Inquiry with less resources and time. Additionally, it seemed that Indigenous women were tired of "being researched to death" (NIMMIWG 2017, 32). One of my respondents argued that Indigenous women were disproportionately victimized but that she was frustrated by a focus on Indigenous women as "victims" because she thought that that took away their agency. Indeed, Indigenous women are "fierce warrior women" according to my respondents[5]. Research with an emphasis on Indigenous agency, in the form of activism, thus seemed paramount. Additionally, the issue of MMIWG has been extensively researched, yet MMIWG activism in itself has not[6].

What struck me as interesting in Indigenous activism surrounding MMIWG was that there were different audiences that needed to be convinced. One of these audiences is an Indigenous audience, while the other is a non-Indigenous audience. It is reasonable to assume that these audiences are distinct from one another. Indeed, they have vastly different experiences, histories, relations to authority, cultures, and world views. This then led me to my empirical complication: how do activists convince such a divergent audience? I used this complication to formulate the following research question:

How do Indigenous grassroots activists attempt or not attempt to construct frame resonance through their collective action frames on MMIWG in Canada from the 2016 announcement of a National Inquiry until present?

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[5] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[6] See Bourgeois 2014 for a notable exception to this.

I selected framing and frame resonance as my analytical framework for several reasons. First of all, it factors in the important role that individual activists and social movements have in the articulation of frames and thus includes a focus on Indigenous agency. What also drew my attention was the focus on particular problem definitions as well as the extensive use of symbols and ceremony in the creation of particular narratives in MMIWG activism. These features fit into the "symbols and meanings" approach to research, a school of which framing is a part. Finally, the concept of frame resonance would allow me to research the relationship between movement activists and their audience.

I define grassroots activism as collective action from the local level organized by independent and self-organized individuals or groups meant to effect change on higher societal levels. As Garry Crystal (2018) puts it: "grassroots activism is a group of people who feel strongly enough about an issue to actively campaign to make a difference" (par. 1). In the context of MMIWG, grassroots activists are most often MMIWG family members, independent artists and film makers, independent academics, and other parties that are engaged in activism that is not sponsored by the state.

Benford and Snow's theory on framing provides the theoretical backbone for this thesis. framing is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman 1993, 52). A frame connects multiple events to each other and tries to create a coherent whole out of them (Gamson qtd. in De Vreese 2012, 366). Frame resonance refers to a frame's effectiveness in mobilizing and compelling potential participants which is influenced by the relevance and congruence of the frame to participants' shared lived experience, values and norms, and cultural narratives, as well as the existence of empirical evidence for claims made in the frame, the reputation of claim makers and the consistency between frames, within frames, and between frames and actions (Resnick 2009, 57; Shuster and Campos-Castillo 2016, 21; Benford and Snow 2000, 619-621). This thesis charts how Indigenous grassroots activists consider the different aspects of resonance, which I call *resonance components*, in their choices on which aspects of a perceived reality to emphasize and downplay in their collective action frames. I additionally use Tilly and Tarrow's concept of the social movement campaign in order to sketch the context in which Indigenous grassroots activism on MMIWG takes place. I also use Tilly and Tarrow's concept

of events to delineate three instances of activism that are sampled for the examination of the claims made by Indigenous activists.

This thesis adds to the academic literature by building information on the case of MMIWG activism and by adding to the framework of frame resonance. The case of Indigenous women's activism concerning MMIWG is relatively understudied, with a few notable exceptions[7]. My thesis adds to knowledge on MMIWG activism by analyzing the claims made by Indigenous activists, providing descriptions of MMIWG events, and by determining the strategies used by a sample of grassroots MMIWG activists. When looking at resonance construction, the current literature primarily focusses on one or a few of the resonance components, i.e. consistency, empirical credibility, credibility of the articulator, centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity, rather than comprehensively studying the different components of frame resonance in the same study. The audience that the current literature addresses is either largely homogenous (VanWynsberghe 2001; Trumpy 2016) or separated by a boundary (Resnick 2009). My thesis thus tries to build knowledge on how all resonance components are considered in the construction of resonance among a diverse audience. Benford and Snow's work is also unclear about the weight of the different resonance components and on how credibility and salience relate to each other, i.e. is one of the two more important for the mobilizing potency of a frame or not. My research works to fill this current gap in the analytical framework by showing whether the audience affects the "weight" of the resonance components and the relative importance of salience and credibility. I find that among an Indigenous audience salience is considered to be more important in constructing resonance, while credibility is more essential in resonance construction among a "White settler" audience. I visualize this relationship through the use of the *resonance equilibrium.* Additionally, I find that space and the collective as well as individual identity of grassroots activists shapes and constrains the ways in which resonance is constructed in collective action frames. The importance of space and identity has already been established in the field of memory studies and identity politics but has until recently gone unincorporated in framing research. By adding the aspects of space and identity in my analysis, I bridge the gap between different fields in conflict studies.

The thesis structure is the following:

[7] See for example Bourgeois 2014

In chapter one, I provide an overview of the academic debate surrounding my analytical framework as well as an overview of the research on resonance construction. I also introduce my methodology and sampling strategies.

In chapter two, I provide a more detailed description on the issue of MMIWG. I give the information on the what, how, when, and where of the MMIWG crisis. I go into the historical roots of MMIWG and provide the sociological context in which MMIWG activism takes place.

Chapter three describes MMIWG activism on the basis of three key events and explains the actors, claims, and context of these three events. I provide an analysis of the claims made by grassroots activists through the use of Benford and Snow's *core framing tasks*.

In chapter four, I go into the construction of frame resonance. I describe two key audiences that activists try to address, and I provide an analysis on how each resonance component "weighs". I also demonstrate the differences in resonance construction for the different audiences and I provide the reader with the strategies activists use to construct resonance. This chapter also goes into two additional factors that influence resonance construction: space and identity.

In my final chapter, I reflect on the findings of this thesis and their importance to current academic and empirical debates. I also discuss the importance of this work to the "world at large". I additionally provide avenues for future research.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This thesis builds on the literature surrounding collective action and Benford and Snow's (2000) concept of framing and frame resonance in collective action. Within the field of collective action and Social Movement Organization (SMO) research, framing is one of the major approaches. This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature surrounding collective action framing and explains the main premises that are used throughout this thesis. In order to situate my current research, I provide an empirical review on resonance construction in SMOs. I identify remaining research gaps. I also provide the methodology of this research and I go into issues of sampling.

Framing in Collective Action

Indigenous women's activism on MMIWG is a case of collective action, when looking at its salient features. According to Tilly and Tarrow (2007), collective action "means coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs" (5). Marshall adds that this is done by groups "either directly or on its behalf through an organization" and that it is about "perceived shared interests" (qtd. in Vanni 2016, 21). In other words, collective action can be conceptualized as coordinated action by groups or organizations on the basis of perceived shared interests.

There are five major vantage points in collective action research. The first of these is contentious politics, advocated by scholars such as Tilly and Tarrow. This approach focusses on the overlap between collective action, contention, and politics (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 7). Tilly and Tarrow (2007) argue that contentious politics is best studied by looking at episodes and events through a process and mechanisms approach (27). Another important approach to collective action is that of political opportunity structures and it is advocated by Tilly, Kriesi, and Kitscheidt, among others. Political opportunity structures determine the opportunities for collective action and the ways in which collective action can take shape (Jasper 2010, 966). The third approach to collective action is that of agency. Such approaches focus on micro-level interactions, lived experiences of individuals, emotions and morals (Jasper 2010, 973). A fourth approach to collective action studies is that of "mobilizing structures". Prominent scholars in this field are McCarthy, Zald, and McAdams, among others. This approach to collective action asserts that intrapersonal and associational ties are needed as a structure that breeds solidarity and generates resources (Lu and Tao 2017, 1727). Scholars argue that the

appropriation of pre-existing organizational structures and social ties will lead to more successful mobilization (1728).

I selected the final approach to collective action, namely collective action framing. The main reason for this is that it brings agency into the equation as well as the role of symbols and narratives. Benford and Snow (2000) argue that agency is one of the key components of collective action framing (614). Collective action frames do not necessarily emerge automatically out of a particular structure, they rather have to be created by SMOs and social movement activists (ibid). This involves the individual agency of activists and their associated movements in deciding what to say and how to say it. As I am interested in exactly this construction (and the construction of resonance in particular), it is only natural to adopt a framing perspective for the case of MMIWG activism. Additionally, contentious politics and approaches focusing on political opportunity structures are too preoccupied with structural conditions, which is a negative given that Indigenous people have the feeling of being over-researched (NIMMIWG 2017, 32). One way to overcome this research fatigue and Indigenous skepticism surrounding research is through a focus on agency. By positioning Indigenous women as individuals with power and agency, rather than passive victims, one focusses on Indigenous empowerment. Because of the importance of symbols and meaning in MMIWG activism, Jasper's approach to agency in collective action falls short. Indeed, the existence of different narratives and symbols in MMIWG protesting is one of the first features that caught my attention.

The concept "frame" was first coined by Goffman who defines it as a ""'schemata of interpretation" that allows individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life space and the world at large" (qtd in Benford and Snow 2000, 614). While Goffman's definition of framing relates primarily to psychology, other scholars have redefined the concept in the context of collective action. Entman (1993) argues that framing is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (52). A frame connects multiple events to each other and tries to create a coherent whole out of them (Gamson qtd. in De Vreese 2012, 366). Collective action frames are defined as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). Collective action framing, then, focusses on interpretation and meaning, salience, the creation of a coherent whole out of divergent events, legitimation, action, and communication.

Now that I have established what a frame is, the question remains of what frames do. Benford and Snow identify three core framing tasks, while Entman formulates the four

functions of collective action framing. The three core framing tasks are diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (Benford and Snow 2000, 615). Diagnostic framing consists of problem identification, identifying causes, and blame or responsibility attribution (616). Prognostic framing consists of a prognosis, i.e. a proposed solution, strategy and tactic, on how to deal with the problem identified through diagnostic framing (617). Lastly, motivational framing provides the motivation (or rationale) for collective action and it usually involves a "call to action" as well as "vocabularies of motive" (617). Framing identifies problems, diagnoses causes, makes moral judgements, and suggests remedies (Entman 1993, 52). The four framing functions that Entman (1993) identifies in some ways overlap with the core framing tasks, in particular the definition of a problem, the formulation of solutions, and the moral evaluation of the problem. A major difference between the two approaches is the fact that Benford and Snow's core framing tasks are heavily interconnected and that it is unlikely for one task to exist without the other. Entman, on the other hand, asserts that the four framing functions can exist on their own (52). The focus of Entman and Benford and Snow is thus different. While Entman focusses on framing as a separate entity in itself, hence the name "framing functions", Benford and Snow see their "core framing tasks" as a means to an end, namely collective action mobilization.

Constraints to framing include political opportunity, culture, time, and the audience (Benford and Snow 2000, 628-630; Gamson and Meyer 2008, 277-279; Entman 1993, 56; De Vreese, 2012, 370). Political structure may influence frames in the sense that it reshapes the narrative fidelity feature, the degree to which a frame builds on collective myths, values, and culture, of resonance (Benford and Snow 2000, 629). In other words, political opportunity may reshape national myths and reframing may be necessary in order to attain a higher degree of resonance. Gamson and Meyer (2008), on the other hand, argue that "real" opportunity structures do not necessarily shape collective action framing, but rather *perceived* opportunity shapes collective action (289). Framing is therefore a way to convince constituents that collective action is possible (289). Culture, according to Benford and Snow (2000), influences the existing stories, meanings, and myths that collective actions frames can build on (629). Culture provides possible foundations for frames, the way in which the "building" will take shape, however, is entirely up to the SMO itself (629). According to De Vreese (2012), most scholars neglect one crucial constraint to the success of framing, namely time (370). The effect of frames decays over time, thus the number of times a frame can and is repeated as well as the time between the initial framing and later framings will affect the degree to which a frame resonates (De Vreese 2012, 370). Lastly, the audience is a crucial constraint to

framing. Entman (1993) argues that although frames may *guide* the interpretations of the audience, particularly in the absence of alternative frames, the audience still has individual autonomy (56). Benford and Snow (2000) also admit that audiences and movement actors interact and that the frame created is largely dependent on the audience it attempts to reach (630). Different frames may be needed in order to convince different audiences.

All these constraints can be related to one crucial issue in framing: resonance. Resonance relates to "the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings" (Benford and Snow 2000, 619). Resonance is essentially about the relationship between framings and the audiences they try to mobilize. Resonance consists of two component parts: credibility and salience (619). Credibility relates to the degree of consistency between frames, within frames, and between frames and actions; the empirical foundations of a frame; and the perceived credibility and authority of the frame articulator (619-620). Salience consists of centrality, i.e. how essential are the frames created to the lives of the target audience, experiential commensurability, i.e. how well does the proffered frame square with the lived experiences of the target audience, and narrative fidelity, how does the frame build on existing grand narratives, culture, and myths (620-621). The component parts of credibility and salience, narrative fidelity, consistency, experiential commensurability, empirical credibility and the credibility of the articulator as defined above are referred to as *resonance components in* this thesis. Entman (1993) defines salience as: "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (53). Although this definition seems to be similar to that of Benford and Snow, there is one major difference, namely the fact that Entman argues that activists determine what will become salient through framing (i.e. something is *made* salient), while Benford and Snow argue that frames need to relate to the preexisting experiences and narratives of the audience in order to even be considered salient, hence something *becomes* salient when there is interaction between the psychological frames of the audience and the frames presented by the movement.

Resonance Construction in SMO Campaigns

For this part of my review, I go into three empirical studies that consider resonance construction in SMOs. I have drawn these works from the field of collective action and social movement studies. The three studies are VanWynsberghe's article on activism in Walpole Island[8]; Resnick's analysis of Indigenous activism in Botswana; and Trumpy's work on

[8] Walpole Island is a First Nations reserve in Ontario, Canada.

framing within the pro-choice movement in the US. VanWynsberghe's article was selected because it discusses collective action framing by an Indigenous community in Canada and it might therefore be very similar to my selected case. Resnick's work was selected because it deals with Indigenous collective action frames in a case where there are distinct audiences. Trumpy's article discusses strategic considerations concerning resonance construction by activists that focus on women's rights and was therefore selected. It must also be noted here that there is relatively little scholarship on Indigenous collective action in Canada and resonance.

VanWynsberghe's (2001) main focus is on the development of a new methodology that he calls "the unfinished story" (733). Although the main focus of his article is not on resonance construction, he does use the concept of resonance construction in his work. According to VanWynsberghe (2001), Indigenous activists in Walpole Island are particularly aware of their Indigenous identity in the creation of their collective action frames (735). Indeed, it is argued that the collective action frames which are used are most resonant when they build on collective Indigenous identity, Indigenous symbols and tradition, and pre-existing myths and narratives of opposition (740). The idea of collective identity, symbols, and myths seems to be most in line with Benford and Snow's "salience" aspect of resonance. One could even be more specific and state that VanWynsberghe mainly considers the aspect of narrative fidelity in his study. This then touches upon a major shortcoming of the article as it fails to consider all aspects of resonance. Indeed, VanWynsberghe neglects to consider all aspects of salience. Additionally, Walpole Island is a reserve and hence it can be asserted that the audience that activists try to mobilize is fairly homogenous and similar to the activists themselves. This, then, leaves the question of how activists attempt to construct resonance among different audiences unaddressed.

Trumpy (2016) also finds that collective identity is an important consideration for activists when constructing resonance. Trumpy's article examines the ways in which activists consider the resonance of their opponents' as well as their own frames in the construction of collective action (counter)framing. Trumpy (2016) argues that the collective identity of the group that activists belong to is important in the considerations of what frames can and cannot be used (165). Collective identity is so important in Trumpy's case study that potentially resonant framings are rejected because they do not "fit" with the collective identity of the pro-choice movement (Trumpy 2016, 171). Activists also use their own personal experiences of other people's reactions to certain frames in order to "pretest" the resonance of their frames (170). Trumpy finds that personal stories were seen as more credible (and thus more resonant)

than statistics in the case of abortion and the pro-choice movement (171). The most important prerequisite for considering a frame resonant, however, is the cultural resonance, i.e. narrative fidelity, of a frame (166). Unlike VanWynsberghe, Trumpy does consider aspects other than narrative fidelity. However, she fails to consider all six aspects of resonance in examining the construction of resonance by pro-choice activists.

Resnick (2009) does consider all aspects of resonance in her study on Indigenous activism in Botswana. Resnick (2009) asserts that the deliberate choice to construct different frames for a movement's different audiences can prove particularly successful (56). Indeed, in the case of Botswana the two audiences, a domestic audience and an international audience, were so different, that activists decided to craft diverging frames in order to create increased resonance (Resnick 2009, 67). Frames that were formulated by INGOs built on a "diamond" frame, while the grassroots organizations in Botswana itself built on a narrative of ethnic inequality (62-64). The perceived credibility and salience of the frames presented differed among the different audiences, i.e. the "diamond" frame proved effective among the international audience, while the ethnic injustice frame resonated among the domestic audience (67). Thus, in cases such as Botswana, where the audiences that need to be convinced are different (in the sense of their individual experiences, national myths, and ideologies) as well as the different nature of the articulator (INGOs have more international legitimacy, while grassroots organizations are seen as more legitimate by domestic audiences), activists may choose to create different frames (67). The goal formulated in the Botswana case, however, was the same for both frames (66). There are a few gaps in Resnick's research, though. Firstly, the two audiences are separated from one another and it is unlikely for one audience to be exposed to the competing or divergent frame on a regular basis. It is unclear how activists would construct resonance in a case where different audience inhabit the same space and are exposed to both frames. Furthermore, Resnick does not specify the "weight" of each component of resonance construction. It is unclear whether certain aspects of resonance are more important in the eyes of activists when constructing frames.

Research Method

I use a qualitative research strategy for this research. There are multiple reasons for this. This research aims to generate large amounts of data on a relatively small and specific group of people (Indigenous people who are also involved in grassroots activism). This group would be difficult to sample in quantitative research as there is no database that records all Indigenous women involved in grassroots activism that one can draw from. Additionally, this

research aims to collect in-depth data on the construction of resonance among a smaller group of Indigenous grassroots activists. In order to get this in-depth information, qualitative data collection is most suitable.

