

## **The Trouble With Triumph: Discourses of Governmentality in Mainstream Media Representations of Urban Youth**

JULIA E. JANES

*School of Social Work, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

BONNY IBHAWOH

*Department of History and Centre for Peace Studies, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada*

NARDA RAZACK

*School of Social Work, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

NATHAN GILBERT

*Laidlaw Foundation, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

*The Assets Coming Together for Youth project conducted a critical discourse analysis of mainstream media depictions of Jane-Finch to better understand the discursive strategies used to constitute urban youth. Although a substantive body of literature investigates the negative discourses, little analysis interrogates the nominally positive discourses deployed by mainstream media. The findings suggest that the sociopolitical significance of these nominally positive discourses may go uncontested and pose a challenge to communities advocating for policies to support urban youth development. These discourses are examined using governmentality theory to reveal how racialized narratives of individual triumph re/produce troubled communities.*

**KEYWORDS** *governmentality, critical discourse analysis, media, race, youth*

---

Address correspondence to Julia E. Janes, School of Social Work, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University, 1017 Kinsmen Building, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Canada. E-mail: julia.janes@nicenet.ca

In the era of “new” racism, racialized texts are maintained through discursive strategies different from those constituted under previous regimes. The new racism is described by Goldberg (2009) as a “regime of colourblindness” that leaves power differentials intact by erasing race (and the experiences of racialized individuals), while sustaining racism through more subtle but nevertheless insidious discourses and practices. This article inquires how mainstream media (MSM) deploy the “absent presence” of race discourse to marginalize Jane-Finch (JF) youth. JF is a lay designation for a cluster of neighborhoods in the northwest inner suburbs of the Greater Toronto Area. This community, particularly JF youth, has been represented in the MSM for several decades in very negative terms (Clarkson & Godfrey, 2005; Hall, 2008; Richardson, 2008). This inquiry is part of a research arm of a larger project, Assets Coming Together for Youth (ACT for Youth),<sup>1</sup> that asks how communities like JF can reframe public discourse to support positive youth development. The aim of this analysis is not to re-present dominant discourse but to present an analysis of the positive discursive strategies that will be useful to communities advocating for discursive and material transformation that support urban youth. A critical analysis of not only the negative frames of JF but also those that are nominally positive is a crucial resource with which to contest the oppressive representations, as well as to construct counter-frames that depict the complexity of JF. Without such an analysis, the positive media texts may be read as signaling a largely unproblematic, promising shift in mainstream media depictions of JF that may ultimately sustain the enduring structural inequalities that are the conditions of this community.

Specifically, this article begins with a critical reflection on doing discourse analysis to outline the particular dangers of analysis of violent texts. This is followed by a brief description of the case study’s neighborhood and a review of relevant literature to contextualize the analysis. The next section outlines the methodology and argues for the distinct value of using critical discourse analysis (CDA) and governmentality to deconstruct media texts with reference to the findings from the preliminary headline analysis. The governmentality framework is then deployed in a CDA of exemplar texts to propose the particular discursive strategies evident in local and national MSM to represent triumph and trouble. The final section of this article offers a discussion of the implications and limitations of the findings and concludes that nominally positive discourses of triumph pose unique troubles for urban youth, communities, and allied human service workers advocating for progressive policies and programs.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the larger project of Assets Coming Together for Youth, including the complete critical discourse analysis report, please see <http://www.yorku.ca/act>

## MITIGATING SPECTACLES AND THE REIFICATION OF RACE

This CDA did not uncover many good stories, that is, stories that depict the strengths of both individual youth and the JF community and those that did highlight youth triumph are frequently tethered to very negative frames. As Lamble (2008) warns, the retelling of violent narratives risks fetishizing violence while obscuring the socioeconomic structures that underlie these narratives and the lives of those represented in the text. Consequently, research that aims to contest negative discourse reproduces the symbolic violence uttered in the original texts. For example, in the naming of discursive trends such as associations between dirt and disorder with poverty, the analysis itself articulates the very frames it seeks to contest. Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2000) describe this challenge as one in which efforts to destabilize race theoretically and analytically re-present the racist texts that the analysis seeks to subvert. Simon, DiPaolantonio, and Clamen (2005) argue that the consumption of these violent spectacles should not leave the reader intact: that is, unaffected by the violence of the texts and unreflective as to its impact on the individuals and communities represented. The authors of this article are not left intact in the consumption or reproductions of these discourses of disadvantage and ask readers to similarly engage with this analysis.

Therefore, this CDA struggles with and against what Fine and colleagues (2000) refer to as the “spectacularization” that dominates media discourse but is also reproduced in its subsequent analysis. The spectacularization in this study is somewhat mitigated by focusing on the emergent positive discursive strategies, rather than on the more exclusively negative frames reported elsewhere, and by situating these frames in the sociopolitical conditions of disadvantage in which they unfold.

## CASE STUDY: THE JF COMMUNITY AND THE ASSETS COMING TOGETHER FOR YOUTH PROJECT

JF is an inner suburb in the northwest of the city of Toronto, the largest metropolitan area in Canada. The community is marked by high-density apartments that were developed in response to the affordable housing needs of newcomers settling in Canada after World War II. As early as the 1970s, the community was described by a national paper as having “an unusually high crime rate” and being on its way to being a “black ghetto” (Moon, 1979). Media coverage continued through the 1980s and 1990s to frame JF as a community “synonymous with trouble” (DiManno, 1986). Negative coverage of JF reached a peak in 2005, the so-called year of the gun, when a high number of shootings in the area provoked frames of guns, gangs, and drugs (Clarkson & Godfrey, 2005). These discursive frames, while not

without warrant, elide the complexity of multiple structural inequalities that confront JF. For example, according to the 2006 census, JF has the highest level of racialized groups and one of the lowest income rates in the city of Toronto (Wilson et al., 2011). Furthermore, these statistics, while suggestive of the racialized and socioeconomic challenges experienced by the community, fail to capture its vitality. The rarity of positive framing of urban youth is a gap that the ACT for Youth project seeks to fill.