I selected a time frame from 2016 until present (2019) because 2016 marks the commencement of the National Inquiry. Given that before 2016, one of the major calls to action was the establishment of a national inquiry, one assumes that the post-2016 call to action is different in character from the call to action before the National Inquiry. Additionally, the National Inquiry also meant a change of focus in many instances of activism. I selected Ottawa as my research location because as the nation's (political) capital, political activism is likely to take place here. Indeed, the Sisters in Spirit Vigils, a prominent MMIWG event, originated in Ottawa.

Steps of Method

I conducted field work for this research between 28 February 2019 and 28 May 2019 in Ottawa. My research consisted of five different phases. In the first phase, I mapped the field and enlarged my network in the Ottawa area. I reached out to individuals and organizations and visited cultural centers and universities. I also analyzed prominent social media accounts and attended two community events (the REDress community welcome and the REDress opening).

In the second phase of my research, I mapped the sites of contention and its conditions and I established what the issue of MMIWG entails. I used documental analysis of 25 documents in order to create a concise overview. I also used the information given to me in interviews to add to my analysis. This step in my research allowed me to identify important actors and events.

Phase three consisted of describing three important events identified in phase two and examining the claims of activists through the use of the *core framing tasks.* I created an overview of the REDress project, SIS vigils, and the DTES Women's Memorial March. I used newspaper articles, documentaries that involved activists, interviews with my respondents, as well as participant observation, either directly (by attending an event) or indirectly (through the use of videos). I created a list of the themes that returned in frames and described the different framing tasks.

In phase four I identified the relationship between the audience and activists through resonance construction. I interviewed respondents to determine how they considered the different resonance components as well as credibility and salience in the construction of their

frames. I also tried to determine how the different audiences affected these considerations. I go beyond Benford and Snow in establishing whether there were other factors influencing resonance construction as well.

Phase five consisted of organizing and analyzing data. Part of this was done during the collection of my data, while another part was done retrospectively. I analyzed the data by identifying recurring themes and topics. These recurring themes and topics were organized in such a way that I was able to create connections. When interpreting these connections I was able to create generalizations for my sample.

Data Collection Techniques

I employed interviews, documental analysis, and participant observation as the primary data collection techniques of this research. I conducted a total of eight interviews with grassroots activists. Three of these interviews were conducted in person, four were conducted through Skype, and one interview was conducted through email correspondence. The four Skype interviews were conducted in this way because the distance between me and my respondents was too far to travel. Skype was selected because it would still allow me to see my respondents' facial expressions during our interview. The one email interview was conducted in this way because of the limited time my respondent had and because of a lack of a space where an interview could be conducted. All the interviews are referred to as "Interview with" followed by the number of the respondent as well as the date on which the interview was conducted. Appendix I includes a list of my respondents. All interviews were conducted in English and quotes follow the literal words of my respondents.

Originally, I intended to conduct thirteen interviews, I arrived at this number by creating a list of what "types" of activists I wanted to interview, e.g. male/female, family member/non-family member, etc. Due to the sensitive nature of the issue of MMIWG, however, I needed more time to build my network and gain the trust of my respondents. Indeed, in some cases it took me three or four weeks to manage to get my respondents to agree to an interview. In order to gain as much information from the eight respondents I managed to recruit as I could, I changed the average length of the interviews from an hour to two hours. Additionally, I made sure that my sample included a non-Indigenous individual, an Indigenous man, family members, non-family members, academics, and individuals involved in different events. In this way, my sample of respondents still included all the features on my original list as one respondent could "tick" several boxes at once.

I also attended two events, the REDress community welcome and the REDress opening. I recorded my observations of these events in my field notes. These observations are referred to as "author's field notes" followed by the date on which the notes were made as well as the event that was attended in the footnotes.

Lastly, I made use of documental analysis. These documents included scholarly articles, reports by (inter)national organizations, government reports, open letters, chapters of books, and texts on (social media) websites. These documents related either to an analysis of the issue of MMIWG or they brought forward frames on the issue of MMIWG.

Sampling

I used non-probability sampling for this research. Documents were sampled purposively, while the individuals selected for interviews were sampled through snowball sampling. The sampling of events was also done purposively. Given that this research tries to give a qualitative description of a small sample, non-probability sampling seemed the most appropriate.

I selected snowball sampling because I found that there was a certain skepticism and trepidation among the Indigenous community when it came to the engagement with researchers. Gaining the trust of "gate-keepers" and important members of the community was therefore crucial. I managed to reach out to individuals that I had identified as having an important role concerning MMIWG and grassroots activism and they helped me identify other respondents.

Although the sampling of my respondents was dependent on my previous respondents, I did create a list of "attributes" that I thought would be important for my respondents to have. I thus interviewed MMIWG family members, survivors, activists from diverging age groups, male and female, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists. Because of my focus on grassroots activism, I decided to focus mainly on the "bubbles" surrounding MMIWG families and survivors, namely family members and survivors themselves, academics, and artists (in the form of an Indigenous film maker) (see page 37 for a visual actor map).

The map on page 37 shows that there are many actors involved in MMIWG activism. I deliberately decided not to focus on organizations, such as NWAC, because their activism is vastly different from that of grassroots activists. Large organizations tend to have more funds, connections and other resources. I mainly focused on activists that were organized in loose collectives and a large part of whose activism was done on their own initiatives through individual and community organizing.

Chapter Two: The Issue of MMIWG and Its Historical and Sociological Context

Before one can examine Indigenous activism concerning Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, it is important to understand the background of the issue that is being protested. In this chapter, I sketch the contemporary and historical context of the issue of MMIWG. I use Tilly and Tarrow's concept of the social movement campaign as the background that informs this chapter. I identify the issue of contention that involves claim making on someone else's interests (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 7). This chapter also serves to sketch the conditions, i.e. "characteristics of sites and relations among sites that shape the contention occurring in and across them" of the contention (237). I create a summary of the complex issue of MMIWG. Lastly, I provide an actor map that outlines the important actors involved in the issue of MMIWG.

What is the Issue? - The Disproportionate Victimization of Indigenous Women

What exactly do people refer to when they stand on the Hill[9] with signs that say "no more MMIWG" or when they add #MMIWG to their social media post? The term MMIWG is an abbreviation of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The term is used to refer to Indigenous women who have been murdered or who have gone missing. The use of MMIWG as social issue refers to the fact that there is a certain disproportionality when one compares the number of Indigenous women who are murdered or who have gone missing to that of other women (Government of Canada 2018, par. 1).

The Sisters in Spirit (SIS) initiative of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) created a database of MMIWG between 1980 and 2010 and found a total of 582 cases (NWAC 2010). The initiative was the first attempt to systematically count the number of MMIWG and it is still cited as the first instance of comprehensive statistics (CFAIA 2012). A more recent attempt at quantifying the number of MMIWG is the 2013 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report and its 2014 update. This report finds a total of 1,181 missing or murdered Indigenous women between 1980 and 2014 (RCMP 2014). The numbers from these reports are often cited to prove that the victimization of Indigenous women is disproportionate and statistically significant. The number 1,181 would add up to over 20,000

[9] The Canadian federal government's headquarters is located on "Parliament Hill". This literal hill is at the center of Downtown Ottawa. The physical location as well as the actual parliament are often called "Parliament Hill" or just "the Hill". It is also common to say: "on the Hill" when referring to someone who is in politics. As in: "she spent ten years on the Hill".

Canadian women, when comparing the percentage of Indigenous women to those of all Canadian women (Printup 2015). Although the RCMP and NWAC findings are often used as the most authoritative figures concerning MMIWG, other initiatives and community estimates sometimes go up as high as 4,000 MMIWG[10] (CFAIA 2012, 7).

When comparing the violent crime statistics of Indigenous women with other groups, it becomes clear that Indigenous women are statistically more vulnerable than others. According to data by statistics Canada, Indigenous women are five times more likely to be murdered than their white counterparts (Mahony et al. 2017). Additionally, Amnesty International (2004) found that Indigenous women with status, so called “status Indians”, are five times more likely to be murdered. Like all Canadian women, Indigenous women are most likely to be killed by a partner or relative (Innes and Anderson 2018, par.6). Indigenous women are also more likely than any other group of women to be killed by a stranger (NWAC 2010, 29). Not only are Indigenous women more likely to be victimized than other women, their cases also go unsolved more often (27). Although clearance rates vary across different provinces and territories, the overall clearance rate of cases involving MMIWG are lower than those involving non-Indigenous women (27). The national average clearance rate is 53 percent according to SIS (27).

Almost all Indigenous people know someone who has been murdered or gone missing (Printup, 2015). When I met with a student advisor at Ottawa University, he told me that it would be difficult to find Indigenous people who were not personally affected by the crisis. One of my respondents mentioned that he had kept track of the MMIWG he knew, and he told me that his current count was at thirteen women and girls[11]. Because MMIWG affects so many Indigenous people, many live in fear every day. Two respondents told me that they feared for the lives of their daughters who were at risk simply by being Indigenous[12]. Indigenous women live with the fear of “am I next?”[13] or “will my daughter/aunty/mother be next?”. Because of the danger that Canadian society poses to them, Indigenous girls are taught and told that they need to be careful of a hostile world[14].

The MMIWG crisis is an accumulation of many structural disparities. It is merely the tip of an iceberg made up of racism, patriarchy, and colonialism. The crisis is emblematic of

[10] Interviews with respondents 4 and 6 conducted on 13 April and 22 April 2019
[11] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019
[12] Interviews with respondents 2 and 3 conducted on 8 April and 4 April 2019
[13] This phrase also refers to a prominent social media campaign against MMIWG in 2014. The phrase refers to the dangers that Indigenous women face simply by being Indigenous.
[14] Author’s Field notes on Observation of REDress Community Welcome on March 6, 2019 at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa

the treatment of Indigenous women in Canada and reflects colonial and racist stereotypes. The structural marginalization of Indigenous women also feeds into MMIWG. A lack of governmental action and concern makes the Canadian government and the policing system complicit in the crisis.

Who are the Women? - Young, Indigenous Mothers

Before I go into the "victim profile", it is important to note here the importance of recognizing the individuality of the women and girls. Indeed, projects by NWAC and Sisters in Spirit, family members, and artists reiterate the importance of seeing Indigenous women and girls as individual people with their own stories and hopes and dreams rather than "just another statistic" or worse "another dead Indian"[15]. I, therefore, wish to firmly reiterate that each case is unique, and that each woman is unique as well.

Many of the victims do share certain commonalities. For one, the majority of the women identified by SIS and the RCMP are young Indigenous women. According to NWAC (2010) the majority of the women are under the age of 31 (23). Additionally, the women are all identified as Indigenous. The victims include all major Indigenous groups in Canada (NWAC 2010, 20). 88 percent of MMIWG have children (ibid, 24; CFAIA 2012, 6). The hashtags and activism surrounding MMIWG often includes the term Trans (T) or Two-Spirit[16](2S) in order to include those that identify as female (either solely or partly) in the discussion of MMIWG. There are no concrete statistics considering the number of trans and Two-Spirit victims among MMIWG (Saramo 2016, 205).

When Does Activism Happen? - Late 80s Activism

According to Indigenous women and allies, Indigenous women have been victimized since the beginning of colonialization[17]. Indigenous women's activism against MMIWG is as old as colonization itself too[18]. The issue of MMIWG gained more traction around the late 80s and early 90s, however (Bourgeois 2014, 3). One prominent instance of activism that involved Indigenous women, is the activism that originated in Vancouver's Downtown East

[15] Interviews with respondents 2 and 4 conducted on 8 April and 13 April 2019
[16] The term Two-Spirit is a Pan-Indigenous term often used to describe an array of Indigenous gender-roles/sexes/gender-identifications/sexualities. It should be noted that not all Indigenous people use and recognize the term. Most notably, the term Two-Spirit is generally not used and recognized among Inuit communities. Two-Spirit individuals may be more vulnerable when it comes to MMIWG, because of the intersectionality of their sexual/gender identity and their Indigeneity.
[17] Interviews with respondents 1, 2, 3, 4,5,6 and 7 conducted on 7 March, 8 April, 4 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May 2019
[18] Interviews with respondents 1 and 3 conducted on 7 March and 4 April 2019

Side (DTES). Women working and living in DTES organized marches and protests because in a short period of time a large number of women were murdered or went missing and many of the women were Indigenous (Culhane 2009, 78). The Amnesty International Report *Stolen Sisters*, the SIS initiative, CEDAW investigations, and many other instances of awareness raising, such as DTES marches, have raised the issue to societal prominence[19].

Where Does It Happen? - A Nationwide Problem

NWAC (2010), and other actors, strongly stress that MMIWG is a national problem that affects urban centers, rural areas, and reserves[20] (25-26). Nonetheless, there are certain "hot spots" and regions that are prominent in current statistics. Most notably, most of SIS's cases occur in the Western provinces, with the majority of cases occurring in British Columbia (NWAC 2010, 26). 60 percent of the murders occurred in urban areas (25). Certain locales, such as the "Highway of Tears", the stretch of highway located between Prince George and Prince Rupert, B.C., and Vancouver's DTES are notable in current statistics (Oppal 2012, 12).

Why? – Dominant Causes and Factors

Although the issue of MMIWG is incredibly complex with a wide range of causes and contributing factors in each case, there are some causes and factors that are most prominently featured in reports, articles, and books. These common themes can be summarized in three categories: colonial legacy, lack of government response, and social marginalization. For analytical purposes I have separated these themes. It should be noted that despite this separation, the three themes contribute and build on one another.

"Colonialism, eh?[21]" – The Role of Canada's Colonial Legacy

Many pre-colonial Indigenous communities were more egalitarian than their European contemporaries (Bourgeois 2018, par. 6; RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 7). Notably, quite some tribes were matrilineal and local matriarchs played crucial roles in politics, land distribution, and daily governance (RCAP 1996, vol. 1, 76). Not all societies had distinct gender roles. Other tribes, such as the Inuit, did have specific gender roles. However, both female and male roles

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[19] Interviews with respondents 1 and 3 conducted on 7 March and 4 April 2019

[20] "Reserve" is the most common term used in Canada to describe land that is "set aside" for Indigenous bands (Indigenous forms of government on reserves). The term commonly used in the US is "reservation".

[21] Conversation with Inuk Woman from Author's fieldnotes 6 March 2019

were equally valued and appreciated (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 17). "If a woman was a sloppy sewer, her husband might freeze; a man who was a poor hunter would have a hungry family" (19). Additionally, most societies had extensive protections for women against different forms of violence (RCAP 1996, vol. 1, 69). The respect for women instilled in many Indigenous societies served as a protective barrier against gender-based violence (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 7).

European settlers introduced a patriarchal world-view to the New World (Bourgeois 2018, par. 6). Colonialists were used to a patriarchal society and hence tended to value male Indigenous leadership over that of females (par. 8). The devaluation of women was also a strategic decision, as Indigenous women often authorized the use of land (par. 9). Thus, devaluing Indigenous women's positions made it easier to acquire and appropriate land. Furthermore, placing Indigenous women lower on the social ladder helped cement the subordination of white women to white men (Morton 2018, 264). Violence against Indigenous women by settlers was prominent and became the dominant way to devalue and subjugate them (Bourgeois 2018, par. 7). As Indigenous women lost their status and respect within their home communities, violence against women became normalized within these communities as well (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 18).

Additionally, the reserve system bred gender-based violence in Indigenous communities. Relocation to reserves often led to a loss of traditional ways of living (19; Pierce 2015, 71). Communities in which one of the dominant male gender roles was that of hunter suffered in particular. Reserves were smaller than the areas where Indigenous communities had previously lived, and this made sustenance hunting increasingly difficult. Indigenous men lost the sense of identity that was codified in traditional gender roles by being unable to hunt. Some Indigenous men were frustrated by the loss of their roles and "usefulness" and turned to violence against women and children as well as alcoholism (Pierre 2015, 71).

Indigenous women were not only targeted for their position as women but also for their position as *Indigenous* women. One of the colonial attitudes that served to legitimize violence against Indigenous women is that of the "Squaw[22]". The stereotype asserts that "colonial women are sexually promiscuous, inherently prone to deviance and incapable of controlling their impulses" (Morton 2018, 268). The "Squaw" was often presented in opposition to the "Indian Princess" stereotype, a prominent example of which is Disney's Pocahontas. The "Indian Princess" was innocent and worthy of saving, while the "Squaw"

[22] I am aware that the term is deemed offensive and derogatory. This term is only used to refer to the colonial stereotype that is often identified as having played a role in MMIWG.

was more akin to a demoness (265). One important thing to note here, however, is that both the "Indian Princess" and the "Squaw" were presented as being inherently sexually available (Bourgeois 2018, par. 21; Morton 2018, 265; Pierce 2015, 79). The depiction of Indigenous women as sex objects and prostitutes normalizes sexual violence against them (Bourgeois 2018, par. 21; Morton 2018, 265; Pierce 2015, 79).

The "Squaw" stereotype does not only legitimize sexual violence against Indigenous women and girls, it also facilitates lethal violence and erasure (Morton 2018, 266; Pierce 2015, 79). The "Squaw" is deviant, ugly, violent, and threatening (Morton 2018, 268). Unlike the "Indian Princess" she is incapable of being saved and hence the most appropriate response is her (attempted) destruction (Morton 2018, 268). Indigenous women were placed in this position of the ugly "Squaw" because they were seen as being inherent obstacles to the colonial project (268). Indeed, Bourgeois (2018) mentions that the eventual end goal of settler colonialism is the ultimate destruction or assimilation of all things Indigenous (par. 2). Indigenous women are thus situated as "other" or "opponents" to the colonial process because of their gender and ethnicity (Morton 2018, 270). In this way, Indigenous women are marked as undesirable members of society that are obstacles to progress and perfection. The depiction of Indigenous women as deviant savages that not only stand in the way of progress but are also a danger to society, serves to dehumanize them and legitimizes their erasure and destruction (Morton 2018, 266; Pierce 2015, 79).