ACT for Youth is a five-year community-engaged research project that brings together a multisector alliance of community stakeholders and an interdisciplinary network of researchers in a program of applied research and knowledge transfer using the JF community both as a site of collaboration and as a case study of the challenges facing marginalized urban youth. JF, though unique, shares many of the struggles of marginalized communities elsewhere, particularly those that struggle with racist and classist representations in the media, as well as in policies and practices of discrimination. ACT for Youth aims to articulate the research findings from JF in ways that are transferable to other communities seeking to challenge and change public discourse concerning urban youth. Youth in the JF community, like youth in other urban cities, have been the focus of extensive negative public discourse. ACT for Youth seeks to counter this trend by developing a comprehensive youth strategy that articulates how the JF community, as well as other urban communities, can reframe discourse and energize community assets to support positive youth development. To this end, the reframing discourse working group, composed of academics, community service professionals, students, and youth interns, determined that a critical analysis of current trends in media representation was required to provide a platform for further research and advocacy activities. The co-chairs, one academic and one community-based professional, provided guidance and reviewed each iteration of the CDA, including co-authoring this article.

The tether of positive to negative discourse was first proposed by a youth intern.<sup>2</sup> The first author then used a governmentality framework to explore the strategies used to articulate nominally positive discourse. This framework and the ensuing analysis were considered by the community members, academics, media actors, and policy makers during in-depth interviews<sup>3</sup> to inquire into how others understood the consumption and production of media depictions of JF. Although the findings from *The Trouble with Triumph* received considerable endorsement by community respondents, most conceded that the nominally positive frames were a welcome reprieve from the exclusively negative discourse. The response to the governmentality analysis was complex, with some community members

---

<sup>2</sup> Enoruwa Osagie, a youth intern, while working on an analysis of Web-based media, argued that even the alternative media did not positively frame JF without saturating the frame in negative discourse.

<sup>3</sup> The findings from these interviews will be reported elsewhere.

and collaborators advocating for more narratives of individual triumph and others noting the limits of these discourses and the need to situate them within advocacy for broader social change. This tension between acknowledging the benefits of discourses of triumph and addressing the ways these narratives might sustain structural inequalities led to the development of critical media literacy workshops and roundtables to enhance community and professional capacities for strategic communication.

## MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES AND YOUTH

Much of the extant literature concerning media representations of marginalized communities attends to its racist discourse (Fleras & Kunz, 2001; Galabuzi, 2006; Henry & Tator, 2002; McGregor, 2003; van Dijk, 1993a). Some examples of the ways in which this literature theorizes racist media discourse include: “othering” communities as being different from the privileged center (Michael-Luna, 2008; Teo, 2000; van Dijk, 1993a); deploying the discourse of “new” racism to re-inscribe race as cultural difference, erasing it altogether, or subsuming it into classist anti-poor language (Goldberg, 2009). This erasure of race is particularly significant in Canada where, as Fleras & Elliott (2007) argue, Canadians constitute themselves as a raceless society and, therefore, resist explicit inscriptions of race. Nelson and Nelson (2004) contend that the elimination of explicitly raced discourse not only erases racist acts but more significantly, institutional and structural racism. These neo-racist discursive strategies are also noted by American authors such as Kozol (2005) but may be more prominent in the Canadian nationalist imagination, where the discourse of tolerance for diversity is paramount.

These neo-racist discursive strategies are evident, even exacerbated, in the deficit-dominated literature on marginalized youth. Youth are most commonly constituted as problems and as threats to the morality and safety of dominant groups. This discourse is rationalized by an extensive literature articulating deviance through biological, psychological, and traditional sociological models (Atkins, 2007; Ellis, 2005; Ousy & Wilcox, 2005). However, a growing number of critical scholars (Jackman, 2002; Martson, 2004) have explored the construction of “deviance” from the perspective of class, race, and ethnicity. A key contribution of these theorists was to expand the discourse of violence beyond that of official state definitions of physical assault to include violent actions that are psychological, material, or social and that can be written or verbal (McMurtry & Curling, 2008). This expanded understanding of violence invites a reading of racialized MSM discourse as violence toward marginalized groups. Although a substantial literature explores positive paradigms of youth through such theoretical and conceptual frames as resilience (Meyer & Farrell, 1998), strengths (Damon, 2004), and assets

(Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Oman, Vesely, & Aspy, 2005), it remains largely tethered to contexts whereby positive attributes and conditions are identified—those that support youth in transcending their familial, community, and culture disadvantages. Evidently, the literature on MSM discourse concerning marginalized communities and youth very much bind youth to negative frames, even when positive discourses are overlaid. However, the tethering of nominally positive to negative discourse is not well theorized in the literature. This CDA seeks to address this gap by proposing a theoretical framework for the understanding of the operations of these nominally positive discourses.