Colonial patriarchal values and racism were also codified in legislation concerning Indigenous peoples. One piece of legislation is particularly prominent in literature surrounding MMIWG, namely the *Indian Act.* The act was created in 1876 and its amended version is still in force today (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 22). The act includes many different parts but the most important thing it facilitates is the creation of "Indian Status". The *Indian Act* delineates who is considered Indigenous by the Canadian government and who has certain rights, e.g. rights to land (NWAC 2010, 7; RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 21). Although the way in which it is determined whether an individual can gain status has been amended several times, this core feature remains until this day.

One of the features of the document that has been heavily criticized is its treatment of women and their status. This is particularly relevant to the issue of MMIWG. Before the 1985 amendments of the *Indian Act*, Indigenous women and their children were liable to lose their status in a variety of ways. The most common way through which Indigenous women lost their status was through "marrying out" (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 30). Indigenous women who married men outside of their own Indigenous band lost their status under the pre-1985 *Indian*

Act. This meant that Indigenous women did not only lose their status when marrying a non-Indigenous man, but also when they married Indigenous men who belonged to other bands (RCAP 1996, vol. 4). The loss of status when marrying out was harmful to Indigenous women. First of all, they lost their connections to their ancestral homes (NIMMIWG 2017, 10; RCAP 1996, vol. 1, 273-277). The loss of status often meant that Indigenous women could no longer reside on their home-reserves and had to move to other reserves or to the city. Additionally, the *Indian Act* enforced the idea that women were extensions and chattel of their husbands (24). The Indigenous woman was no longer defined by her own ancestry but rather by that of her husband. Indeed, not only did an Indigenous woman who married out lose her own status, her children would not be eligible for Indian status if her husband was non-Indigenous or non-status Indigenous (25). If an Indigenous man married a non-Indigenous or non-status woman, however, both he and his children would maintain Indian status (27). Children born out of wedlock whose fathers did not have status but whose mother did have status were also not eligible for status (26). The marrying out clause of the *Indian Act* thus subverted the matrialinealism of many Indigenous societies and replaced it with patriarchal notions.

Another way through which Indigenous women lost status was through enfranchisement (24). Under the *Gradual Civilization Act*, Indigenous men could gain the right to vote in elections and become viewed as "regular" British[23] citizens by the state (5th Parliament Province of Canada 1857). Enfranchisement occurred when an Indigenous man older than 21 was "able to speak, read and write either English or the French language readily and well, and [was] sufficiently advanced in the elementary branches of education and […] of good moral character and free from debt" (5th Parliament Province of Canada 1857, par. 3). Enfranchised Indigenous men would gain a tract of land on their reserves as well as a sum of money. In return they lost all their claims to reserve lands as well as their Indian status and its associated rights (RCAP 1996, vol. 1, 272). Indigenous women and their children became automatically enfranchised when their husband was and could only regain status by remarrying a man with Indian status (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 24). Women could not decline being enfranchised and lost all their status rights when their husband was enfranchised (24). Additionally, Indigenous women could be enfranchised whenever an Indian agent decided that she should be enfranchised, regardless of who her husband was (25). This meant that

[23] When the Gradual Civilization Act was first adopted, Canada as an independent country did not yet exist. The nation was still a British colony and therefore Indigenous people that were enfranchised became British rather than Canadian citizens.

Indigenous women and their children often lost their Indian status and its associated rights involuntarily. Until 1985 there was no way for enfranchised women to regain their Indian status.

1985 marked a turning point for the *Indian Act*. The federal government decided to amend the act to allow Indigenous women who had previously lost their status to regain it. The concept of enfranchisement was entirely struck from the books and those who had previously been enfranchised, both men and women, were able to regain their Indian status (31). Status was also restored to women who had been affected by the "marrying out" clause (32). Women who had their status restored did so under section 6 (1) of Bill C-31 (the bill that amended the *Indian Act*). Section 6 (2) of the Bill established a new "class" of Status Indians, namely those who only had one status parent (37). This section was an attempt to establish gender equality when it came to the children of Indigenous individuals, as status no longer depended on the male line (38). Indigenous children could now attain status if they had one parent who qualified under section 6 (1) (37).

Despite Bill C-31's attempt to alleviate gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*, there were continuing problems. For one, the children of Indigenous women who marry non-Indigenous or non-status men are still negatively affected by the *Indian Act*. Indigenous women who marry out retain their status under section 6 (1), while their children are able to attain status under section 6 (2). Indigenous children with section 6 (2) status, however, are unable to transfer their status to their children (38). In other words, the grandchildren of Indigenous women who marry out are unable to gain Indian status. Due to the "grandfather clause" that states that anyone eligible for Indian status under the pre-1985 *Indian Act* is eligible under section 6 (1) in the renewed version of the act, children of Indigenous men who marry out are eligible for Indian status under section 6 (1) rather than 6 (2). Indigenous status can thus be transferred infinitely when this is done through the male line, while it "dies out" after two generations of matrilineal transfer (37).

Furthermore, changes in the rules and powers surrounding Indian bands have led to the exclusion of Indigenous women who regained status. Previous versions of the *Indian Act* automatically granted band membership rights when one had status. Bill C-31 transferred the decisions about band membership rights from the federal government to Indian bands. This meant that bands now decided who was eligible for band membership and thus many benefits, such as on-reserve housing (40). This change reflected Indigenous leaders' worry that "reinstatement of non-status and enfranchised women and children would severely strain their already limited financial resources, since it would mean providing housing and social services

if they chose to return to reserve communities" (31). Certain groups of Indigenous people with status had to be included in band membership. In reality that meant that those who had held status under the pre-1985 *Indian Act* would retain band membership (41). Other Indigenous individuals had to abide by new band membership codes. These codes were gradually adopted and in theory new or reinstated status Indians were supposed to vote on these codes as well (42). However, bureaucratic backlog and the option to enforce a band's new membership codes before allowing new members led to new or reinstated status Indians to not be able to vote on these codes (43). Thus, those who gained status could be excluded from bands without having been involved in the decision-making process. One of the rights that is most often refused to new or reinstated status Indians is the right to live on reserve (46).

Why does the *Indian Act* matter for the issue of MMIWG then? For one, the Indian act has codified the idea that Indigenous women are chattel of their husbands, thus establishing an environment in which the subjugation of Indigenous women, potentially through violent means, is normalized (ibid, 24; Bourgeois 2018, par. 9). This subjugation is evidenced in Indigenous communities through instances of domestic violence as well as the rules concerning divorce and housing rights on reserves (RCAP 1996, vol. 4, 43). Additionally, Indigenous women's removal from their ancestral communities has subverted their sense of identity, something which is often associated with an increase in mental health issues and addiction, both of which are identified as factors in Indigenous women's victimization. The mere fact of living in an urban area already puts Indigenous women at more risk of becoming victimized (NWAC 2010, 26). Inadequate housing and a lack of social services are additional risk factors concerning MMIWG (NWAC 2010, 32; NIMMIWG 2017, 38; Amnesty International 2004, 2; Oppal 2012, 16). The fact that Indigenous women were refused, and continue to be refused, status and band rights puts Indigenous women at risk.

The last issue that relates to Canada's colonial legacy is the effect of residential schools and the 60s scoop. Canadian residential schools were first established around 1880 and the last residential school closed in 1996 (Miller 2012, par. 2). The primary purpose of residential schools was to take children away from their ancestral homes in an attempt to instill white Euro-Christian values and, infamously, "kill the Indian in the child" (Pierce 2015, 76). Indigenous children were taken from their homes at a young age and placed in schools where they were forbidden to speak their native languages, practice their cultural beliefs and traditions, or do anything else that marked their "Indianness" (75). At first, the Canadian state was in charge of residential schools, but this task was later taken over by the Anglican and

Catholic church (74). Conditions in schools were poor: the schools were overcrowded, there was a lack of (nutritious) food, and infectious diseases, such as the flu and TB, raged rampant (75; TRC 2015, 95). Furthermore, both physical and sexual abuse were common in residential schools (Pierce 2015, 77; TRC 2012, 44). At least 3,200 children died while in residential school (TRC 2015, 92).

The continuing effects of the residential school system feed into the MMIWG crisis. Indigenous children, particularly Indigenous boys, were taught violence and abuse in residential schools. Not only did school authorities use violence against the children, thus instilling the idea that abuse is a valid method of discipline, older children were also told to discipline younger children (Pierce 2015, 77; TRC 2012, 44). The fact that children were taught abuse has generated "intergenerational trauma". Intergenerational trauma refers to the cycle of abuse that affects residential school survivors and their subsequent children and grandchildren (Pierce 2015, 86). Individuals that experienced abuse in the past are more likely to abuse others (Damron and Johnson 2015, 8). Thus, abuse and violence among Indigenous communities is relatively common, particularly in intrapersonal relationships (Pierce 2015, 86).

Indigenous children were also taught to devalue Indigenous women in residential schools. The entire institution of the residential school was built on the idea that Indigenous women were "the bad mother, uncivilized and uncivilizing" (Pierce 2015, 74). Children were told that their mothers were bad and wicked women who had failed in raising their children (74). The gendered divisions of labor in residential schools as well as the teaching of conservative religious values erased traditional (more egalitarian) gender roles and enforced the idea that Indigenous women were supposed to be submissive wives and daughters (74). Indigenous boys were taught that not only was Indigenous "less" than White, women were also "less" than men. In order to attain some sense of power, Indigenous men adopted patriarchal notions of Indigenous women (NWAC 2010, 8).

The 60s Scoop refers to a period in the 60s in which huge numbers of Indigenous children were taken from their Indigenous families and placed in Foster Care (7). Nowadays, Indigenous children are still disproportionately placed taken in by Foster Care and Child Services (HRC 2014, 11). The effects of Foster Care are similar to those of the residential schools and some argue that it is a continuation of the residential school system (NWAC 2010, 8), thus installing patriarchal and colonial notions in Indigenous children and generating intergenerational trauma.

"Over-Policed and Under-Protected[24]"- The Failure of the Canadian State

In 2015, a special investigator, mandated by article 8 of the optional protocol of CEDAW, came to Canada to investigate claims concerning the issue of MMIWG. CEDAW was dissatisfied with Canada's response to what Amnesty International (2014) called "a national human rights crisis" (2). Although the CEDAW commission (2015) decided that Canada was (no longer) responsible for the direct perpetration of violence committed against MMIWG, it did find that Canada had failed to protect its Indigenous women (24). Under international law this meant that Canada had failed to abide by due diligence, that is, a state should do everything in its power to protect *all* its citizens from violence, and the commission urged Canada to seriously reconsider its response to the MMIWG crisis (CEDAW 2015, 25).

The first major way in which the Canadian state[25] structurally fails to protect Indigenous women and girls is through the way the policing system operates. Amnesty International (2004) asserts that Canadian police services are more likely to see Indigenous people as perpetrators than they are to recognize Indigenous individuals as potential victims (18). Indigenous people are more likely to be charged for a crime that white individuals would not be charged or held for (18). Family members of MMIWG often assert that police response to their concern was inaccurate and that protocols were not followed (17). Police argued that the missing women engaged in "high-risk" and transient lifestyles or that they had run away from home (Oppal 2012, 43; NWAC 2010, 7). There is also a lack of cultural sensitivity among police, which makes engagement with Indigenous communities tenuous (Amnesty International 2004, 19). All these factors have led to distrust of police by many Indigenous individuals (Amnesty International 2004, 19)[26]. Indigenous people are not likely to turn to the police for help and protection because of fears that this will "backfire" (17). Indeed, women fear having their children taken away or being abused by police (19).

Not only do Indigenous women go largely unprotected by police, perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women often go unchecked or receive light sentences (NWAC 2010, 17; Bourgeois 2018, par. 12; CEDAW 2015, 32). The fact that only half of the cases identified by NWAC's SIS initiative are cleared, shows that perpetrators of violence against MMIWG are less likely to be brought to justice then if they were to harm a non-Indigenous woman (NWAC 2010, 17). Indeed, "clearance" often does not even mean that a suspect is

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[24] This quote refers to a term used in Amnesty International's *Stolen Sisters* (2004) report.

[25] In this section I use Bourgeois' definition of the Canadian state: "the Canadian state refers to both federal and provincial/territorial governments, as well as its institutions including educational systems, the criminal justice system, and child protection services" (Bourgeois, 2018: 4).

[26] Interviews with respondents 2, 5 and 7 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, and 1 May 2019

charged. Some cases, particularly in the North, are simply ruled "suicides" in order to close a case (18). Additionally, the justice system often does not take the specific needs of Indigenous people into account, such as translators (Amnesty 2004, 19). Most strikingly, however, crimes against Indigenous women (hate crimes, violence, murder) have a low prosecution rate (CEDAW 2015, 39).

The lack of police and judicial response is rooted in discrimination and negative attitudes towards Indigenous women (ibid, 34; Bourgeois 2018, par. 12). Examples show that images of the "Indian Squaw" are often used to perpetuate violence and legitimize a lack of response. The use of the "Squaw" image is often cited in relation to the police response in Vancouver's DTES. Police used the argument that many of the missing and murdered women were involved in the sex trade as an excuse to not investigate or address the fact that many women in DTES went missing or were murdered (Morton 2018, 268). After all, police argued, these women were transient prostitutes that lived "high-risk lifestyles" (268). Police presented Indigenous women as "unworthy" of victimhood as they were seen as being in some way "complicit" to their victimization (277). Furthermore, the dehumanization and legitimization inherent in the "Squaw" stereotype can be seen as a way to perpetuate violence and a lack of response to violence. Media often use the "Squaw" stereotype in reporting on MMIWG too[27].

Secondly, the evocation of the "Squaw" is a common tactic used in court by perpetrators to receive lighter sentences and legitimize their actions (Bourgeois 2018, par. 19). This strategy is used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and serves to minimize the victimhood of Indigenous women (par. 19). The image that is created is one of a nice (White) man who was seduced into violence by the "Squaw" temptress (par. 20). In some cases, the fact that an Indigenous woman was a prostitute is mentioned in order to legitimate (deadly) sexual violence as it is assumed that the "Squaw" always gives her consent (par. 20).

A lack of protection of Indigenous women and girls and the low chances of being punished for perpetrating violence against Indigenous women and girls makes them easy targets for those seeking to perpetrate lethal violence. Indigenous women go unprotected and are thus easier to reach than other women. Additionally, the fact that perpetrators of violence against women so often go unpunished breeds impunity. If laws are not upheld, there is no reason to abide by them.

[27] Interviews with respondents 2 and 4 conducted on 8 April and 13 April 2019

"We are Second Class Citizens Living in Third-World Conditions[28]"- Social Marginalization

Years of colonial rule and racist attitudes that persist in Canada's institutions have made that Indigenous people suffer from considerable social marginalization. The Oppal (2012) report refers to marginalization as "the social process by which individuals and groups are relegated to the fringe of society. It is closely tied to the concepts of social exclusion and social disadvantage, which refer to processes by which people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available in a society" (12). Social marginalization thus means that a particular group is seen as "fringe", "outsiders", or "second class citizens". The marginalized position of Indigenous people in Canada is evidenced in access to education, housing, health care, employment opportunities, and annual income, among others (HRC 2014).

Indigenous women are often disadvantaged when compared to other groups in Canada. According to a CEDAW report in 2015, Indigenous women in Canada are likely to live in poverty, as 37 percent of First Nations and 23 percent of Métis and Inuit women live in poverty, which is double the rate of non-Indigenous women (CEDAW 2015, 28). First Nations are also drastically underfunded when compared to non-Indigenous cities and towns (28). Furthermore, Indigenous women are over two times more likely to be unemployed than non-Indigenous women (28). Indigenous women are also disadvantaged when it comes to their education. Only nine percent of Indigenous women have a university degree, this is half the rate of non-Indigenous women (28). Moreover, there is a large number of Indigenous women (35 percent) that did not graduate high school (28). Some also claim that the Canadian government offers insufficient money to culturally appropriate and language education for Indigenous peoples (HRC 2014, 7). Another example that evidences the social marginalization of Indigenous people in Canada is the issue of housing. The Human Rights Commission (2014) asserted that "the housing situation in Inuit communities has reached a crisis level" in 2014 (7). Indeed, 44 percent of women and girls living in reserve communities lived in homes that needed repair (CEDAW 2015, 28). Additionally, 31 percent of Inuit women lived in overcrowded houses (28). Half of the water facilities on reserve form a medium or high health risk (HRC 2014, 10). Attempts to satisfy housing needs often lead to financial hardship as well (10).

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[28] Perry Bellegarde at SIS Vigil Ottawa Oct 4, 2017, accessed at **https://www.facebook.com/kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/**

Social marginalization, particularly poverty, has severe effects on the risk to Indigenous women's lives. One of the major ways in which poverty affects MMIWG is that it makes it more difficult for women to avoid or escape situations that increase the risk of violence. In the case of the murders and disappearances along the Highway of Tears[29] hitchhiking was identified as a major risk factor for women and girls (Highway of Tears 2006, 16). The reason why Indigenous women and girls hitchhiked is due to a lack of affordable and reliable transportation and because it was necessary to travel to towns that had facilities that their own communities did not. Women that have a higher economic status might be able to buy a car or find other means of transportation. However, hitchhiking often becomes inevitable when money is lacking (17).

Additionally, in the case of DTES, some of the victims were involved in survival prostitution (Oppal 2012, 15). Survival prostitution entails people engaging in prostitution in order to provide money for their basic needs, such as food and board. It is well-established that women engaged in prostitution, regardless of their race, are more likely to become victims of violence (16). Furthermore, some of those involved in the sex trade, become addicted in order to cope with the traumas of everyday life (15). Addiction tends to make people less aware of dangers and in an attempt to earn money, women may get involved in dangerous situations (15).

Moreover, sub-standard housing and homelessness are risk factors for Indigenous women. High housing costs may lead women to live in dangerous locales, such as shady hotels or homes without locks, or end up on the street (16). Those that inhabit such dangerous spaces are more likely to be victimized. Additionally, because it is so difficult to acquire accurate housing, many women are forced to remain in households where domestic abuse is common. Socioeconomic marginalization puts Indigenous women at risk of violence because they do not have the resources nor the choice to avoid certain dangerous situations. It must be noted here, however, that not all MMIWG are poor and that poverty is merely a "risk factor".

The National Inquiry

One of the prominent campaign promises of PM Justin Trudeau was the establishment of a National Inquiry into the issue of MMIWG, something which resulted in many Indigenous people supporting him. This inquiry was the result of years of activists pressuring

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[29] The stretch of highway located between Prince George and Prince Rupert, B.C. The highway is called the "Highway of Tears" because of the high number of Indigenous women who have been murdered or gone missing along this stretch. The name "Highway of Tears" also shows parallels to the "Trail of Tears".

the federal government (NIMMIWG 2017, 3). The inquiry officially commenced in 2016 and its initial timeline was until the end of 2018. After an extension request, the official final report of the inquiry was published in early June 2019 (Government of Canada 2018, par. 3). According to the inquiry's mandate the commission is charged with "finding the truth, honoring the truth, and giving life to the truth" (NIMMIWG 2017, 19). The inquiry is to report on the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls (NNIWG 2017, 19). The commission's research consists of an extensive literature review of previous MMIWG reports and the problems and recommendations identified in them. The commission also holds hearings with family members, survivors, academics and professionals. Lastly, the commission is "mandated to make recommendations on concrete and effective action that can be taken to remove systemic causes of violence and increase safety of Indigenous women and girls and ways to honour and commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada" (NIMMIG 2017, "Paths of Inquiry", 5).

Response

Responses to the National Inquiry are mixed depending on who is asked. On the one hand the National Inquiry on MMIWG is an important step in Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples (NWAC 2018, 8). Some argue that the inquiry is important because it finally recognizes that the issue of MMIWG is a systemic issue rather than a case of "just crime"[30]. Additionally, the National Inquiry offered a forum for honoring and remembering MMIWG through art, song, and stories as an alternative to Western ways of truth-telling (NWAC 2018, 5). Others applaud the establishment of a National Commemoration Fund for Indigenous women and girls[31].

On the other hand, there is also considerable criticism surrounding the National Inquiry. One of the major themes in these criticisms is the way in which the National Inquiry treats families of MMIWG. Some state that the inquiry has created a divide between families deemed "worthy" to testify and others, such as families whose cases were closed by police, who are not included in the inquiry[32]. Families also say that they have lost trust in the inquiry (Muskrat 2017, par. 1). Timelines are not accurately communicated, travel costs are not reimbursed, and there is no communication on what the inquiry process would look like (NWAC 2018, 2). Additionally, families have trouble communicating with the inquiry as

[30] Interview with respondent 1 conducted on 7 March 2019
[31] Interview with respondent 1 conducted on 7 March 2019
[32] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019.

FAQ pages are offline, phonelines go unmanned, and they have to reach out to the inquiry themselves for information on their testimony (NWAC 2018, 3; Muskrat 2017, par. 3)[33]. Those that are asked to testify often state that they find the inquiry process retraumatizing (NWAC 2018, 4; Muskrat 2017, par. 2)[34]. Particularly the cross-examination of witnesses in a western legal setting is traumatizing (NWAC 2018, 4)[35]. For a time, there were also inaccurate translation services and a lack of culturally appropriate services (NWAC 2018, 7). Aftercare was lacking as well (Muskrat 2017, par. 3).

Another major criticism is that the National Inquiry is mere lip service that does not accurately address the government's role in the violence perpetuated. An open letter to Trudeau argues that the inquiry merely creates another list of recommendations without any parallel action to implement these recommendations (Muskrat 2017, par. 4). In the words of one activist: "We don't need more [recommendations]"[36]. The inquiry is also not explicitly authorized to investigate the Canadian policing and justice system (Amnesty International 2016). Families are unable to address institutional failures in their individual cases and are often send back to the very institutions that failed them in the first place (NWAC 2018, 6; Muskrat 2017, par. 3; Amnesty International 2016). Lastly, the inquiry fails to address specific government programs and policies and how they have affected the crisis of MMIWG (Amnesty International 2016).

In short, the issue of MMIWG involves the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Most recent reports identify over 1,181 MMIWG and community estimates go up as high as 4,000 women. Victims include women and girls that are First Nation, status and non-status, Inuit, and Métis and most women are relatively young. The issue of MMIWG has existed ever since first contact but has gained prominence ever since the late 80s. Indigenous women all over Canada fall victim to MMIWG but there are certain "hotspots", most notably in B.C. The issue of MMIWG is firmly rooted in Canada's colonial legacy in the form of continuing attitudes towards Indigenous women and girls, legal policies, such as the *Indian Act*, and intergenerational trauma and misogynistic attitudes bred in residential schools and the Foster Care system. Additionally, Indigenous women and girls go unprotected by police, they are less likely to be protected by the legal system, and

[33] Interviews with respondents 2 and 5 conducted on 8 April, 4 April and 17 April 2019
[34] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[35] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[36] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019

perpetrators go unpunished, thus breeding impunity. Finally, the marginal socioeconomic position of many Indigenous women and girls exposes them to increased risks of violence. The most prominent government attempt to address MMIWG, the National Inquiry, is seen as a step forward, but many maintain that it simply will not be enough.

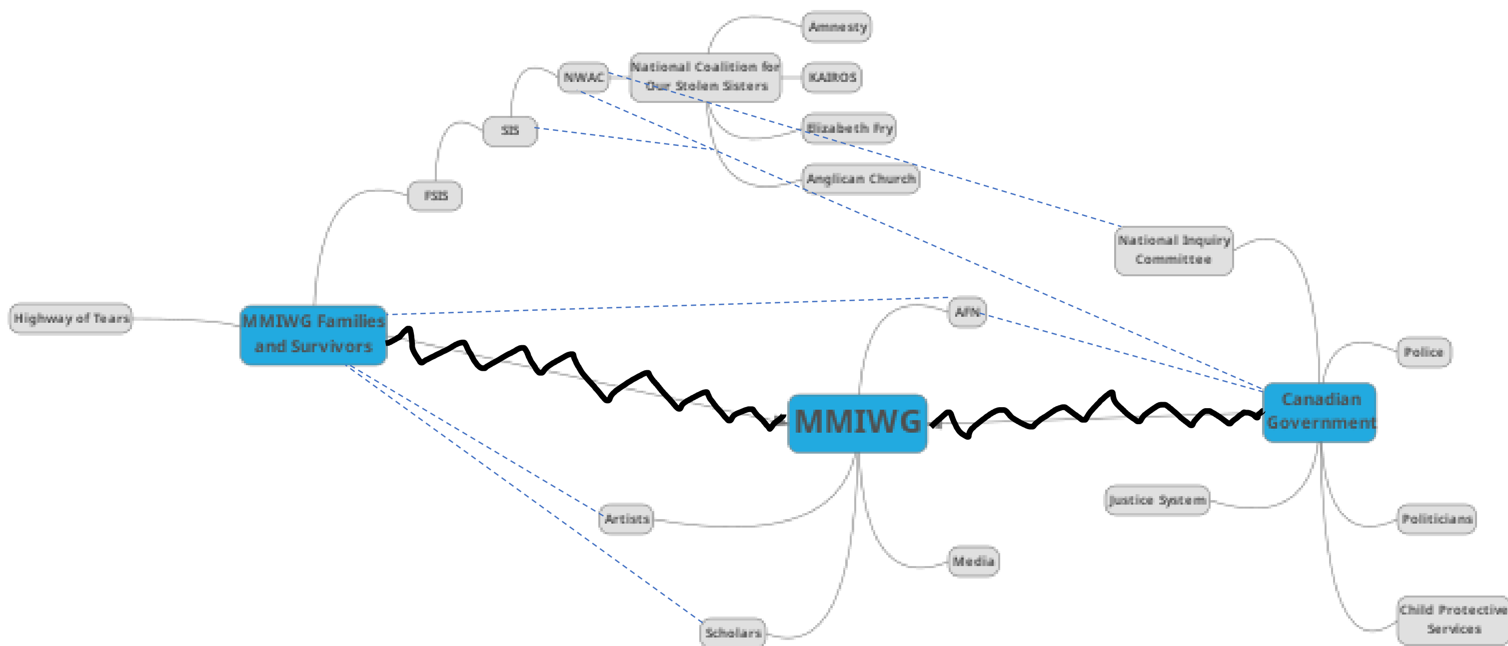

Figure 1: Actormap MMIWG Created by Author

= Central conflict

Chapter Three: The REDress Project, SIS Vigils, and the Women's Memorial March: The Claims and Frames of Indigenous Activists

This chapter provides a description of the frames that activists use at three events: the REDress project, SIS vigils and February 14 Memorial March in DTES. I provide short descriptions of what these events look like and delve into the significance of the dates and provide an analysis of the spaces in which activism takes place. I analyze claims made by activists through the use of Benford and Snow's *core framing tasks.* I separate each framing task (diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational) and provide an overview of common themes that emerge in each category.

The events were selected because of their long-lasting influence on MMIWG protesting. All of the events were established before the National Inquiry and either occur annually (SIS vigils and Memorial March) or continue throughout the years (REDress). Additionally, these events are identified as influential in literature as well as by my informants (Bourgeois 2014; Saramo 2016; Felt 2016; Strautins 2018)[37]. Furthermore, these three events are open to the public and occur in (semi)public spaces, thus having a focus on collective action. Lastly, these events involve actors that play a significant role in MMIWG activism (such as family members, FSIS, women from DTES, and artists).

The Downtown East Side February 14 Women's Memorial March

Contemporary activism surrounding MMIWG started with the women of Vancouver's Downtown East Side (DTES) (Bourgeois 2014)[38]. It is, therefore, natural to start this chapter with DTES's annual Valentine's Day Memorial March. The march was first organized in 1991, when family members of a woman who had been murdered decided they wanted to cleanse DTES's dangerous spaces (Culhane 2009, 78)[39]. The first marches were not well attended, and protesters were met with hostility by the public (Zuluaga and Walia 2011)[40]. The march became an annual event, however, and recent marches have drawn thousands of participants (Howell 2017). It is important to note here that the DTES memorial march serves to remember and honor all women who have been murdered or have gone missing in DTES.

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[37] Interviews with respondent 1,2,3 and 4 conducted on 7 March, 8 April, 4 April and 13 April 2019
[38] Interviews with respondents 2,3 and 4 conducted on 8 April, 4 April and 13 April 2019
[39] Interviews respondent 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[40] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019

These women are of all races and nationalities. Because many of the women are Indigenous, however, the march has a palpable "Indigenous" character.

What Does It Look Like?

This description is based on my own observation of video material and secondary accounts by scholars and journalists. The march starts with a closed meeting of family members. This meeting is not open to the public or media and descriptions imply that this is a time of ceremony and remembrance for the families (Culhane 2009, 84). After the family meeting, the public gathers at the intersection of Main and Hastings, where the march commences. The march ends at a totem pole in Oppenheimer Park with a feast (88). The route of the march is different each year, as each year's locales in which women were murdered or went missing are added (Zulagua and Walia 2011). The march is led by family members who carry banners with the names of their loved ones or hold up stitched quilts or pictures[41] (Culhane 2009, 86; Postmedia 2018; Wilton 2010). Elders walk behind the family members and the Elders are followed by the general public. The march stops at the locales in which women were murdered or where they were last seen before their disappearances. These locations are then smudged, the women's stories are told, and drum songs are sung (Culhane 2009, 86; Zulagua and Walia 2011). Family members leave roses at the locations (red for a murdered woman and yellow for a missing woman) (Zulagua and Walia 2011). Somewhere the march is stopped in order to have speeches. The speakers are mostly female[42] (Culhane 2009, 84). Some of the speakers are professionals, such as health care workers, while others are family members of murdered or missing women, residents of DTES, or important community leaders. Participants include men and women from multiple age groups and ethnicities. Additionally, participants' ages range from children to the elderly.

The Setting

The setting in which this instance of activism takes place is significant to the activism itself. One respondent answered the question on the significance of DTES with: "I mean Vancouver Downtown East Side… Massive"[43]. Vancouver's DTES has a significant position

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[41] Observation of Valentine's Day Memorial March of February 14, 2017, Vancouver accessed at **https://www.facebook.com/redworksphotography/videos/10154789598555700/**

[42] Observation of Valentine's Day Memorial March of February 14, 2017, Vancouver accessed at **https://www.facebook.com/redworksphotography/videos/10154789598555700/**

[43] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019.

in Canadian history[44]. People often see the neighborhood as a hotbed of addiction, poverty, homelessness, and sex work (Morton 2018, 272; Oppal 2012, 13). DTES is (in)famously known as "Canada's poorest postal code" (Oppal, 2012, 12) and one of my respondents called DTES "the largest urban reserve"[45]. DTES is thus a neighborhood that has a large Indigenous population and a neighborhood that suffers from economic marginalization. Housing in DTES is often substandard, with a lack of running water or sanitation, and expensive[46], which has led to a large homeless population (Oppal 2012, 14). Many women in the DTES, it should be noted here that this does not mean all women in DTES, are in some way involved in the survival sex trade (Morton 2018, 273; Oppal 2012, 13). Additionally, Vancouver's DTES suffers from an opioid crisis (Culhane 2009; 80). Not only does DTES suffer from economic marginalization, it also has a socially marginal position. Historically, all perceived "deviant populations" from surrounding neighborhoods were excluded from their communities and pushed into DTES[47] (81). DTES also has a high instance of missing and murdered women (ibid, 83; Oppal 2012, 15). Despite its marginal position, DTES also has strong and vibrant communities and it is known for its activism[48] (Culhane 2009, 83; Zulagua and Walia 2011).

Significance of the Date

"Why Valentine's Day?". When I asked my respondents this question, they were unanimous: "because it's about love"[49]. The choice to have the march on February 14 is not insignificant. Some assume that the date is in some way connected to the woman whose family first initiated the march, although there seems to be no consensus on how this is connected to the date[50]. Additionally, the date is related to Valentine's Day, the holiday of love. My respondents all argue that the connection between "love" and the march is important. One respondent mentioned the day is marketed to the world as a capitalist day of love but that the march is a way to show that love is more than that[51]. Other respondents mention that the march is meant to show love for the women who were murdered and have

[44] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[45] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[46] Although it may seem contradictory that housing in a marginalized neighborhood would be expensive, Vancouver is expensive overall. Living in Vancouver is so expensive that even substandard housing is sometimes unaffordable for those with lower incomes. Social housing projects do exist, but they are still considered to be too expensive for most renters, see for example Fumano 2019.
[47] Interviews with respondents 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[48] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April
[49] Interviews with respondents 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[50] Interviews with respondents 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[51] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019

gone missing[52]. This love can be seen as showing the power and commitment of DTES' community[53]. Furthermore, a respondent argued that the date challenged white settlers to address MMIWG in some way in order to show that they loved the women[54].

Sisters in Spirit Vigils

A second event is the Sisters in Spirit (SIS) Vigil. The first vigil was organized on October 4, 2006 on Parliament Hill. The initiative was created through cooperation between NWAC and family members of MMIWG, most notably Bridget Tolley, who later organized in Families of Sisters in Spirit (FSIS) (Bourgeois 2014, 218; NWAC 2019, Hackett 2018). Amnesty International, KAIROS, the National Committee of Friendship Centres, and the Canadian Federation of Students are also involved in the official vigil (Targeted News 2012). The first year, 14 vigils were held across Canada (NWAC 2019; Hackett 2018). More recently, these numbers are over a hundred (NWAC 2019; Hacket 2018). My discussion of the SIS vigils focusses primarily on the vigils held at Parliament Hill throughout the years. The reason for this is that this is the original vigil that inspired all other solidarity vigils and because it is the most prominent vigil. The SIS vigil originated as an idea to "bring [MMIWG] to the federal government"[55].

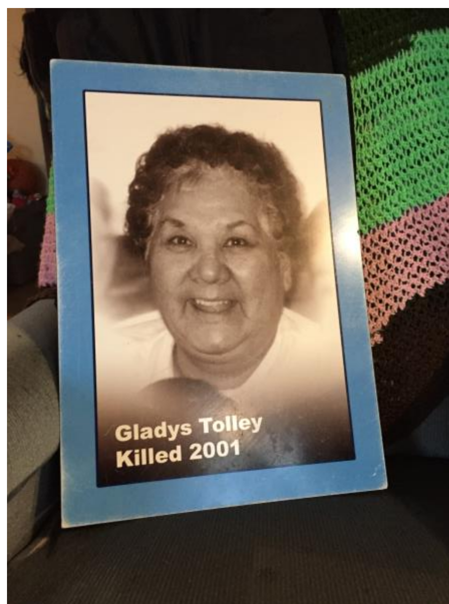

Figure 2: Example of Photos used at SIS Vigils. This photo depicts Gladys Tolley, an Algonquin mother who was struck and killed by a police cruiser in October 2001. Picture taken by Author, used with permission from the original owner.

What does it look like?

Like the Valentine's Day March, each edition of the SIS vigil is slightly different. Sometimes there are community feast and marches or vigils in different locations from the Hill[56]. All vigils on Parliament Hill, however, share some commonalities. Family members and the crowd gather on the steps in front of the main Parliament building. An Elder usually

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[52] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[53] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[54] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[55] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[56] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019

opens the ceremony with prayer and an acknowledgement of the land, which is usually followed by song[57]. There is a lectern or microphone on top of the steps for the speakers. Behind the speakers are family members of MMIWG holding signs or photos of their lost loved ones. The drummers and singers, as well as the Elders stand behind the speakers. Speakers come up on the steps to speak. Family members are usually allowed to speak first, followed by organizations and politicians[58]. Organizations are asked not to bring their banners (Amnesty International 2018). Some examples of speakers include family members of MMIWG, Elders and traditionalists, Amnesty International, NWAC, AFN, Carolyn Bennett, and Justin Trudeau. The vigil sometimes includes red dresses. The crowd consists of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and women from all ages. Notably, there are many children present, which may be due to them being families of MMIWG. One video shows that the speakers and families on the steps are separated from the crowd by a large row of cameras and journalists[59].