## METHODOLOGY: CDA AND GOVERNMENTALITY THEORY

### CDA

Discourses can be used in everyday micro social practices or in macro contexts, whereby institutions seek power over the knowledge available to others and over what counts as the truth. CDA attends to both the micro practices of written texts and the macro contexts that inform these everyday practices. As Fairclough (2001) and others (McGregor, 2003; van Dijk, 1993b; Wodak, 2001) argue, CDA is explicitly aimed at uncovering dominant discourse encoded in texts so that others can apprehend how power is asserted through texts with material effects and, ultimately, use that knowledge to disrupt power relations through the production of counterdiscourse. Teo (2000) emphasizes the significance of the critical approach by highlighting that CDA is distinct from the descriptive and thematic foci of discourse analysis in that it attends to prejudice and power. Furthermore, both Fairclough and van Dijk argue that CDA is uniquely powerful in excavating the ways in which social inequalities are re produced and legitimated in mainstream media discourse.

Media texts are frequently used by critical discourse analysts to explore the discursive production of race (e.g., Adeyanju & Neverson, 2007; Fairclough, 2004, 2006; Teo, 2000; van Dijk, 1988). For example, Teo used CDA to explore racist ideologies and asymmetrical power discourse deployed in two Sydney newspapers to reveal the discursive marginalization of Vietnamese migrants. Adeyanju and Neverson used CDA to interrogate MSM coverage of a visiting Congolese woman so as to vividly capture how the Canadian media deployed diversity and immigration discourse as racial ideologies. As Smith (2007) explains, media texts are a significant target of analysis because of their central role in the production and reproduction of dominant discourse. Others, such as Valle and Torres (1995) and Fairclough (1992, 2004), have argued that media is uniquely positioned to exert control over discourse through its operation as a central institution of information production and, in the case of MSM, its relations to other dominant institutions, including the elite groups that monopolize Toronto's media outlets

(Edge, 2003; Miller, 1998). Valle and Torres suggest that one central operation of MSM is the presentation of existing relations of dominance as natural, while rendering the ideological underpinnings of the “facts” invisible. CDA aims to trouble this naturalization of dominant discourse so that communities like JF can contest MSM discourses of marginality. In summary, CDA offers a robust methodology for interrogating the MSM discourse concerning JF youth because it attends to power relationships, is frequently deployed to interrogate racialized discourse and extends beyond its description to question how and why particular discourses dominate.

This analysis draws on both Fairclough’s tridimensional model (2004) and van Dijk’s (1993b) principles for CDA. CDA conceptualizes discourse as a communicative event whereby texts, social practices, and structures are mutually constituted. Fairclough separates the communicative event into three dimensions: text (oral or written); discourse practice (the production and consumption of text); and sociocultural practice (the macro context in which the communicative event is embedded). This article attends to the dimensions of text and sociocultural practice. Discourse practice is outside of the scope of this article. In Fairclough’s terms, the communicative event under consideration is selected news articles from the Factiva database (<http://www.dowjones.com/factiva>) and the *Toronto Sun*’s News Research Centre. The search terms were *Jane-Finch* and *youth*, bound by the timeframe of January 1, 2008, to August 25, 2010. Only those articles issued by four major MSM outlets (the *Toronto Star*, the *Toronto Sun*, *The Globe and Mail*, and the *National Post*) were selected for analyses. These MSM were selected because of their large circulation and their representation of both local and national perspectives. The timeframe was selected to build on existing work (Hall, 2008; Richardson, 2008) as well as to capture the positive turn in media portrayals of JF suggested by the ACT for Youth community partners (S. Levesque, personal communication, March 10, 2010). The search terms and timeline produced 122 texts from Factiva and 82 texts from the *Toronto Sun* archives. Of these, 83 texts from Factiva and 65 from the *Toronto Sun* archives were selected for analysis.<sup>4</sup>

van Dijk (1988) has argued that the structure of news is hierarchical, with the most “important” information, what he refers to as *macro-semantics*, which summarize, define, and signal dominant discourse, presented first—in this case, the headlines. Therefore, a preliminary analysis of the 149 headlines was conducted to identify major discursive strategies and develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of full texts. As previously noted, in an effort to mitigate against the symbolic violence of reproducing the explicitly

---

<sup>4</sup> The remaining texts were eliminated from the analysis for the following reasons: duplication; tangential reference to JF youth; a genre other than a news article; or having been written for media outside of the four MSM sampled.

negative frames, as well as to extend the analysis in new directions, only analysis of the nominally positive frames is reported.

The preliminary headline analysis suggests that positive framing is most frequently articulated as individual triumph against a background of trouble. This tethering of the positive to the negative and the focus on individual improvement, while offering some reprieve from the purely negative headline frames, does not disrupt power relations or address the deep structural deficits that constitute the conditions of disadvantage in JF. Although the few headlines that do address structural deficit and stereotyping signal a potential shift in MSM, they remain soft, ambiguous, or saturated in negative frames.

### Governmentality

The theoretical framework of new racism is articulated in quite explicit terms in the negative framing of JF youth. However, the nominally positive frames of triumph are not so straightforward and require further theorizing. The discourses of individual triumph that prevail in the positive headlines are well aligned with governmentality theories. Although Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1996; Cronin, 1996) might also be useful in interrogating the re/production of dominant discourse in mainstream media and its naturalization of difference and disadvantage, the particularity of discourses of triumph articulate more clearly governmentality readings of the project of improvement. Governmentality analysis of discourses of individual triumph vividly capture how individual improvement operates as a technology of domination that subverts structural change and preserves systems of privilege (Cruikshank, 1999; Tait, 1993). While Bourdieu's symbolic violence can account for discourses of improvement, it does not address the project of improvement with the same specificity as governmentality.

Governmentality has been used by several scholars to explore the discursive production of risk and of "risky" youth (Kelly, 2000; Tait, 1993) and may be deployed to understand the production of triumphant youth. Furthermore, governmentality scholars (Dean & Hindness, 1998; Mitchell, 2010; Rabinow & Rose, 2003; Valverde, 2007) emphasize the productivity of governing from a distance by extra-state institutions such as the media, which play key roles in normalizing state-sanctioned behaviors and subjectivities. Therefore, governmentality offers an effective lens for exploring MSM's tethering of the positive discourses of improvement to negative frames of violence, disorder, and dysfunction. Governmentality also reveals the moral imperatives deployed in the positive headlines to produce (in)capable subjects and communities. It is argued, in the subsequent analysis, that the project of producing competent subjects performs the paradoxical but powerful discursive move of signifying both the moral goodness of the saviors and the moral deficits of its targets. In conclusion, the preliminary headline analysis established that governmentality offers a productive framework for



suggesting why positive discourses about triumph are troubling, whereas CDA reveals how particular discursive strategies re-inscribe relationships of power and privilege.

### CDA OF EXEMPLAR FULL TEXTS: THE TROUBLE WITH TRIUMPH

Seventeen MSM texts were selected for close analysis on the basis of their articulation of and complex deployment of nominally positive frames as well as their representation of each of the macro semantic strands identified in the headline analysis. These strands include sports, music, and educational improvements for JF youth. The following CDA interrogates nominally positive discourses of triumph as they articulate governmentality and the “new” racism.

#### Sports: Hoops and Hockey

Several authors have noted how sports articulate the new racism through the trope of hoops (Matheson, 2005; van Dijk, 1993a) in ways that both de-ethnicize but silently re-inscribe stereotypes. The discursive strategy of sports interventions to troubled youth are not located only in racialized spaces but also in the white spaces outside of the basketball court. Both hoops and hockey feature prominently in the discourse of sports improvement in the MSM texts to the effect of relocating disadvantage in individual bodies and then ameliorating it in other bodies that perform the project of improvement.

For example, a *National Post* article (Leong, 2008) begins with accolades:

This week, Junior Cadougan enters his senior year at a Texas high school as a star. The local American papers are writing about the U. S. universities trying to woo him after he made the top 100 at NBA camp and was the youngest person on Canada’s junior national team at 14. (para. 1)

Junior Cadougan is depicted triumphantly as a star who has made history. However, after this string of superlatives comes the *but*:

But Junior Cadougan grew up in the Jane-Finch corridor, considered one of Toronto’s toughest neighbourhoods, and early success on the basketball court brought him some unwanted attention as well. Some think his success is what singled him out during the 2005 “Summer of the Gun” in the city, prompting a gunman to walk up to his home and open fire, hitting his four-year-old brother, Shaquan, several times. (para. 2)

This discursive strategy suggests that not only is success more difficult to achieve in JF, but it can get you killed and, implicitly, by a member of

your own racialized community. The individual is discursively constituted as both triumphant and troubled, while the community is only troubled.

The article then goes on to trace the inevitableness of his basketball success evident from the time he was an infant:

On the fridge of the modest, two-story semi-detached home that Mrs. Cadougan rents, there is a picture of Junior Cadougan at seven months; he is squatting in his diapers, his palms facing the camera. “He’s already playing defence,” says his mother. (para. 7)

This historical tracing back to infancy signals that his skill is natural, thereby essentializing the primacy of sporting ability in racialized bodies. The text goes on to further embody racial disadvantage as traveling with racialized bodies, so that even JF youth who leave troubled communities transport trouble: “But even away, he was not immune to violence. In the fall of 2006, a teammate’s older brother was shot and wounded while leaving a Pittsburgh club” (para. 17). This phrase articulates several negative discursive threads, including contagion and pathology, which reiterates that violence is innate to racialized bodies. Although the reference is to violence against a teammate’s brother, it also suggests that Junior himself may perpetrate violence.

The article continues by outlining Junior’s response to a teammate’s experience of violence. Junior tells his friend, “You got to try to make the NBA for your brother. . . . That should make you work harder to be the best you can be” (para. 18). In this quote, restitution for violence is realized through improvement on the basketball court. This discourse dislocates violence from structural inequalities onto racialized and responsabilized bodies that can remedy violence through basketball achievement; onto communities where “young males succumb to gangs, drugs and violence” (para. 24); and onto mothers whose “young boys who’re doing the shooting . . . need love” (para. 26), which is presumed to be unavailable.

Responsibility is enacted not only on the court but also in the white spaces of the hockey rink. A *Toronto Star* article (Black, 2009) leads with the headline that states, “Students in danger of falling into drugs and gangs learn discipline, respect at the rink.” Risky bodies here are disciplined, in the Foucauldian sense of rehabilitation, by and through what the article explicitly refers to as a “white man’s sport”:

For these kids, hockey wasn’t even in their lexicon when they first stepped on the ice. For them it was a “white man’s sport.” Basketball was their passion. It mirrored what they saw around them. Black men on television played basketball; in their neighbourhood they played b-ball or maybe soccer. These kids knew nothing about hockey. And most of their parents couldn’t afford the steep fees and hefty equipment costs of the game. (para. 7)

The story follows Beenie, a disenfranchised kid from JF, who “may be lost to gangs, crime and drugs” (para. 3). Although basketball is racialized as their sport, it is not the site for learning respect and discipline. Instead, a sport that demands “steep financial resources,” albeit waved for now for a few exceptional racialized youth, is determined to be the site of salvation.