The Setting

Parliament Hill is a place that is traditionally associated with protest, as it is the "seat of power"[60]. Interview respondents agree that Parliament Hill is a "place of protest"[61]. The reason for this is that the Parliament and thus the center of electoral power is located at that location. Additionally, remembering and protesting MMIWG on the governments literal doorstep offers an opportunity to "bring [Indigenous women] to the government"[62]. There seems to be the conception that for political protests Parliament Hill is "the way to go"[63] and that it is "just what you do"[64].

Interestingly, some respondents mentioned the possibility of the location of vigils changing in the near future[65]. Respondents argued that the accessibility of Parliament Hill as well as the increased security had made the location less attractive[66]. Particularly the

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[57] Observation of SIS Vigil on October 4, 2017 accessed at https://www.facebook.com/kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/
[58] Observation of SIS Vigil on October 4, 2017 accessed at https://www.facebook.com /kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/; Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019.
[59] Observation of SIS Vigil on October 4, 2017 accessed at https://www.facebook.com/kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/
[60] Interviews with respondent 3 ,4, 5 and 6 conducted on 4 April, 13 April, 17 April and 22 April 2019
[61] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[62] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[63] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019
[64] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019
[65] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[66] Interviews with respondents 2 and 5 conducted on 8 April and 17 April 2019

increased security was problematic, as one respondent stated that it made her feel nervous, while another respondent highlighted that increased police presence is problematic because of the tensions between Indigenous people and the police[67]. Other locations, such as Vanier, which one respondent described as "Ottawa's Ground Zero for MMIWG" and another as "Vanier First Nation" were mentioned as alternatives for the vigil[68]. The reason for this is that events in Vanier would center on an Indigenous community and marches or vigils in this locale would create a similarity to the DTES march[69].

Significance of the Date

The SIS vigils are also known as "October 4th Vigils", because these vigils always take place on October 4. Gladys Tolley, the mother of the woman who initiated the vigils, died on October 5, 2001. October 4 is, therefore, a date that has personal significance to Bridget Tolley who plays a crucial role in the organization of the vigils[70]. Additionally, Amnesty International published its 2004 *Stolen Sisters* report on October 4[71] . This report marked the first time that the crisis of MMIWG was recognized on a much more prominent stage. The report outlined individual cases, as well as some systemic problems and causes associated with the issue of MMIWG (Amnesty International 2004). In this way, the selection of October 4 links one individual case of MMIWG to the broader history of awareness raising on the issue.

The REDress Project

The *REDress Project*, also known as the Red Dress Project, is an artistic response to the crisis of MMIWG. Métis artist Jamie Black started the project in 2011 and the exhibition consists of donated red dresses (Strautins 2018). The project has inspired many people not directly related to the project to use the red dress as symbol for MMIWG (McCully 2017; Saxberg 2019). The dresses are displayed in (semi)public spaces, such as art galleries, university campuses, and cultural centers (Postmedia 2013). Black first wanted to display the dresses in public spaces in a type of guerilla exhibition but later decided to have the exhibition at a university campus in cooperation with the University of Winnipeg (Strautins 2018). The

[67] Interviews with respondents 2 and 5 conducted on 8 April and 17 April 2019
[68] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[69] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[70] Interviews with respondents 2, 3 and 4 conducted on 8 April, 4 April and 13 April 2019
[71] Interviews with respondents 2 and 4 conducted on 8 April and 13 April 2019

purpose of Black's work is "to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence" (Black 2014). The REDress project travels through the US and Canada and is displayed at different locations. Black was inspired by a protest in Bogotá where women wore red dresses[72] (Strautins 2018; Pruden 2012).

What does it look like?

For this description I focus on the official project rather than the grassroots "spin-offs". Although the way in which the project takes shape differs per exhibition, there are some common threads. Firstly, the dresses are usually hung on hangers and invisible strings in (semi)public spaces. These spaces range from university campuses to art galleries and museums. The dresses have different styles and sizes, but they are always red. According to Black, red was chosen because of its symbolic and spiritual significance (Quesnel Cariboo Observer 2017; Saxberg 2019; Strautins 2018). For one, red invokes interpretations of blood, violence, and sexuality but it also invokes interpretations of power and Indigeneity (Quesnel Cariboo Observer 2017; Saxberg 2019). Additionally, it is argued that red is the only color that spirits can see (Quesnel Cariboo Observer 2017). The displayed dresses are usually explained. This explanation can be through signs detailing the issue of MMIWG, people who inform visitors, or addresses by key speakers[73].

Figure 3: REDress Project at NAC 2019 from Author's (Lisa Menke) Collection

I witnessed the REDress project in the National Arts Centre (NAC) in Ottawa in March 2019. This version of the REDress project consisted of two parts. The first part was a "community welcome" for the dresses. This was a meeting two days before the exhibition

[72] The protest Black witnessed was a protest by 300 women who gathered at Place de Bolivar. The women protested the politically motivated arrest of their family and friends and wore red dresses (Strautins 2018).
[73] Observation of Opening of REDress Project on March 8, 2019 at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa

would be opened. Family members of MMIWG and others that felt connected to MMIWG were invited to steam and smudge the incoming dresses. The setting was informal and there was Indigenous food, song, and prayer. The second part consisted of the official exhibition. The opening ceremony was on International Women's Day. This ceremony was more formal than the family gathering. There were speeches by Elders, singers, the director of the NAC and a speech written by Jamie Black. The audience consisted of mainly non-Indigenous young professionals. The second event also included Indigenous food and drinks.

The Setting

Unlike the Valentine's Day March and SIS Vigil, the REDress project is not associated with one specific location. What is interesting to note, however, is the fact that exhibitions often take place in traditionally "privileged" spaces, such as universities and art galleries[74] (Strautins 2018). The choice for these spaces is not unintentional. Indeed, during the opening of the project at the NAC in Ottawa, the importance of taking up space for Indigenous women in non-Indigenous privileged spaces was mentioned[75]. Furthermore, the choice for "privileged" spaces might be related to the fact that the project attempts to educate those that do not know about the issue of MMIWG (Black 2014). It is reasonable to suppose that those that do not know about the issue are those that have some form of privilege. It thus makes sense to locate the project in spaces where such a privileged audience might see it. It should also be noted here that the NAC is located only a two-minute walk from Parliament Hill and having the project at the NAC also serves to address and implicate the government (Saxberg 2019).

Significance of the Date

The REDress project is not associated with one particular date. The project is usually exhibited around dates significant to the issue of MMIWG, however. Brock University hosted the project on March 8 in 2018 and again on Valentine's Day 2019, for example. It will remain on February 14th annually as an act of solidarity with the annual Valentine's day memorial in the DTES[76]. Additionally, the opening of the REDress project at the NAC

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[74] Author's field notes on Observation of Opening of REDress Project on March 8, 2019 at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa

[75] Author's field notes on Observation of Opening of REDress Project on March 8, 2019 at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa

[76] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019

coincided with International Women's Day, thus linking the issue of MMIWG to international women's rights.

Claims and Frames: A Human Rights Issue Rooted in Structural Problems

The following section analyzes the collective action framing used at the three events described above. This section is based on my analysis of multiple sources. The first type of source used is that of newspaper articles and two documentaries in which activists are interviewed or in some way provide their view on MMIWG[77]. The second source of information is my observation of the three events, either in person or through digital means[78]. In those cases, I have created a list of frames presented by the different articulators at each event. Lastly, my respondents were also asked about their frames and I have also incorporated those interviews[79]. Quotes and specific arguments are contributed to a specific source. When this is not the case, the argument and analysis is based on an aggregate of the multiple sources I have described above.

Diagnostic Frames

According to Benford and Snow diagnostic framing "consists of the formulation of the main problem identified, blame attribution, and an identification of causes for the problem" (614).

Problems and Causes: A National Tragedy That is Rooted in Structuralism

I have grouped the category of problem formulation and the identification of causes together for several reasons. First of all, given that the main bone of contention in activism surrounding MMIWG is the number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, the problem identification section would not prove very enlightening. Secondly, due to the interconnectedness of the causes and effects of MMIWG, it is difficult to determine what constitutes a cause and what constitutes a separate problem. Lack of (safe) housing, for

[77] Printup 2015; Zuluaga and Walia 2011; Postmedia 2018; Postmedia 2016; Wilton 2010; Tetley 2011; Canada Newswire 2013; Canada Newswire 2018; Postmedia 2013; CBC 2016; Postmedia 2018, Oct 5; Quesnel Cariboo Observer 2017; The Daily Gleaner 2015; Tyler Kula 2018; Kelowna Capital News 2018.
[78] Author's field notes on Observation of Opening of REDress Project on March 8, 2019 at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa; Observation of SIS Vigil on October 4, 2017 accessed at https://www.facebook.com/kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/; Observation of Valentine's Day Memorial March of February 14, 2017, Vancouver accessed at **https://www.facebook.com/redworksphotography/videos/10154789598555700/**
[79] Interviews with respondents 2,3,4 and 5 conducted on 8 April, 4 April, 13 April and 17 April 2019

example, can be identified as one of the causes of MMIWG. On the other hand, lack of housing can also be seen as a problem in its own right, depending on the researcher's reading.

One of the most important conclusions one can draw from an analysis of collective action frames surrounding MMIWG, is the focus on the structural nature of the problem. Indeed, the second most cited cause for the issue is "colonialism". Activists represent the issue as rooted in a colonial history and its related policies (residential schools, the *Indian Act*, Child Welfare policies), racism, and patriarchy. These structural causes are informed by an overall lack of respect towards Indigenous women and policies have also further cemented this attitude. The negative attitude towards Indigenous women is best represented through the "Squaw" stereotype that is explained in depth in chapter two. The stereotype makes that Indigenous women are often seen as "lesser than" (Morton 2018, 261). These attitudes have become stratified in institutions, such as most notably the justice system and the police, that do little to deter perpetrators and protect Indigenous women, as is evidenced in chapter two. Additionally, activists argue that representations of victimized women, particularly in the media, serve to both legitimize violence and further dehumanize Indigenous women.

The focus on structural causes may seem natural, but one could argue that it is a deliberate choice. The recognition of the issue of MMIWG as having its roots in structures is relatively recent[80]. Before 2015/2016, official channels, most notably the Harper government, explicitly argued that the issue of MMIWG did *not* have its roots in structural causes and was rather an issue of "just crime" and women who lived "high-risk lifestyles" (Saramo 2016), thus placing the problems roots in individual agency rather than structure. Some of my respondents directly engaged with this rhetoric in explicitly stating that this was not caused by "high risk women" but rather by structures.

Who is to blame? - The Failure of Police and State

Perhaps one would expect a focus on blaming structures to go along with a formulation of structural causes. This does indeed happen, as "structures" and "systems" are repeatedly said to be responsible for the issue of MMIWG. The Canadian government and the police are the ones that are blamed most often. Additionally, individual politicians, such as Trudeau and Bennett, are also blamed. They were coded separately, but one could argue that they might also fall under "the government". What is particularly interesting in relation to this form of blame is the fact that the government and police are not said to be the direct

[80] Interview with respondent 1 conducted on 7 March 2019

perpetrators that murder and kidnap Indigenous women, except for perhaps a few notable cases in which police violence is highlighted[81]. Rather, the government and police bear responsibility because they fail to protect Indigenous women. This failure is particularly problematic because the government and police are the ones that are tasked with the protection of Canada's citizens. In the language of human rights: the Canadian government and police have failed to abide by their due diligence.

An interesting group that activists represent as bearing blame is "those that take advantage". What is essentially meant with this category is those that live a comfortable life in Canada owing to the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and lands. The term that is used by my respondents is "White settlers"[82]. Activists argue that white settlers have gained their privileged position through systematic oppression and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. All White settlers bear some sort of responsibility, and thus blame, when it comes to the issue of MMIWG.

Lastly, individual perpetrators are also represented as being culpable. In my interviews, perpetrators were almost always named. However, it is interesting that they do not receive the primary focus. Activists argue that in order to prevent perpetrators from being able to take advantage of Indigenous women, one should first change the structures that put Indigenous women at risk. Individual perpetrators are only able to commit violence against Indigenous women as long as Canada's structures allow them to easily reach Indigenous women and go unpunished for their crimes.

Boundary Framing- David and Goliath

It is interesting that boundary or adversarial framing is not very prominent in the collective action frames sampled. Criticism and anger are most openly directed towards the government and police, who activists see as main culprits. However, the government is also allowed to speak at SIS Vigils and politicians feature prominently in *Our Sisters in Spirit*. One possible explanation for this "ambivalence" towards the government is that Indigenous activists need to convince the government as well. As is shown in the section "call to action", many of the frames used require governmental action. Therefore, demonizing the government might serve to undermine the persuasiveness of activists' arguments. Indeed, one of my

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[81] The role of the police as direct perpetrators was strongly highlighted in my interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019

[82] Interviews with respondents 3,4,5,6 and 7 conducted on 4 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 1 May 2019

respondents argued that the inclusion of politicians is crucial for the mobilizing potential of the frame[83].

One of the boundaries that is implicit (and sometimes even explicit) in many collective action frames, is the boundary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Three of my interviewees further clarified this idea. They argued that they did not necessarily mean "Indigenous" and "non-Indigenous", because they felt that "non-Indigenous" was a duplicitous group[84]. My respondents asserted that so-called BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color[85]) populations "get this in a way that White [people] don't"[86]. Because of the experiences of marginalization that BIPOC people have in common with Indigenous people as well as the problematic nature of slavery, BIPOC populations understand the plight of MMIWG better. The boundary between "Indigenous" and "non-Indigenous" is thus rather a boundary between "Indigenous" and "White settler". The boundary that is drawn is one between "marginalized" and "privileged" and "exploited" and "exploiter". It must be noted here that although this boundary drawing does create a certain culpability, it does not necessarily situate "White settlers" as an adversary. Indeed, activists see cooperation and using privilege to attain results as good strategies.

Amplification of Victimization- Our Sisters in Spirit

According to Benford and Snow (2000), many, though not all, collective action frames feature an "injustice" component (615). Injustice frames identify victims and amplify the victimization of these victims (615). In the case of the sampled frames for this research, this victimization was highly present. Those that are identified of victims are primarily MMIWG, although sometimes Indigenous women themselves are also highlighted as potential victims[87]. The main way in which their victimization is amplified is through "humanization". Indigenous women deal with negative stereotypes that turn them into "high risk" women, who "were asking for it", and are thus "unworthy victims" (Morton 2018, 261). In order to establish the "worthiness" of MMIWG, activists use a humanizing rhetoric.

The major way through which Indigenous women's worthiness is established is through their connection to their families. All events sampled in some way include family members of

[83] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019
[84] Interviews with respondents 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[85] Although the term BIPOC includes "Indigenous", my respondents used it primarily to refer to Black people and people of color as they usually mentioned "Indigenous" as an individual category. I copy this use in this thesis. Thus, BIPOC will be used to primarily refer to Black people and people of color.
[86] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[87] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019

MMIWG. Indeed, when asked who she would put at the center of an actor map, one of my respondents almost immediately replied: "families"[88]. Family members are highly visible in the sampled events, either as speakers, behind speakers, or as active participants. Not only is the women's victimization amplified through the family member's loss, the women's familial roles are also highlighted. Activists refer to MMIWG as "sisters", "aunties", "mothers", and "grandmothers", among others. Indeed, the names of organizations such as Sisters in Spirit and Families of Sisters in Spirit, as well as the name of *Our Sisters in Spirit* (2015) amplify this familial role. It also serves to create a sense of common humanity and collectiveness which is discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, individual women are made salient as victims through the speaking of their names, the telling of their stories, or the use of their pictures.

Prognostic Frames- Address the Tip Whilst Melting the Iceberg

Prognostic framing "involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan" (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). In other words, now that it has been established what is seen as the problem and its causes, it is important to determine how to address them.

Proposed Solutions- Learning, Unlearning, Protecting and Funding

One of the solutions that features prominently in the frames examined for this section is education. This category can be split into two parts: education of Indigenous people, and education of non-Indigenous (often White settler) people. Indigenous education is important in several ways according to activists. First of all, better quality education for Indigenous people helps overcome part of the social marginalization of Indigenous women, as higher educational attainment may make it more likely that they will attain better paying employment. Indeed, one respondent argued that there is an attitude in Canada that stipulates that educated women are seen as more "worthy" than non-educated women[89]. The respondent did not agree with this attitude. It is also argued that appropriate education is important for the cultural identity of Indigenous people. Secondly, education that returns to traditional Indigenous teachings helps instill more respect for women in young Indigenous individuals. The third advantage of education relates to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, namely the creation of a better understanding of the colonial relations between Indigenous

[88] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[89] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019

peoples and White settlers. Because of a lack of education on colonialism, there is a lack of understanding of the marginalization of Indigenous people (it is seen as a choice, rather than the result of years of colonial policies) as well as a perpetuation of existing stereotypes among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Activists argue that education will expose the structural nature of the plight of Indigenous people and challenge existing stereotypes.

This last point is also related to two other important themes: awareness raising and the removal of stigma. The basic premise here is the following: because the MMIWG crisis is said to be rooted in certain attitudes (be it colonial, misogynistic, racist, or all of the above), which are both created and upheld by the existing structures, exposing and trying to remove this attitude might be effective in addressing the problem. One of my respondents illustrated the danger of a negative attitude (stigma) towards Indigenous women in the following way: “there’s a thin veil between saying a woman’s life is worthless and taking a life”[90]. Activists also argue that many of the policies that negatively affect Indigenous women are informed by stigma and negative attitudes. If the attitude were to be removed, one might assume that the policies would follow suit.

The role of awareness raising is contested, however. While some argue that awareness raising is a solution in itself, others assert that awareness alone is not enough. The latter advocates argue that: “you can be aware of a lot of things and still not give a shit”[91]. Those that pose awareness as a solution assert that awareness of the scale of violence against women will shock people into action. One respondent mentioned that “when I see something like this, I want to do something”[92]. When awareness is seen as the solution, there is a certain optimism when it comes to the willingness of (primarily White) people to act to resolve the issue. In these cases, it is assumed that people simply did not know about MMIWG and that once people know, they will want to act to resolve it. Although other activists are more pessimistic, they do see awareness as an important part of the process of addressing MMIWG. One must know about an issue before one can address it after all.