Beenie is described as troubled but recuperable:

Beenie is defiant. He is the one being wronged, he insists. His take-no-prisoners manner is in sharp contrast to his boyish looks—his doelike eyes, sweet smile and four-foot-something frame. But on the ice Beenie loses the hard-ass attitude. (para. 11)

The potential triumph of Beenie is tethered to the troubled community and troubling youth:

Many of the students, who are in Grades 6 to 8, come from troubled homes, without adequate supervision and financial resources. Some have no place to go after school. They panhandle at the Downsview subway station. It is a high-risk community, but also one of great potential. Subban doesn't sugar-coat the world these kids live in. Children come to school hungry. Some come with unexplained wads of money, porn on their cells. They are often absent without reason. Many are disengaged from their school work and uninterested. (para. 21)

The litany of disadvantage deploys discursive strategies of dysfunctional families, disorder, drugs, and moral panic to responsabilize the community and discipline youth. However, all of this individualized improvement is not enough to prevent the fall:

The hockey program is not a panacea, however. A couple of months ago, Beenie was suspended from school for three days for talking back to a supply teacher and pushing over a chair.

However, a week after his suspension Beenie seemed back on track, staying a half-hour extra after school to finish his project for a Grade 7 science fair. For Subban, that's a glimmer of hope. Still, by season's end, any improvement in Beenie was marginal. There was less disruptive behaviour, less absenteeism, but he remained a discipline problem. And he is still at great risk, Subban admits. (para. 32–33)

Presumably, Beenie has failed to internalize the hockey-hero values and to fully improve. This moralization of racialized bodies and communities by the white center is fully developed in this article and is fully realized in its ultimately declensionist narrative.

## Music: Beats and Opera

An article in *The Globe and Mail* (Lorinc, 2008) leads with a reference to turf wars turning into beats, which presupposes the presence of gangs and the amelioration of violence by music. The musical intervention deploys rap, which is closely associated in MSM with gang culture and therefore, re-inscribes racialized violence. The article begins by introducing young musicians who are improvising rap (note, not writing lyrics) on the Palisades, a boundary line and site of contestation between rival gangs in JF:

These young men are trying to mend the divided neighbourhood with a few thousand dollars worth of recording equipment, as well as an open invitation to area teens to drop in to this basement beneath a daycare on the property, and lay down a beat. The goal is to provide those youth who have left school but can't find work with a constructive alternative to the violence linked to gangs or drug dealing. (para. 6)

The music program in the basement of a Palisades apartment building is then contrasted with the public and commercial spaces available to middle-class kids:

Unlike middle-class neighbourhoods, where residents take backyards and rec rooms for granted, the Palisades has little to offer except a basketball court. Libraries, schools and community centres all charge for rooms, and malls don't like it when kids loiter. (para. 13)

This privatization of disadvantage signals what is not available to youth that live in high-density housing with limited civic commons and limited access to the shopping-mall culture of consumerism. Although access is tied to income, the erosion of public space is naturalized rather than linked to public policy and planning. Also, race is erased by class yet subtly re-inscribed through the invocation of the Palisades (gangs) and basketball. The final reference to the studio as a second home situates the improvement via music as one that replicates and recuperates the domestic space of home. As Roelvink and Craig (2006) have argued, domesticating spaces re-articulates and relocates institutional disadvantage in private, social domains.

A musical variant on the colonial trope of inculcating racialized youth into white practices and spaces, echoing the hockey trope, is that of the opera. An article written by Kristin Rushowy (2008a) discursively mixes up the musical improvement of opera training with the discourse of the good cop. The article begins with a testimony to the lack of culture and civility of the JF youth who are invited to improve through the production of an opera:

“I thought *Phantom of the Opera* was a real opera.”

“It’s over when the fat lady sings, or something like that?”

A week ago, that’s all they knew. But by yesterday, the group of 14 teens from at-risk neighbourhoods had not only written, but dramatized and performed their own opera with the help of Canadian Opera Company professionals—and police officers. (para. 4)

Although this joint venture claims to help kids from “troubled communities,” its primary agenda is clearly articulated in the following excerpt:

The Toronto Opera Program ran for two one-week sessions serving 40 kids ages 11 to 18, free. The project is the first of its kind for COC and ProAction Cops and Kids, which raises money for programs to promote positive relationships between officers and youth. (para. 8)

Nowhere in the text is a substantive outcome proposed for the youth who will be occupying, albeit only temporarily, the privileged white space of opera. Instead, the centrality of police and youth relations is the focus of the concluding statement by a youth participant: “‘They’re not mean like people say,’ said Ocean Aarons, 14, of the officers. ‘They’re fair’” (para. 18). In a peculiar, but peculiarly effective discursive move, the youth are constructed as opera competent and police compliant.

### Education: Domesticating Disadvantage and the Making of Dutiful Subjects

On close analysis, much of the negatively framed stories, such as the explosion of articles reporting on the shooting of Jordan Manners (Alphonso, Apple, & Gandhi, 2007; Richardson, 2008) and ensuing positively framed stories, for example, the mentorship and leadership programs initiated after Manner’s death (Allen, 2010; Rushowy, 2008b) are spatially located in JF high schools, which productively sutures the two framing strategies to education.

An example of the “benign” violence of the discourse on educational improvement is evident in an article written by Royson James (2010) of the *Toronto Star*, which marks kids attending an educational conference as being at risk and then leads with a description of the conference that centers on violence:

The morning session was punctuated by real, pointed and engaging testimonials—from gang bangers, boys who spent serious time in jail, including one who came within seconds of death by gunshot. (para. 3)

These testimonials are delivered by ex-gang members who “display the language facility and insight of a college graduate” (para. 7), which neatly

interlocks race with violence and constitutes educational interventions as key to stemming violence. Nowhere in this discursive production is there a reference to the ongoing institutional disadvantage experienced by youth, local schools, and the community at large. Instead, disadvantage is depoliticized and domesticated and remedied by “ensuring a ‘caring adult’ in each youth’s life” (para. 18). In this discursive turn, violence and poor academic outcomes are re-articulated as a private familial responsibility rather than a public concern.

Although educational interventions are targeted largely to non-parenting youth, there are several MSM texts that articulate the educational rehabilitation of teenage mothers. An article in the *Toronto Star* (Lu, 2008), for example, leads with a headline that describes an “empowered family” that is connecting with the Investing in Families Initiative. Through this program, the teen mother and her children, who live with deep poverty, are reconstituted: “‘I felt like a rich woman,’ she said. ‘My children had never experienced being on a soccer team’” (para. 8). Although there is no account of her deep poverty, it is, albeit indirectly, linked to an inadequate welfare system:

Last week, the city also began accepting applications for welfare online. The reduced paperwork frees up caseworkers to spend more of their time with clients, working on meeting needs from subsidized child care to help with writing a résumé or getting job training. (para. 12)

However, this discursive strand ambiguously suggests both more surveillance and less, in ways that do not actually disturb the severe shortfalls of income assistance, the feminization and racialization of poverty, or the paternalism that pervades social services. Furthermore, the fact that this “improved” single mother is “on her way to her goal of becoming a social worker” (para. 16) demonstrates how educational interventions re/constitute uncivilized and ungovernable subjects into civilizing and surveilling subjects.

#### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In conclusion, this CDA of MSM texts depicting JF youth during the period between January 1, 2008, and August 25, 2010, provides a reading of nominally positive discourse that is not well theorized in the literature. Very little has been written about the interlock of positive and negative frames in media texts or about how governmentality and racism are discursively reproduced by MSM through discourses about triumph. Although there is an extensive literature on the assignment of blame to disadvantaged bodies and communities, there is virtually no analysis of how individualized

stories of triumph reinscribe race, class, and other axes of social inequality, as well as bypass structural disadvantage and discrimination. This CDA contributes to the understanding of how these frames are discursively deployed and the governmentality theoretical framework offers insight into why these “positive” frames prevail. This analysis also provides evidence of the ascendance in MSM texts<sup>5</sup> and distinct examples of how these discursive strategies are constituted as individualized sports, music, and educational interventions. Furthermore, it has been proposed that these discursive strands are deployed to elide structural deficits and sustain relations of dominance. Although the few texts that do address structural deficit and discrimination signal a potential shift in MSM discursive production, careful analysis reveals that they remain soft, ambiguous, and tethered to negative frames. Without a methodology such as CDA that interrogates the sociopolitical context in which discursive strategies are re produced, these “positive” texts may be read as signaling a largely unproblematic, promising shift in MSM discourse. In contrast, a governmentality lens clearly elucidates the trouble with individual triumph discourse.

The implications of negative framing of marginalized youth and communities on program and policy development are fairly straightforward and have been addressed in the literature (Augustino & Every, 2007; Crewe & Fernando, 2006; van Dijk, 1988). However, the policy and program implications of the “positive” frames of individualized improvement remain undertheorized. The findings of this CDA suggest that positive discourse tends toward policies and programs aimed at individual rehabilitation to produce exceptional lives that, nevertheless, preserve institutional patterns of privilege and penalty. The policy implications of positive discourses concerning improvement require further exploration to determine the interlock between specific discursive strategies and policy and program development.<sup>6</sup>

ACT for Youth aims to mobilize these findings in a number of ways that seek to disrupt the dominant discourses that undermine positive youth development. The findings have been used to develop an interactive critical media literacy workshop for JF youth and to craft a communication strategy with and for the community so as to advocate for policies that not only produce exceptional opportunities for an exceptional few youth, but also attend to the deep policy shortfalls in income and housing assistance and in employment and educational supports. Additionally, several media roundtables will be held with prominent media stakeholders and journalism students to highlight how even “positive” media texts can undermine

<sup>5</sup> Individualized improvement frames are evident in 23 of the 65 *Toronto Sun* and 30 of the 83 Factiva headlines. The subject categorization of the Factiva database evidenced a doubling of texts classified as education in the period between 2008 and 2010 compared to that of the earlier period of 2005 through 2007, where crime/violence were the dominant categories of media texts.

<sup>6</sup> An interpretative policy analysis by ACT for Youth is under way; it seeks to explore the policy/discourse nexus.

the development of progressive policies and programs. The findings of this CDA and the knowledge-mobilization activities undertaken by ACT for Youth suggest that savvy communication strategies and critical media analysis is a crucial, yet not well developed, skill for progressive human service professionals. As Forte (2002) argues, allied social and health care workers should offer “intelligent social reconstructions” (p. 153) using discursive and rhetorical strategies that mediate between contesting claims and claim makers. Likewise, Curry-Stevens (2012) contends that building advocacy efficacy through strategic persuasive communication is a critical practice that has been largely neglected by social care professionals. Research such as this CDA offers a foundation for human services workers who wish to productively talk back to dominant discourse and talk forward toward progressive social change.