In earlier chapters it became clear that the National Inquiry into MMIWG has been a contested process that was met with many criticisms. Before 2016, however, a National Inquiry seemed to be seen as *the* solution to address MMIWG, as is perhaps best illustrated by the opening scenes of *Our Sisters in Spirit (2015)*. Interestingly, even after 2016, a National Inquiry was still formulated as a solution quite often. Some activists have been calling for a

[90] Interview with respondent 7 conducted on 1 May 2019
[91] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[92] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019

reset of the current inquiry (as happened with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Residential Schools), while others call for a National Inquiry 2.0. Activists thus still see a national inquiry as an appropriate solution to address MMIWG, it is just its current form that is unsatisfactory. One of the main themes that returns in relation to an inquiry is that it should be grassroots-led, because Indigenous communities that suffer the violence "have the answers"[93]. A good inquiry would also be more inclusive of different survivors and families. Lastly, activists stress that any inquiry should also include parallel action. That is to say, an inquiry should not just go about truth-finding, it should also try to address the problem directly.

Another solution that relates to addressing MMIWG directly is that of increased protection of Indigenous women and girls. This solution focusses on preventing deaths first and worrying about root causes later. Although not all articulations of this solution include an exact description of what is meant by "increased protection", there are some common categories related to this theme. Firstly, advocates assert that better housing and shelters will help protect Indigenous women and girls from violence. Additionally, activists often stress the importance of accurate police response. That is to say, reports of violence and disappearances should be taken seriously and met with the same responses as White people would receive[94]. Police and government should also be more vigilant when it comes to Indigenous women and girls because they are a group vulnerable to violence.

The last solution, funding, is related to all solutions previously named. Activists argue that there are more than enough recommendations, both by the government, national organizations and Indigenous people themselves, and that in order to start solving the MMIWG crisis only money is needed to implement these recommendations. Moreover, money invested in housing, schooling, health care, and other social services may help Indigenous people overcome previous socioeconomic marginalization. As this marginalization is said to contribute to the problem of MMIWG, addressing it seems reasonable. Funding would also help Indigenous people reclaim their own cultural and political sovereignty, which would lead to self-determination and a return to Indigenous traditional culture that respected and protected women. It is interesting to note that there is a certain weariness when it comes to government funding. Some activists emphasize that there

[93] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[94] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019

should be “limited strings attached”[95], while others are weary of all government money as they feel they risk being silenced and “paid to heal”[96].

How Can the Solutions Be Attained? - Families First and Community Building

According to many activists the focus of any strategy that addresses MMIWG should be on families of MMIWG women. This attitude is perhaps best reflected in Perry Bellegarde’s assertion of “families first”[97]. The logic is that families are the most affected by violence and hence they should be helped first. Additionally, family members have experienced the violence associated with MMIWG first-hand and they are most knowledgeable on what solutions will be effective and which will not, according to activists.

Another theme that emerges in relation to MMIWG strategies is that of community. Many of the sampled frames argue that solutions and activism should be community-led. There is a focus on a grass-roots, bottom-up approach as opposed to top-down solutions proposed by the government. Additionally, many of the frames highlight a sense of community and cooperation as important to the success of proposed solutions. It seems that the creation of (the idea of) a united front is essential if one wishes to attain success. Community is important in another way as well, for it can provide strength and support to those affected by MMIWG. Indeed, activists highlight the importance of a sense of “not being alone”.

A related strategy is that of healing and honoring. This strategy is seen as an important way to overcome the trauma caused by MMIWG according to advocates. The honoring of MMIWG women and healing, particularly when done in Indigenous ceremony, are important ways to reestablish Indigenous identity and sense of self-worth as well as tool to overcome trauma. Overcoming trauma is said to be an important way to “break the circle” of intergenerational violence, which is identified as playing a role in the MMIWG crisis. Additionally, remembering and honoring murdered and missing women will create a sense of their “worthiness” and “humanness” which helps remove stigma and negative attitudes.

Lastly, activists emphasize the importance of Indigenous-non-Indigenous partnerships. What is meant by this is that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people should work together in order to resolve the issue of MMIWG. There are several reasons for this. First of all,

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[95] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[96] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[97] Perry Bellegarde at SIS Vigil Ottawa Oct 4, 2017, accessed at **https://www.facebook.com/kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/**

highlighting the need for action by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people raises the issue beyond an "Indian problem" or a case of "Indians watching Indians"[98] . Furthermore, there is a sense that this problem is so large that it cannot be resolved by one single group. MMIWG activists also argue that the power imbalance between Indigenous people and the federal government makes it difficult for Indigenous people to resolve the problem on their own. Some activists argue that White settlers are an important group because they can "leverage their privilege"[99] in order to convince the government to act.

Motivational Frames- Fulfil Your Responsibility and Protect Your Fellow Human

"Motivational framing, the final core framing task, provides a "call to arms" or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive" (Benford and Snow 2000, 617).

<u>Call to Action- Fulfill Your Duty and Get Rid of That Attitude!</u>

A large part of the frames examined call for government action in some way. There is usually also an emphasis on "concerted" or "comprehensive" government action (Amnesty International 2016). This is most likely a response to current government policies and programs which are said to address MMIWG but that do not directly address the issue (CEDAW 2015). Government action can be divided into two components. The first component focusses on addressing Indigenous social marginalization and programs to try to alleviate this marginalization. This component has activists calling for better education, health care, housing, higher welfare rates, etc. This type of government action would serve to address the "roots" of the MMIWG tree. The second component focusses on government action that addresses MMIWG more directly. This component calls for a national action plan, task forces specialized in MMIWG, better shelters for women, and an examination of the police and justice system, among others.

A second call to action that is related to direct government action to address MMIWG is the call to "stop the violence". When my respondents were asked about their call to action, they responded that this particular call to action was a no-brainer. Indeed, one respondent accurately voiced this call to action in stating "stop killing us!"[100]. While certain calls to action and proposed solutions focus on the root causes of violence against Indigenous women

[98] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019
[99] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[100] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019

and girls, this particular call to action shows that stopping or slowing down the violence should be a priority. The call to stop the violence also puts some responsibility on the audience, something which is discussed under "rationale".

The last prominent call to action is the call for respect. The documentary *Survival, Strength, Sisterhood (2011)* quite nicely illustrates this call to action. In the documentary, one of the respondents points at the audience and tells them to "get rid of that attitude". One of the solutions previously mentioned was the removal of stigma. The call for respect calls upon the audience to remove the stigma they have placed on Indigenous women. While some frames merely ask for respect, others also highlight how this can be attained. My respondents were clear on this issue. They argued that they called upon people to examine their own values and prejudices[101]. The argument is that once people are aware of their prejudices, they can change their actions. One respondent stated that the primary response in one's mind may remain the same, i.e. prejudicial, but the secondary response would challenge this first response and lead to better action[102].

What Rationale is Invoked? - "We're All the Two-Legged Tribe"

The language of rights features prominently in the collective action frames of Indigenous activists concerning MMIWG. "Human rights" as a general category is often invoked. Additionally, more specific rights are also often used in the frames analyzed. Such more specific rights usually focus on social, economic, and cultural rights, such as housing, education, and the right to culture. One civil and political right features prominently as well, namely the right to life. Articulators also invoke Indigenous rights as well as women's rights frequently. One could argue that the evocation of human rights not only provides moral reasons for engaging in action, they are also part of a legal framework that must be acted upon.

A second theme that returns is "common humanity". This rationale asserts that the audience should act to resolve the issue of MMIWG because the women are human like the rest of us. This sense of common humanity relates to a rationale of human rights as well. Indeed, human rights are based on the idea that there are certain universal characteristics that go along with being human. Highlighting MMIWG's humanity thus emphasizes their "worthiness" of protection under human rights. Additionally, an emphasis on common humanity may serve to create a sense of solidarity between MMIWG and the audience. Perry

[101] Interviews with respondents 3,4,5 and 7 conducted on 4 April, 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019
[102] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019

Bellegarde highlights this when asserting that: "we are all a part of the two-legged tribe"[103]. In other words, MMIWG belong to the "human" group and all humans should act to protect members of this group.

A last rationale that is offered for engaging in action is "responsibility". The responsibility highlighted in the collective action frames of activists is both government and police responsibility, for failing to abide by due diligence in protecting women, as well as the responsibility of individual Canadians. The Canadian government and White settlers have profited so much from the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and lands that they have a responsibility to "give back". One respondent described the responsibility to resolve MMIWG as "rent" for living on Indigenous land[104]. Additionally, White settlers and the Canadian government are (partly) responsible for the hardships suffered by Indigenous people, particularly women, and they thus have a responsibility to resolve the problems that they have created.

Vocabularies of Motive

The four vocabularies of motive that Benford and Snow (2000) highlight are severity, urgency, propriety, and efficacy (617). While severity and urgency are relatively straightforward, it is useful to explain what is meant by propriety and efficacy. Propriety focusses on the moral importance of engaging in action. Efficacy entails the "use" of engaging in action, that is to say, how likely it is that action by activists and the audience will actually bring about change. All four vocabularies are invoked at relatively similar rates in the collective action frames examined. Urgency and severity are slightly more prominent than propriety and efficacy, but differences are slim. Examples of urgency are calls for "immediate action", such as in statements of "we need action now!". Activists also argue several times that there should be "no more" victims, which puts the focus on urgent action. Severity is emphasized by describing MMIWG as a "crisis", "epidemic", or even "colonial war". These words underscore the scale of the issue. Propriety is mainly invoked through the rationale for engaging in action, such as human rights, common humanity, and responsibility.

Efficacy is used in a slightly different way than the other three vocabularies, however. First of all, efficacy is invoked the least often out of all of the vocabularies, although the difference is slight. What is more interesting is that sometimes activists actively undermine a

[103] Perry Bellegarde at SIS Vigil Ottawa Oct 4, 2017, accessed at **https://www.facebook.com/kloughton/videos/10214472799354448/**
[104] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019

sense of efficacy. Indeed, activists mention their own commitment to the cause, often in the form of many years of activism, and they show that there has been little progress in return. Women in DTES mention “we’ve been here for 28 years and nothing has changed”. My respondents told me that they had been active for years, but that activism was “frustrating” because “no one is listening”[105]. One respondent even mentioned that she did not believe ending MMIWG was possible[106]. Such undermining of vocabularies of efficacy may reflect activists’ personal frustrations or they may serve to raise the sense of urgency and severity.

SIS vigils, the REDress project, and the DTES march all serve as ways to raise awareness for MMIWG and honor MMIWG. The events are often connected to particular dates to drive home a certain narrative. Additionally, Indigenous elements and tradition as well as the importance of taking up space feature prominently. At these events, activists present their claims and frames. Overall, MMIWG is identified as a structural issue that is primarily rooted in colonialism, patriarchy, and racism. The government and police bear the most responsibility because they have failed to protect Indigenous women. Those that profit from the marginal position of Indigenous women also bear responsibility, because they profit from the structures that victimize MMIWG. Activists try to be not to “shamey blamey”[107], because this might undermine partnerships. MMIWG are presented as valuable women and important family members who deserve love and respect. In order to address MMIWG, the primary focus should be on addressing the structural causes of MMIWG and stop their immediate effects, i.e. the deaths of Indigenous women. Activists argue that a grassroots approach that builds community is most likely to be effective. Activists build their narratives on a sense of human rights, common humanity, and colonial responsibility.

[105] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 18 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[106] Interview with respondent 7 conducted on 1 May 2019
[107] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019

Chapter Four: Resonance Construction- On the Split between Different Audiences and the *Resonance Equilibrium*

"Again, it depends on your audience. The content doesn't change, but how you say it does"[108]. This is what one of my respondents answered to the question of resonance construction in her frames. She argued that the key points of her story did not necessary change, but her way of framing certain things depended on her audience. This chapter dives into this issue of resonance construction among different audiences. I explain the different types of audiences that my respondents identify and highlight some of their key differences. I go beyond Benford and Snow by examining how the different resonance components interact with each other, i.e. which is more important and how they relate to each other, for each audience. I propose the model of the *resonance equilibrium* as a visual tool that aids in understanding the relationship between credibility and salience, and their associated resonance components, in resonance construction among different audiences. This chapter also puts forward space and identity as factors that influence resonance construction.

A Double Audience: A "White Settler" vs. a "Non-White" audience

One striking observation is that my respondents catered to two distinct audiences in the construction of their collective action frames. The first of these two audiences is best categorized as a "White settler" audience, that is an audience that consists of primarily White members of Canadian society who are seen as having a certain privilege over other groups in Canadian society[109]. This first audience is relatively unaware of the lived realities of Indigenous women's lives, this unawareness can be intentional or unintentional according to respondents. This group is also presented as bearing certain responsibility when it comes to the issue of MMIWG[110].

The second audience is a "non-White" audience. The term that some of my respondents referred to is BIPOC, which stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color[111]. The argument is that these populations do, in part, understand the plight of Indigenous people in Canada. According to one respondent, populations that have experienced similar socioeconomic marginalization and racism to that experienced by Indigenous people are more

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[108] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[109] Interviews with respondents 4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[110] Interviews with respondents 3,4,5 and 8 conducted on 4 April, 13 April, 17 April and 23 May 2019
[111] Interviews with respondents 3, 4 and 5 conducted on 4 April, 13 April and 17 April 2019

suited to intuitively understand the struggle of MMIWG[112]. This audience also bears less of a colonial responsibility because, as one respondent put it, "you can't really call black people colonizers"[113]. One could also characterize this audience as an audience that in some way mirrors MMIWG. One respondent mentioned that women, regardless of their race, that had experienced sexual violence were more likely to understand and identify with the issue of MMIWG[114].

The primary group that is presented through this audience is Indigenous people themselves, however. The Indigenous audience part of the audience consists of people that have shared experiences of colonialism, oppression, marginalization and violence. Additionally, they share certain Indigenous culture and values, such as the Seven Grandfather teachings. This part of the audience may also be directly related to the issue of MMIWG through the loss of a family member. The distinction between a "White Settler" and a "non-White" (primarily Indigenous) audience informs the rest of this chapter as a different audience creates different considerations and strategies in the resonance construction of my respondents. Indeed, the resonance components weigh differently for each audience. For this analysis it is useful to note that in the case of a "mixed audience", e.g. a rally at which both Indigenous people and "White settlers" are present, my respondents usually selected one primary audience on which they focused. The selected audience was the one activists wanted to convince and if they managed to convince part of the other audience that was a nice bonus[115].

Constructing Resonance among a White Settler Audience

I compare resonance construction to a scale with credibility represented by one side of the scale and salience by the other side. One can compare the different resonance components to weights that can be put on either side. Benford and Snow might argue that such a scale will

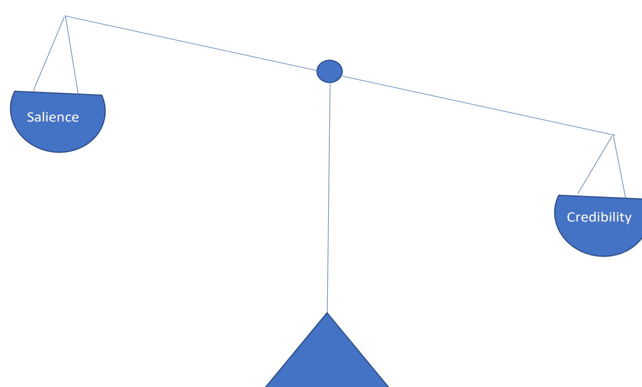

Figure 4: The Resonance Equilibrium for a "White settler" Audience

[112] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[113] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[114] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[115] Interview with respondents 2, 4, 5, 7 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019

preferably be in balance. The *resonance equilibrium,* as I dub this model, is different depending on the audience according to my respondents. Overall, the "credibility" scale is heavier than the "salience" scale when my respondents construct resonance among a "White settler" audience.

"We Always Have to Have Proof"[116]*- The Role of Credibility among a "White Settler" Audience*

Credibility relates to how believable a certain frame is to a particular audience. The concept relates to three resonance components, namely consistency, empirical credibility, and the credibility of the articulator. Consistency relates to the degree to which the frame is consistent with both the other frames articulated by the SMO, the actions of the SMO, and the articulated beliefs of the SMO (Benford and Snow 2000, 620).Hypothetically, the more apparent inconsistencies are, the less likely the frame is to resonate (620). Empirical credibility consists of the relationship between the presented frame and empirical, i.e. observable or verifiable, information and "real world" data (620). The more credible and numerous the "facts" or evidence supporting the frame, the more resonant the frame will be (620). The more authoritative, experienced, and credentialed the frame articulator is perceived to be, the more likely the frame is to resonate (621). The following section examines these components and the ways in which my respondents use them in order to construct resonance among a "White settler" audience.

In relation to consistency, some of my respondents mentioned that they had to consider this because there was a potential for different frames to be inconsistent[117]. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the issue of MMIWG incorporates many different issues, such as racism and colonialism, but also police and state failure. There is a potential for all these different and broad themes to be perceived as inconsistent by a "White settler" audience. There are several ways in which my respondents try to create consistency between the different frames they present. One of the main themes that emerges is the idea of one core idea or theme that serves as a large umbrella that overarches all frames[118]. It is key that the activist is transparent about how this larger framework and its subsequent themes are connected to one another according to my respondents[119]. One respondent mentioned that she

[116] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[117] Interviews with respondents 2,4 and 5 conducted on 8 April, 13 April and 17 April 2019
[118] Interviews with respondents 4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[119] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 6 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 22 April 2019

used the concept of intersectionality to link arguments concerning patriarchy, racism and colonialism together[120]. Another respondent stated that she used a historical narrative to show how the past and the present linked together into one "big snowball"[121]. Additionally, my respondents argued that contextualizing framings helped create consistency[122]. Another way to attain consistency is by limiting oneself to one core issue[123]. By focusing on multiple issues or frames, such as land rights and MMIWG (two issues that are often connected in frames), one not only dilutes one's own time and resources, it also becomes less clear what the focus of the frame is. One respondent mentioned that "you can't fight for every little thing […] I should focus on what I started and hopefully get some change"[124].

Activists argue that creating consistency between what they say and what they do is important in order to elevate a frame beyond "just rhetoric"[125]. The most important way to do this, according to my respondents, is by practicing what you preach[126]. One respondent illustrated this by mentioning that she should "talk the talk and walk the walk"[127]. The reason that activists should do this is because not only are activists less believable if they act contrary to their words, they should also lead by example[128]. The strategies that my respondents use to create consistency varies. One respondent that calls for the solution of more support for families posts MMIWG on her Facebook feed daily, helps with searches, and sends money and support to families of MMIWG[129]. Others that talk about harm reduction, coping with trauma, or stopping abuse show that they themselves also abide by those principles through their interactions with others[130].

Connected to the idea of practicing what you preach is the creation of consistency between activists' articulated beliefs and their frames. My respondents were relatively unconcerned that this would prove a problem for them[131]. They argued being open about their own experiences, social position, and beliefs before presenting their frames helped provide consistency. One respondent argued that being "naked", i.e. open about one's own position,

[120] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[121] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019
[122] Interviews with respondents 4,5 6 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[123] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[124] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[125] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[126] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[127] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019
[128] Interviews with respondent 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[129] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[130] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 7 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019
[131] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

helped prevent charges of "insincerity" or inconsistency[132]. In a sense, my respondents use the articulation of their beliefs as the foundation on which they build their frames, which makes it easier to prevent inconsistencies.

"We always have to have proof"[133], this quote is emblematic of the importance of empirical credibility in constructing resonance among a "White settler" audience. According to many of my respondents, empirical evidence and credibility may be *the* most important component in trying to convince this audience[134]. Evidence of a particular nature is represented by many Canadians as being the most convincing, namely evidence that has come out of empirical research that was conducted according to the scientific method. Respondents argue that they almost always include individual stories of MMIWG as evidence but that, among a white audience, stories alone are not considered to be "credible"[135]. One respondent mentioned that personal stories are often deemed "too anecdotal" to be convincing evidence[136]. In order to combat such charges, my respondents used different types of evidence to "back up" personal stories. One type of evidence that activists deemed particularly effective among a White audience was the use of databases and statistics. "You need to be able to put a number on it"[137]. Some respondents created their own databases, while others used existing reports, such as that by the RCMP or NWAC, in order to quantify MMIWG[138]. The RCMP and NWAC reports are particularly effective, according to respondents, because they are well known and often cited [139]. An additional source of evidence that my respondents use is reports written by academics, organizations, or the government. Respondents argue that such reports are authoritative among white audiences and thus more convincing. Government reports are also used to show government commitment and failure[140]. Visual tools are sometimes utilized to help the information "speak" to the audience, examples include treaty maps, timelines, and pictures[141].

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[132] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[133] Interview with respondent 1 conducted on 7 March 2019
[134] Interviews with respondent 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[135] Interviews with respondents 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[136] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[137] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[138] Interviews with respondents 2,4,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[139] Interviews with respondents 4 and 8 conducted on 13 April and 23 May 2019
[140] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[141] Interviews with respondents 2,5 and 6 conducted on 8 April, 17 April and 22 April 2019

The credibility of the articulator is also important in convincing a White audience, according to respondents[142]. There are several factors that make an articulator seem more credible. These include the expertise of the articulator, the privilege of the articulator, and the "recognizability" of the articulator (Benford and Snow 2000, 621). The expertise of the articulator is argued to be best established in one of the following ways: through proof in the form of awards and distinctions, or through long-term involvement in the issue[143]. According to many respondents, the more privileged an articulator is, the more convincing he or she is considered by a White audience[144]. Respondents argue that privilege can be established through several means. One can highlight his or her educational achievements, socioeconomic status, or status in an organization[145]. One respondent mentioned that women who had gone to college were deemed more worthy by a White audience than those who had not[146]. Lastly, articulators are deemed more credible when they are "recognizable" according to respondents. This "recognizability" consists of two parts: the degree to which the articulator is similar to the audience and how often he or she is brought up in connection to the issue[147]. According to one respondent, an articulator that "looks and talks like the audience" is likely to be more credible than someone of a different race, religion, or nationality from the audience you are trying to convince[148]. Others argued that there were certain "poster children" for the issue of MMIWG that were covered in the news so often that they might have become more credible[149]. In order to become more credible as articulators my respondents used various tactics. Several respondents chose to invite White privileged voices to events[150]. Other respondents emphasize their own credentials and long-term involvement in the issue[151].

On Aligning and Not Aligning- Constructing Salience among a "White Settler" Audience

In my interviews it became clear that salience was considerably less important to my respondents in trying to reach a White audience. Indeed, some respondents replied to questions about salience in relation to a White audience that they did not really consider

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[142] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019

[143] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April and 23 May 2019

[144] Interviews with respondents 4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019

[145] Interviews with respondents 4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019

[146] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019

[147] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019

[148] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019

[149] Interviews with respondent 2,4 and 6 conducted on 8 April, 13 April and 22 April 2019

[150] Interviews with respondents 2 and 6 conducted on 8 April and 22 April 2019

[151] Interviews with respondents 2,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

certain aspects or that they did not know whether they considered them[152]. This does not mean that none of my respondents considered issues of salience or that the issue was entirely unimportant in their eyes. Rather, it signaled that they were more clear and explicit about their considerations surrounding credibility, because they considered that to be one of the most important factors in convincing a “White settler” audience.

Salience relates to the “visibility” or relevance of a particular frame to the lives, experiences, and cultural beliefs of a target audience (Benford and Snow 2000, 621). The more “recognizable” or salient a particular frame is to the audience, the more successful it will be in convincing that particular audience. Salience consists of three resonance components: centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity. Centrality relates to how central or relevant the issue raised by a frame is to the lives of the target audience (621). Experiential commensurability consists of the degree to which a frame builds on or relates to the lived everyday experiences of the target audience (621). Lastly, narrative fidelity relates to how a frame builds on the dominant myths, narratives, cultural symbols, norms, and values of the target audience (622).

Many respondents argue that the issue of centrality is a difficult one when looking at a “White settler” audience[153]. Respondents stated that the issue of MMIWG is either not known by a White audience or that it is not a central concern[154]. This is where the contested issue of awareness raising becomes relevant. Those that argue that the White audience is simply unaware of the issue of MMIWG, assert that raising awareness for the issue creates centrality[155]. Others posit that even if a White audience becomes aware of the issue of MMIWG, it still will not be a central concern[156]. In other words, those that believe in awareness raising hold a conviction similar to that of Entman (1993), namely that activists create salience by highlighting certain issues. Those that do not necessarily believe in awareness put more emphasis on the dynamics between a frame and the audience.

There are several other ways in which respondents deal with the issue of centrality. Some respondents concede that there are some audiences that they will never convince and hence decide to focus on an audience where the issue of MMIWG already has a certain degree

[152] Interviews with respondents 4 and 7 conducted on 13 April and 1 May 2019
[153] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7, and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[154] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[155] Interviews with respondents 2,5 and 6 conducted on 8 April, 17 April and 22 April 2019
[156] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019

of centrality[157]. Another strategy is actively involving a White audience in activism surrounding MMIWG. Examples of these include school projects for young children and communities as well as involving audiences through gifts on fundraising campaigns[158]. Activists argue that this involvement raises the stakes for the audience and hence increases centrality. A second way of raising the stakes is through establishing “White responsibility”. Some respondents chose to highlight Canada’s colonial policies and how they affected Indigenous people as well as how they have profited the “White settler” citizens[159]. Establishing that “White settlers” play a role in the MMIWG crisis helps create more centrality among a “White settler” audience according to respondents.

Experiential commensurability holds the least weight when respondents try to convince a “White settler” audience. One of the first reasons respondents give for this is that a White audience does not have many of the experiences associated with MMIWG[160]. A White audience generally does not cope with a legacy of colonialism, the trauma of having a loved one murdered or go missing, and consistent racism. One respondent argued that people that do have experiences that align with MMIWG experiences, such as sexual abuse, are more easily convinced[161]. One way in which activists might try to establish some sort of experiential commensurability is through the use of hypothetical scenarios[162]. They attempt to get their White audience to ask themselves “what would I do if my daughter/mother/auntie was murdered or went missing”[163]. In this way, activists attempt to create experiential commensurability through the use of the experience of being a parent or a child. Many respondents argued, however, that they do not go out of their way to try and align their narrative to “White settler” experiences[164]. One reason for this might be that pandering to a white audience too much might undermine the legitimacy of Indigenous women and girls’ experiences.

Narrative fidelity plays a remarkable role in the construction of resonance among a “White settler” audience. On the one hand, respondents try to establish narrative fidelity through the use of universal values, such as common humanity and human rights, while on the other certain “White settler” values and myths are actively undermined. The activists that

[157] Interviews with respondents 4 and 7 conducted on 13 April and 1 May 2019
[158] Interviews with respondents 6 and 7 conducted on 22 April and 1 May 2019
[159] Interviews with respondents 2,5,6 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[160] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 6 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 22 April 2019
[161] Interview with respondent 7 conducted on 1 May 2019
[162] Interviews with respondents 5,6 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[163] Interviews with respondents 6 and 8 conducted on 22 April and 23 May 2019
[164] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5 and 7 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019

were interviewed said that they tried to build on particular narratives of universality and universal human rights[165]. Some said that they invoked Canadian values, such as justice, equality, and human rights, as a reason why people should care about MMIWG[166]. Additionally, emphasizing a sense of "we are all human here"[167] further cemented a sense of universality. Interestingly, however, some respondents argued that they actively tried to undermine certain "White settler" myths and values[168]. They argued that they sometimes invoked certain Canadian values, such as human rights and Canadian exceptionalism[169], and used the example of MMIWG to undercut those values[170]. Indeed, the issue of MMIWG shows that Canada is not as exceptional and human rights oriented as many of its citizens would like to believe. Activists also attempt to undermine "White settler" myths and stereotypes surrounding Indigenous people and women[171]. They actively create images of MMIWG that challenge conceptions of Indigenous women as "Squaws" that engaged in "high risk lifestyles". Even though undercutting narrative fidelity among a white audience might decrease salience, respondents seem to take other aspects, such as their own values as well as those of their other audience, into account when attempting to construct resonance through their collective action frames.

Constructing Resonance among a Non-White and Indigenous Audience

Whereas credibility seems to hold the utmost important when trying to construct resonance among a "White settler" audience, salience features prominently when my respondents try to convince an Indigenous audience. This does not mean that activists do not consider credibility as well.

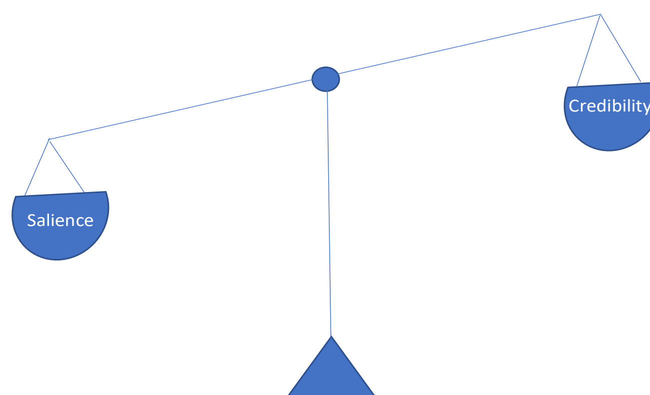

Figure 5: The Resonance Equilibrium for an Indigenous Audience

[165] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019
[166] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 6 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 22 April 2019
[167] Interview with respondent 2 conducted on 8 April 2019
[168] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 7 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019
[169] Canadian Exceptionalism draws a parallel with "American Exceptionalism". The term Canadian Exceptionalism usually refers to the idea that Canada is better than the US, because it does not have the same history of slavery. In a sense it creates the idea that Canada is a more "gentle" and "proper" version of the US.
[170] Interviews with respondents 4 and 7 conducted on 13 April and 1 May 2019
[171] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

Considerations of credibility weigh differently and are used in resonance construction in different ways from a "White settler" audience. Additionally, respondents were able to be more explicit and could speak more at length on their considerations of salience when they were speaking in relation to an Indigenous audience[172]. Thus, the "salience" scale of the resonance equilibrium weighs more heavily than the "credibility" scale when respondents construct resonance among an Indigenous audience.

"Everyone Has Their Own Truth"[173]- On the Role of Credibility among an Indigenous Audience

Respondents were relatively unconcerned about issues of consistency when trying to create resonance among an Indigenous audience. In relation to a possibility of inconsistency between different frames, one respondent mentioned that "[i]t's all pretty consistent"[174]. An Indigenous audience that is already familiar with the dominant narratives (that is, dominant among the Indigenous community) on MMIWG, will not find the connection of the different frames to colonialism, racism, and patriarchy particularly surprising[175]. Additionally, one respondent mentioned that many of the personal stories of Indigenous people regarding MMIWG show a return of particular themes, such as police failure and racism[176]. According to this respondent, consistency, then, does not have to be created as it naturally emerges from the stories within the Indigenous community[177].

Consistency between one's words and actions was considered important by my respondents in convincing an Indigenous audience. The reason many respondents cited is that there are many individuals and organizations that try to take advantage of the MMIWG crisis and try to bind Indigenous people to them through the use of "lip service", that is, they mention MMIWG and present themselves as if they support the cause, while actually undertaking little action to resolve it[178]. Activists argue that they have to establish that they will go beyond mere talk in order to convince an Indigenous audience[179]. The way in which this is primarily done is through the aforementioned "practicing what you preach". Respondents try to "prove" that there is consistency between what they tell their Indigenous

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[172] Interviews with respondents 4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[173] Interview with respondent 7 conducted on 1 May 2019
[174] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[175] Interviews with respondents 7 and 8 conducted on 1 May and 23 May 2019
[176] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[177] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[178] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[179] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

audience and how they act by engaging with communities[180]. One respondent offers legal assistance to MMIWG families in order to show her commitment to the issue, while other respondents engage in ceremonies, searches, or help gather donations for Indigenous communities affected by MMIWG[181].

Among an Indigenous audience, consistency between one's articulated and beliefs and the presented frames was not deemed problematic to achieve[182]. Many respondents said that they used Indigenous values and ceremony, such as the Seven Grandfather teachings, as the main beliefs that they built on when addressing an Indigenous audience[183]. Respondents argued that using such teachings as a guideline by which to talk and act, something which many refer to as doing things "in a good way"[184], automatically creates consistency[185]. Consistency is thus not necessarily actively created, but it rather emerges from living one's life according to a particular philosophy.

Empirical credibility is considered differently when respondents consider their Indigenous audience. Firstly, the importance of "being credible" is not as high as it is among a "White settler" audience[186]. What is deemed "credible" evidence is also different when considering an Indigenous audience according to respondents. Respondents assert one striking difference between what is seen as being credible to a White and an Indigenous audience is the idea that "experiential" evidence is more credible than "hard evidence" by an Indigenous audience. The most prominent way in which respondents use this "experiential" evidence when trying to convince an Indigenous audience is through the use of personal stories of MMIWG[187]. Activists tell the stories of women who have been murdered or gone missing, but they also highlight the plight of families[188]. As many activists are MMIWG family members, they also tell their own stories and those of their loved ones[189]. These personal stories are used as evidence to show the scale and impact of MMIWG on Indigenous people and communities.

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[180] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[181] Interviews with respondents 2,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[182] Interviews with respondents 4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[183] Interviews with respondents 5,7 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[184] "In a good way" is used to refer to doing things in a way that is consistent with Indigenous values, particularly the Seven Grandfather teachings. It posists that one should be mindful in one's actions and one's words in order to "do no harm". It usually means that one has a good intent and that one is aware of the impact of one's words and actions on others.
[185] Interviews with respondent 5,7 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[186] Interviews with respondent 4,5 and 7 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019
[187] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 1 May 2019
[188] Interviews with respondents 2,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[189] Interviews with respondents 2,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

Interestingly, activists do not deem evidence in the form of statistics, published articles, and reports particularly important in constructing resonance among this audience[190].

The role that the articulator plays in constructing resonance among an Indigenous audience is important. As is the case with empirical credibility, the credibility of the articulator is established in a different way when considering an Indigenous audience. An Indigenous audience considers different articulators "credible" than a White audience according to respondents. Many respondents argued that those that have deep cultural knowledge, such as Elders, Helpers, and other knowledge keepers, are particularly credible among an Indigenous audience[191]. These individuals are seen as experts on Indigenous values and life as well as well-respected members of Indigenous communities. Indeed, one respondent argued that traditionalists are sometimes deemed more authoritative than Chiefs by an Indigenous audience[192]. Thus, any information or frame presented by Elders or similar figures might be more convincing. Respondents used this idea in order to help establish the credibility of their frames. They may choose to have knowledge keepers as their articulators, or they highlight their own cultural knowledge[193]. Additionally, those that have experiential knowledge are also seen as having credibility as articulators[194]. The fact that many activists have gone through losing a loved one through MMIWG or that they are victims of MMIWG gives them a certain "right" to speak on the issue[195]. An Indigenous audience sees family members and survivors as people that "have the answers" because they have dealt with MMIWG up close[196]. Hence, many instances of activism include family members and survivors. Some respondents argued that they also highlighted their own experiences with MMIWG, as family members or survivors, to construct their credibility among an Indigenous audience.

A last theme that emerged is the idea of "sincerity". Sincerity is primarily related to the role of the articulator. According to many respondents being perceived as sincere, i.e. being genuinely committed to the issue of MMIWG, is key in convincing Indigenous audiences[197]. One respondent likened it to wearing a hat, absolute sincerity and commitment meant that "you can't take your hat off", while those that were not entirely committed could

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[190] Interviews with respondents 4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[191] Interviews with respondents 5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[192] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019
[193] Interviews with respondents 5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[194] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[195] Interviews with respondents 2,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[196] Interviews with respondents 4,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[197] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

"take their hat off and go home"[198]. Sincerity can also be seen as being committed and accountable to the Indigenous community[199]. Activists attempt to establish their sincerity and commitment through actively engaging with the community, helping those that ask for help, and by "never taking their hat off", i.e. being available and working on MMIWG most of their time[200].

"What You Say is Nothing New"[201]- Constructing Salience among an Indigenous Audience

Salience was more important to my respondents than credibility when they tried to convince an Indigenous audience. This is signaled by the fact that they were more specific and went more in-depth concerning questions surrounding salience when asked about an Indigenous audience. In relation to resonance and salience, narrative fidelity and experiential commensurability in particular held high importance.