This CDA is not without its limitations, including the absence of the visual images that accompany these MSM texts; under-theorized sites, such as the interlock of the discursive production of race, gender, and class; and the methodological and theoretical challenges of excavating counter-discourses and other acts of resistance. Although a rationale has been proposed for the why of nominally positive discourse, it may lack empirical vigor. The subsequent analysis of interviews with key community, political, media, and academic actors will provide more robust proposals about why these discourses prevail as well as how they are produced, contested, and experienced in the everyday lives of JF youth.

A theoretically dense CDA was not the objective of this research arm, which instead requires a productive basis from which to reframe discourse so as to support transformative policies, programs, and funding envelopes to support urban youth. That said, a CDA remains a largely academic activity and may be less accessible and even alienating to the very communities that are the subjects of the MSM analysis. Consequently, in addition to the previously mentioned media workshops and roundtables, ACT for Youth will disseminate a brief research summary that outlines the findings of this CDA in plain language and suggests how they might be used to promote more progressive policy and program responses.

Although van Dijk (1993b) acknowledges the importance of an analysis of resistant discourse, he suggests that CDA typically attends to the top-down discursive strategies of dominant discourse. This methodological and theoretical bias may be ill suited to the analyses of counter-discourse. Furthermore, governmentality theory, with its focus on deconstruction and de-centering the subject, may erase the discourses of resistance that this project and this community seek. To mediate against this limitation, the reflexive model proposed by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009), which layers multiple analytic strategies, might be used in future research not only to identify the fallibility of dominant discourses in MSM texts but also to reveal discourses of resistance.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the ACT for Youth youth interns, Asim Aziz and Enoruwa Osagie, for their support to the Reframing Discourse working group. We also thank Uzo Anucha and Tka Pinnock for their encouragement and advice.

## FUNDING

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Community-University Research Alliances [833-2008-1010].

## REFERENCES

- Adeyanju, C., & Neverson, N. (2007). "There will be a next time": Media discourse about an "apocalyptic" vision of immigration, racial diversity, and health risks. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 39, 79–105.
- Allen, K. (2010, June 19). How a school shooting shaped a breeding ground for success; when a 15-year-old was gunned down at his Toronto high school, there was a climate of disorder. Three years later, mentoring programs, a leadership camp and a musical production have helped establish a sea change. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A3.
- Alphonso, C., Appleby, T., & Gandhi, U. (2007, May 24). Teen shot dead in Toronto school; Fight outside North York high school spilled over as gunman followed Grade 9 student up to second floor. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A1.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. London, UK: Sage.
- Atkins, R. (2007). The association of personality type in childhood with violence in adolescence. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 30, 308–319.
- Augustino, M., & Every, D. (2007). The language of "race" and prejudice; a discourse of denial, reason and liberal-practical politics. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26, 123–141.
- Black, D. (2009, March 21). Scoring pride at Jane-Finch; Middle-school students in danger of falling into drugs and gangs learn discipline, respect at the rink. *Toronto Star*, p. GTO5.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). Language, gender and symbolic violence. In P. Bourdieu & L. J. D. Wacquant (Eds.), *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (pp. 140–169). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Clarkson, B., & Godfrey, T. (2005, September 11). Life and death in Jane-Finch. *The Toronto Sun*, p. 31.
- Crewe, E., & Fernando, P. (2006). The elephant in the room: Racism in representations, relationships and rituals. *Progress in Development Studies* 6, 40–54.
- Cronin, C. (1996). Bourdieu and Foucault on power and modernity. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 2(6), 55–85.

- Cruikshank, B. (1999) *The will to empower: Democratic citizens and other subjects*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Curry-Stevens, A. (2012). Persuasion: Infusing advocacy practice with insights from anti-oppression practice. *Journal of Social Work*, 12, 345–363. doi:10.1177/1468017310387252
- Damon, W. (2004). What is positive youth development? *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591, 13–24.
- Dean, M., & Hindness, B. (1998). Introduction: Government, liberalism, society. In M. Dean & B. Hindness (Eds.), *Governing Australia: Studies in contemporary rationalities of government* (pp. 1–19). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- DiManno, R. (1986, November 30). Jane-Finch: Perceptions & realities. *Toronto Star*, p. F1.
- Edge, M. (2003). The good, the bad, and the ugly: Financial markets and the demise of Canada's Southam newspapers. *International Journal on Media Management*, 5, 227–236.
- Ellis, L. (2005). Theory explaining the biological correlates of criminality. *European Journal of Criminology*, 2, 287–314.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Intertextuality in critical discourse analysis. *Linguistics and Education*, 4, 269–293.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). The dialectics of discourse. *Textus*, 16, 231–242.
- Fairclough, N. (2004). Critical analysis of media discourse. In P. Marris & S. Thornham (Eds.), *Media studies: A reader* (pp. 308–329). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Fine, M., Weis, L., Weseen, S., & Wong, L. (2000). For whom? Qualitative research, representations and social responsibilities. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 107–132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fleras, A., & Elliott, J. L. (2007). *Unequal relations: An introduction to race, ethnic, and aboriginal dynamics in Canada* (5th ed.). Toronto, Canada: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Fleras, A., & Kunz, J. L. (2001). *Media and minorities: Representing diversity in multicultural Canada*. Toronto, Canada: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Forte, J. (2002). Not in my social world: A cultural analysis of media representations, contested spaces and sympathy for the homeless. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 29(4), 131–159.
- Galabuzi, G.-E. (2006). *Canada's economic apartheid: the social exclusion of racialized groups in the new century*. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholar's Press.
- Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. (2002). New terrain in youth development: The promise of a social justice approach. *Social Justice* 29(4), 82–95.
- Goldberg, D. (2009). *The threat of race*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hall, H. (2008). *Jane-Finch: A critical discourse analysis of print media discourse on a Toronto low income community* (Unpublished master's thesis). York University, Toronto, Canada.
- Henry, F., & Tator, C. (2002). *Discourses of domination: Racial bias in the Canadian-English-language press*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Jackman, M. R. (2002). Violence in social life. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 387–415.

- James, R. (2010, May 20). Reaching out to kids at risk, one by one. *Toronto Star*, p. GT2.
- Kelly, P. (2000). The dangerousness of youth-at-risk: The possibilities of surveillance and intervention in uncertain times. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23, 463–476. doi:10.1006/jado.2000.0331
- Kozol, J. (2005, September). Still separate, still unequal. *Harper's*, 41–54.
- Lamble, S. (2008). Retelling racialized violence, remaking white innocence: The politics of interlocking oppressions in transgender day of remembrance. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 5, 24–42.
- Leong, M. (2008, September 3). Living out a hoop dream; Young basketball star who fled a violent Toronto neighbourhood thrives in U.S. *National Post*, p. A3.
- Lorinc, J. (2008, May 24). Turning turf wars into beats. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A11.
- Lu, V. (2008, November 17). City program “empowered” family; Investing in families initiative connected single mom, children with host of services. *The Toronto Star*, p. A08.
- Martson, G. (2004). *The place of critical discourse analysis in policy studies: Social policy and discourse analysis*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Matheson, D. (2005). Racism as social cognition in sports commentary. In D. Matheson (Ed.), *Media discourses: Analysing texts* (pp. 137–156). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- McGregor, S. (2003). Critical science approach: A primer. Retrieved from [http://www.kon.org/cfp/critical\\_science\\_primer.pdf](http://www.kon.org/cfp/critical_science_primer.pdf)
- McMurtry, R., & Curling, A. (2008). *The review of the roots of violence*. Toronto, Canada: Queens Printer for Ontario.
- Meyer, A. & Farrell, A. (1998). Social skills training to promote resilience in urban sixth-grade students: One product of an action research strategy to prevent youth violence in high-risk environments. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 21, 461–488.
- Michael-Luna, S. (2008). Todos somos blancos/We are all white: Constructing racial identities through texts. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 7, 272–293.
- Miller, J. (1998). *Yesterday's news: Why Canada's daily newspapers are failing us*. Halifax, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- Mitchell, K. (2010). Ungoverned space: Global security and the geopolitics of broken windows. *Political Geography*, 29, 289–297. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2010.03.004
- Moon, P. (1979, June 4). North York plaza like a ravaged section of New York. *The Globe and Mail*, p. 4.
- Nelson, C. A., & Nelson, C. A. (Eds.). (2004). *Racism, eh? A critical inter-disciplinary anthology of race and racism in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: Captus Press.
- Oman, R. F., Vesely, S. K., & Aspy, C. B. (2005). Youth assets, aggression, and delinquency within the context of family structure. *American Journal of Health Behaviour*, 29, 557–568.
- Ousey, G. C., & Wilcox, P. (2005). Subcultural values and violent delinquency: A multilevel analysis in middle schools. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 3, 3–22.
- Rabinow, P., & Rose, N. (Eds.). (2003). *The essential Foucault*. New York, NY: The New Press.

- Richardson, C. (2008). *"Canada's toughest neighbourhood": Surveillance, myth and orientalism in Jane-Finch* (Unpublished master's thesis). York University, Toronto, Canada.
- Rushowy, K. (2008a, August 9). Opera not over until this score of teens sings: Unlikely cast of kids develops and stages opus, after coaching from police and pros. *The Toronto Star*, p. A12.
- Rushowy, K. (2008b, November 13). School safety plans ignored, union charges; 'No evidence' metal detectors improve safety, Wynne argues. *The Toronto Star*, p. A01.
- Simon, R., DiPaolantonio, M., & Clamen, M. (2005). Remembrance as praxis and the ethics of the inter-human. In R. Simon (Ed.), *The touch of the past: Remembrance, learning and ethics* (pp. 132–155). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tait, G. (1993). Youth, personhood and "practices of the self": Some new directions for youth research. *Journal of Sociology*, 29, 40–54. doi:10.1177/144078339302900103
- Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the news: A critical discourse analysis of news reporting in two Australian newspapers. *Discourse and Society*, 11, 7–49.
- Valle, V., & Torres, R. (1995). The idea of mestizaje and the "race" problematic: Racialized media discourse in a post-Fordist landscape. In A. Darder (Ed.), *Culture and difference: critical perspectives on the bicultural experience in the United States* (pp. 139–153). Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing.
- Valverde, M. (2007). Genealogies of European states: Foucauldian reflections. *Economy and Society*, 36, 159–178.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1988). The interdisciplinary study of news as discourse. In K. Jensen & N. Jankowski (Eds.), *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research* (pp. 108–120). Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993a). *Elite discourse and racism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993b). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 4, 249–283.
- Wilson, R. M., Landolt, P., Shakya, Y. B., Galabuzi, G.-E., Zahoorunissa, Z., Pham, D., . . . Joly, M.-P. (2011). *Working rough, living poor: Employment and income insecurities faced by racialized groups in the Black Creek area and their impact on health*. Toronto, Canada: Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services.
- Wodak, R. (2001). Preface. *Folia Linguistica*, 35, 1–10.