Among many of my respondents there was agreement that when talking to an Indigenous audience, centrality did not necessarily need to be established because it was already established[202]. The issue of MMIWG is already a central issue to the lives of many Indigenous individuals. Indeed, one of my respondents mentioned that he knew thirteen women that had become a victim of MMIWG[203]. Most Indigenous people are in some way, through the loss of friends, family, or community members, connected to MMIWG (Printup 2015). Respondents thus argued that they did not have to raise awareness of MMIWG among an Indigenous audience because they were already aware[204]. Although the issue of MMIWG was central to an Indigenous audience, activists argued that it was important to center particular interpretations of the crisis[205]. Respondents argued that it was crucial to reveal the effects of patriarchy on MMIWG and to battle stereotypical portrayals of MMIWG women as "high risk"[206]. Many activists link MMIWG to the ongoing effects of colonialism and land, two issues that are arguable very central among the Indigenous community[207]. The linkage to these other *structural* issues may make Indigenous individuals more prone to accept

[198] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[199] Interviews with respondent 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[200] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[201] This quote is based on the lyrics of a song sung by Theland Kicknosway at the REDress community welcome at the NAC in Ottawa on March 6, 2019.
[202] Interviews with respondents 4,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[203] Interview with respondent 6 conducted on 22 April 2019
[204] Interviews with respondents 4,6,7 and 8 conducted on 13 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[205] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[206] Interviews with respondents 2,4 and 5 conducted on 8 April, 13 April and 17 April 2019
[207] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

interpretations of the *structural* causes for MMIWG rather than focusing on individual "responsibility" of MMIWG women. Additionally, a structural focus may serve to create acceptance of the idea that another structural factor, namely patriarchy, is also at play.

Experiential commensurability is influential when respondents try to construct resonance among an Indigenous audience. Almost all respondents mentioned the daily experiences of an Indigenous audience when discussing experiential commensurability, while they rarely mentioned the experiences of a "White settler" audience[208]. There are several experiences that activists build on, one of the most important ones is the experience of losing a loved one to MMIWG[209]. Respondents explained that the shared experience of losing someone to MMIWG create a sense of community, one respondent even called it a "club"[210]. When activists build on the shared experiences of this community, they believe they are more convincing to an Indigenous audience[211]. Additionally, activists often build on a shared experience of "everyday colonialism" and racism[212]. They share stories of mistreatment and racism by police and government, the overall negative attitudes by "White settlers", and stories of violence against women[213]. Arguably, such stories resonate with those that have had similar experiences. The stories might not only be convincing and salient to an Indigenous audience, but also to other minorities, such as BIPOC populations and abused women[214]. Indeed, many narratives build on ideas of structural oppression and socioeconomic marginalization. Such narratives align with experiences common to the lives of many Indigenous individuals[215].

Lastly, narrative fidelity was one of the most prominent features of my interviews with activists when we discussed an Indigenous audience. The themes that were most frequently mentioned in this regard were: Indigenous traditional values, the worth of women, and the importance of community[216]. Traditional (cultural) values are often invoked in activist events through the use of Indigenous ceremony. Elders often lead in prayer, there are opportunities to smudge, the land is acknowledged, and sometimes there are other ceremonies, such as sacred

[208] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[209] Interviews with respondents 2,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[210] Interviews with respondents 2,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[211] Interviews with respondents 5,7 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[212] Interviews with respondents 2,5,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[213] Interviews with respondents 2,5 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April and 23 May 2019
[214] Interviews with respondents 4 and 8 conducted on 13 April and 23 May 2019
[215] Interviews with respondents 2,4 and 7 conducted on 8 April, 13 April and 1 May 2019
[216] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019

fires, sweat lodges, and giveaways[217]. Traditional teachings, such as the Seven Grandfather teachings, are also often invoked, sometimes through the use of the phrase "in a good way"[218]. Such use of Indigenous ceremony, respondents argue, strike a responsive chord with Indigenous audiences[219]. Furthermore, respondents mention that they invoke the role of women in Indigenous tradition and stories[220]. Women are construed as "sacred life-givers" that deserve the utmost protection[221]. Activist frames often build on this idea of sacred women and emphasize the role of women as "life-givers", i.e. through calling MMIWG mothers. Invoking Indigenous ideas on motherhood and the role of the woman in frames thus serves as a way to construct narrative fidelity among an Indigenous audience. Finally, activists invoke Indigenous ideas of communalism. Respondents stress the importance of women to communities and thus the loss of the community when a woman goes missing or is murdered[222]. It is also the responsibility of the community to do its best to protect these women[223]. One respondent gave the example of a man abusing a woman. She argued that the man's individual actions not only affected the woman and himself, but also the entire community. The man thus had the responsibility to change his actions for the good of the woman and the community[224]. Not only does the community have the responsibility to try and protect women, individuals themselves also have a responsibility to serve the community. Respondents often mention community in their frames and invoke this idea of communalism and individual responsibility to the community.

Other Factors in Constructing Resonance- On Space and Identity

There are two other factors that activists identified as influencing their considerations on the construction of resonance: space and identity. Although these factors are not a part of the resonance components, discussion of them is paramount. Previous chapters have shown that the locales in which activism takes place are significant. Activists select particular locations because it affects their relationship with their audience[225]. One might assume that a privileged "White" institution, such as a museum or parliament, results in a different audience

[217] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[218] Interviews with respondents 5,7 and 8 conducted on 17 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[219] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[220] Interviews with respondents 2,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[221] Interviews with respondents 2,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[222] Interviews with respondents 2,5,6,7 and 8 conducted on 8 April, 17 April, 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[223] Interviews with respondents 6,7 and 8 conducted on 22 April, 1 May and 23 May 2019
[224] Interview with respondent 8 conducted on 23 May 2019
[225] Interviews with respondents 2,4,5 and 6 conducted on 8 April, 13 April, 17 April, 22 April and 23 May 2019

than a gathering in a distinctly "Indigenous" space, such as Vanier. The reputations that different spaces have among different audiences also matters. The DTES, for example, is associated with prostitution, HIV and opioid crises, and homelessness, in the eyes of many White audiences[226]. Other audiences, such as an Indigenous audience, might instead associate the DTES with community, activism, and resistance[227]. Hence, activists' selection of particular spaces matter when trying to construct resonance among a particular audience. Indeed, shifts away from certain spaces, such as Parliament Hill, in favor of other spaces, such as Vanier, may signal a shift in audience[228]. This particular example points towards a focus on more resonance construction among an Indigenous audience, as this was argued by some to be lacking[229].

The importance of space has already been firmly established in the field of memory studies. Spaces are important to memory because memory leaves traces in them, they are memory materialized (Nora 1989, 12). Spaces are also important to memory because they are symbolic (Nora 1989, 19). Because memory is crucial in the construction of history (Nora 1989), spaces are also important in this meaning construction. The construction of memory is political because in collective memory it is stipulated what is important (Sontag 2003 qtd. in Sprenkels 2011). In other words, spaces are crucial in the political construction of meaning and thus bringing space into an analysis of framing proves fruitful.

The (collective) identity and beliefs of my respondents often informed decisions on how *not* to construct resonance[230]. One respondent who is non-Indigenous argued that although the use of Indigenous symbols and experiences might serve to convince an Indigenous audience more easily, she deliberately decided not to do this. The reason she stated for this is that she believed that as a non-Indigenous person trying to battle colonialism she could not "appropriate" such symbols and experiences[231]. Additionally, many respondents mentioned a particular reluctance to pander to audiences in particular ways[232]. They often mentioned the "White racist" who might be convinced by playing into negative stereotypes and ideas about Indigenous people[233]. However, because activists have a collective identity that builds on a belief of anti-racism, such framings were unlikely to be used. Not only does

[226] Interviews with respondents 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[227] Interviews with respondents 3 and 4 conducted on 4 April and 13 April 2019
[228] Interviews with respondents 4 and 5 conducted on 13 April and 17 April 2019
[229] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[230] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 7 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019
[231] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019
[232] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 7 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019
[233] Interviews with respondents 4,5 and 7 conducted on 13 April, 17 April and 1 May 2019

collective identity shape what is and is not selected, framings that clash with the *individual* identity of my respondents were also deliberately rejected and subdued. One respondent mentioned that sometimes her own beliefs did not align with the beliefs of her audience but that this did not necessarily matter too much as she thought it would be possible to find some overarching themes or common ground. "When they [norms and values] don't align with mine because they dehumanize me, we have a problem"[234]. In other words, when framings do not align, in a major way, with the identity of my respondents, they are not used no matter their potential to create resonance. Additionally, potential audience members were also deliberately excluded by some activists if they felt that that audience's beliefs clashed with their own. One respondent mentioned that if this was the case, those potential audience members "are cancelled"[235].

Other fields, such as that of identity politics, have already established the importance of identity in conflict. Identity politics scholars argue that identity is used by diverging groups in order to draw boundaries and inspire collective action (Fearon and Laitin 2000). These scholars also touch upon the importance of identity in discourse and argue that long-standing discourses on identity shape the "social scripts" of a society, i.e. they shape how members of particular groups are expected to act (Fearon and Laitin 2000, 89). One can easily connect this assertion to framing in the sense that social identity shapes the myths, stories, and values that are crucial for constructing narrative fidelity. Connecting identity to the construction of resonance is therefore very logical and may also provide important insights in the future.

All in all, the grassroots activists concerning MMIWG that I interviewed construct frame resonance in different ways depending on whether they try to mobilize a "White settler" or an Indigenous audience. Credibility weighs more heavily in resonance construction than salience when activists try to mobilize a "White settler" audience. The perception is that particularly empirical credibility and the credibility of the articulator are important ways in which to convince a White audience. Salience holds a less central position when trying to mobilize a White audience. Activists do try to create centrality through awareness raising and use universal human rights as a way to establish narrative fidelity. Interestingly, respondents argue that they sometimes actively try to undermine narrative fidelity as a way to make a point.

[234] Interview with respondent 5 conducted on 17 April 2019
[235] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019

Among an Indigenous audience, however, salience plays the leading role over credibility. Narrative fidelity features strongly, and experiential commensurability is seen as being important as well. When looking at credibility the credibility of the articulator is one of the more prominent features considered. The definition of what makes a "credible articulator" is different than it is for a "White settler" audience. The activists interviewed do not only consider the six resonance components when trying to construct resonance. Space influences the relationship with the audience and is thus an important variable in resonance construction. Additionally, the collective and individual identity of activists ensures that certain potentially resonant frames are deliberately not used because they clash with activists' (collective) identity.

Conclusion: MMIWG and The Balancing of Audiences

The existence of two key audiences emerged as a key observation during this project. Indigenous grassroots activists had to consider two audiences with different backgrounds, customs, and cultures. What does one tell these divergent audiences and which aspects does one consider in trying to be as convincing as possible? These questions became the guide to my research in the form of the research question:

How do Indigenous grassroots activists attempt or not attempt to construct frame resonance through their collective action frames on MMIWG in Canada from the 2016 announcement of a National Inquiry until present?

In order to answer this question I first defined the issue of MMIWG. It is a case of the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women and girls. The issue has existed since first contact but it has become more visible as a social issue since the early 90s and has since grown to become one of the key issues within Indigenous (feminist) activism. The victims are usually young Indigenous women throughout Canada. MMIWG has its roots in colonial policies that served to subjugate and devalue Indigenous women and girls. The ongoing effects of these policies are further aggravated by a lack of government response to cases of MMIWG and an overall lack of protections for Indigenous women and girls. Additionally, many Indigenous women and girls suffer from socioeconomic marginalization that not only amplifies their risk of being victimized but also prevents them from avoiding certain situations that might put them at risk.

These structural causes are highlighted in many of the frames activists use. According to the most prominent frames in my sample, structural issues, such as racism, sexism, and colonialism, are reflected and caused by a certain societal attitude towards Indigenous peoples. These societal attitudes are further cemented in many of Canada's institutions, such as the political system and education. Activist framing highlights the responsibility (and culpability) of the Canadian government and police forces as they bear the responsibility to protect Indigenous women and continuously fail to do so. Those that have profited (in)directly from the structural disadvantaged position of Indigenous peoples also bear responsibility, according to the sampled frames. In order to address the structural causes of MMIWG, education, awareness raising, the removal of stigma, and a remodeled National Inquiry are

posed as solutions. Activists also raise more protection and better housing as ways to directly address the number of MMIWG. Most strategies posed to address MMIWG posit that a grassroots approach and Indigenous-non-Indigenous partnerships are best. Most solutions require funding in some form. The call for funding and government action therefore features prominently in collective action frames. The call for a stop to violence and increased respect is also dominant. These calls are motivated through a language of human rights, common humanity, and responsibility.

The different frames were used to convince two distinct audiences: a “White settler” audience and an Indigenous audience. My respondents explained how they considered their audiences in their attempt to construct resonance. Among a “White settler” audience, considerations of credibility were seen as being paramount to construct resonance. The “credibility” component of the resonance equilibrium weighed more heavily than salience. Among the resonance components that make up credibility, empirical credibility was most important. When attempting to convince an Indigenous audience, on the other hand, the salience component of the resonance equilibrium weighed more heavily. Salience was thus considered to be more important among my respondents when trying to convince an Indigenous audience. The resonance components narrative fidelity and experiential commensurability were most prominently featured in my respondents’ considerations. Additionally, my research revealed that activists also consider their collective and individual identities in the choices on what framings not to use. The space in which activism takes place was another factor respondents took into account when constructing resonance.

The relevance of this research lies in multiple factors. Firstly, this research builds knowledge on Indigenous grassroots activism, a phenomenon that is relatively understudied. This work has also adds to Benford and Snow’s framing theory. This study introduces the effect of the interaction between SMO activists and their audience(s) on the considerations of frame resonance. I visualize this interaction by introducing the idea of the resonance equilibrium. This model has not only shown that in my particular case considerations differ across audiences, it has also highlighted that not all resonance components are equally important in the eyes of articulators. Thus, this research shows both the interaction between audience and articulator and the interaction between the different resonance components in the construction of frame resonance. Additionally, I have shown which strategies are used by my sample in order to construct frame resonance among their different audiences. My research further shows indications that are in line with VanWynberghe and Trumpy’s findings

that collective identity influences activists' considerations concerning resonance construction. I add to this that individual identity shapes choices on framing. I have also introduced the idea that space influences resonance construction in the case of grassroots activism concerning MMIWG. I thereby show that space may be necessary to consider in future studies on resonance construction.

The relevance of this work is not solely academic, however. The knowledge built on the considerations of my sample of grassroots activists may inform future activism. By revealing activists' considerations, they and others may learn from these considerations and choose to improve their activism. Indeed, some of my respondents mentioned that I had raised certain issues that they had not previously thought about in detail but were nonetheless important to consider[236]. A model such as the resonance equilibrium also serves to visualize the emphasis of activists in their resonance construction. Should activists find that their activism seems to be less effective than they may have hoped, they might be able to return to the resonance equilibrium and reconsider their focus.

When looking past this current research, I envision several avenues of future research. Collective identity and space emerged as factors that shaped resonance construction quite unexpectedly in the later stages of this research. Because of my current research focus, I have not been able to explore these factors to their full extent. Future studies that focus on the role that collective identity and space play in the construction of resonance may therefore prove valuable. This research also focusses on grassroots activists and their considerations in the construction of resonance. The considerations of large organizations with more funds may be entirely different and a study that delves into this might provide interesting results. Additionally, such a study could provide a comparison between grassroots and more "professional" activism. Given that my current research sample was relatively limited, follow-up research with more participants may further build on my exploratory results. Because of my current focus on resonance construction, my research does not go into the question of whether particular frames are actually resonant or not. Research that measures frame resonance can try to establish the success or failure of constructing resonance in particular ways among particular audiences. Finally, the issue of MMIWG is not solely a Canadian phenomenon. Indeed, in some of my interviews, the global nature of violence against

[236] Interviews with respondents 4, 7, 8

Indigenous women and girls was mentioned[237]. Hence, future studies might use similar methodologies when studying the issue of MMIWG in different locales.

One respondent mentioned that solutions or approaches to MMIWG should not be formulated without the involvement of Indigenous women. “Nothing about us, without us”[238]. In my interactions with Indigenous men and women, I found that we agreed that the same should go for research on Indigenous peoples. Another respondent told me that researchers and journalists could not write about her and other Indigenous activists without speaking to them. She argued that it is impossible to understand people without meeting them, seeing them, and really knowing who they are[239]. I agreed with her. Reading books and articles on MMIWG and MMIWG activism does not provide the same understanding that interacting with people in real life does. The mere words on paper do not do justice to the anger, frustration, hurt, but also resilience, humor, and strength of activists and family members. The black and white of writing leaves out the brilliant array of color that is MMIWG activism.

“You’re going to need a lot of time to do this,” one Elder told me. “I know. I also know that learning and research is never finished,” I replied. This research is just one step in the endless road that is research. Eons of knowledge production have merely scratched the surface of all the knowledge that is still waiting to be acquired. As long as there are people to wonder, there is research to be conducted. Learning is never done and does not have an end-point. “When you think you’ve arrived, you really haven’t”[240].

[237] Interviews with respondents 3,5,6,7
[238] Interview with respondent 3 conducted on 4 April 2019
[239] Conversation with respondent 2
[240] Interview with respondent 4 conducted on 13 April 2019

Appendix I

List of respondents:

Respondent #	Date	Affiliation	Format
1	March 7, 2019	NWAC, Worked on the National Inquiry	Email Interview
2	April 8, 2019	Family Member, FSIS	In-person Interview
3	April 4, 2019	Brock University, Testified for the National Inquiry, MMIWG Survivor	Skype Interview
4	April 13, 2019	Métis Nation of Ontario, FSIS	In-person Interview
5	April 17, 2019	FSIS, National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network, Family Member	In-person Interview
6	April 22, 2019	Independent Film Maker	Skype Interview
7	May 1, 2019	Shades of Our Sisters, FSIS, Family Member	Skype Interview
8	May 23, 2019	Family Member, (Former) NWAC	Skype Interview

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