A Critical Discourse Analysis of the media portrayal of Melania Trump as First Lady

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Abstract
Title: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the media portrayal of Melania Trump as First Lady

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Aim: To examine how the New York Times portrays Melania Trump in her role as First Lady.

Methodology: A qualitative discourse analysis of newspaper articles from the New York Time’s online publication. The main theoretical and methodological foundation is Fairclough’s concept of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Yvonne Hirdman’s theories about gender system and gender contract.

Main results: The main results of the analysis is that Melania Trump is depicted as absent, non-traditional, irresponsible, unhappy, greedy, non-supportive, illiterate, that she is mimicking other First Ladies, responsible for her husband’s actions, that she prioritizes motherhood over the First Lady role, and that she is compared to other women in a negative light.

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Introduction

This study is a critical discourse analysis of how Melania Trump is portrayed as First Lady in the New York Times. The office, role and traditions of the First Lady has existed over a long period of time and has been in focus in cultural debates about women, gender and political power for decades (Borelli, 2002, p. 335). Earlier studies have shown that First Ladies are viewed as “symbols of American Womanhood” (Wertheimer, 2004). The First Lady role has traditionally been considered “woman’s role”, but in the presidential election of 2016 between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton the roles could have been reversed for the first time in American history. Much of the media attention on Melania Trump has so far tended to be negative, for example during the Republican National Convention in 2016 when she was accused of plagiarizing Michelle Obama’s speech from the Democratic National Convention in 2008. In light of the “traditional” nature of the First Lady role, and Melania Trump’s background (she is the first First Lady in modern times to be born outside of the United States second only to Louisa Adams (1825-1829)), it is interesting to investigate how Melania Trump is depicted in an influential American newspaper. According to T.A van Dijk (2002, p. 110) the media has the power to impute ideologies into the consciousness of the public; our political and social knowledge and beliefs about the world emanate from the dozens of news reports that we are exposed to on a daily basis. This highlights a relevance of examining discourses in newspapers.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine how the New York Times portrays Melania Trump in her role as First Lady, through a Critical Discourse Analysis of a number of newspaper articles.

The main question at issue is: *How is Melania Trump portrayed by the New York Times in her role as First Lady?* This main question is illuminated through two sub-questions: *Are there any evidently repeated depictions of Melania Trump in her role as First Lady? How is the reader meant to interpret the content?*
Gender System and Gender Contract

The historian Yvonne Hirdman (1990, p. 76) is the author of a city council preparation for the Swedish Government’s Official Investigations in 1990 about what she refers to as gender system theories. Hirdman states that there has been attempts within gender studies to develop new approaches to anticipate gender roles from a new perspective. She continues by stating that gender theories strive to create a category, or a ‘school of thought’ within a similar status like class, nationality and race. Gender is according to Hirdman (ibid, p. 76) a concept that strives for a qualitative leap away from the conventional explanations of gender towards more intrusive attempts to understand the obvious (as well as subtle) power relations that exists between men and women and the reproduction of women’s subordination. Further she states that gender is also a concept that does not stand for a single definition, more a concept that can be useful as a guideline in understanding the complex problematics.

Hirdman (1990, pp. 78) presents the concept gender contract which is explained through the conventional division between the two categories Man and Woman. This has, according to Hirdman, created a gender order that forces men and women into different rationalities, on a social-, cultural- and economic aspect. Further Hirdman claims that a way of systematizing these different rationalities is to theorize it in terms of gender contract. Contract is to be understood as an invisible relation and a cultural heritage in terms of ‘agreement’ that enforces a constraint between these two units. The concept of gender contract (ibid, p. 78) is further to be understood as a simple term for a complicated reality that can be used to distinguish and analyze the perception between men and women and the ideas and conception, informal and formal rules/codes and norms that are generated through the positioning of men and women, their duties and characteristics in a society.

Hirdman (Ibid, p. 78) claims that there are three levels of abstraction regarding gender contract. The first level is the abstract and philosophical gender contract on a metaphysical and philosophical level, which she names archaic gender contract. Hirdman explains this through archetypical, mythical, religious and scientific conceptions of Man and Woman, like for instance through Aristoteles and the Bible’s Adam and Eve. The second level is more concrete and is related to work, politics and culture, in other words a social institutional level of gender contract. This concept can be used to draw out the more obvious facts about the gender formed
conceptions and situations. The third level is the *individual* gender contract which focuses on the contract of relationships between couples. The second and third level includes aspects of class structures, the construction of family situations and age that shapes the gender contract on level of diversity. Despite the diversity, Hirdman (Ibid, p. 78-79) states that the gender order and their contracts creates a social pattern that is visible in each society, a pattern she chooses to call gender system, distinguished by two laws or logics. The *separation* of gender, and the *primacy* of the male norm. Further Hirdman points out that the male dominance in societies has implemented norms, and in some cases physical laws, that further separates men from women and that these norms are created through the perception of men. She exemplifies through the domination of women in earlier male dominated work that has resulted in lower- wages and status, and vice versa whereas earlier women dominated work have been taken over by men while the salaries on the contrary have increased. In relation to the purpose of this study, the awareness of gender inequalities is important in order to examine the phenomena of the First Lady role.
First Lady Research

Existing research on first ladies has been conducted through various methodologies, for instance analysis of autobiographies, discourse analysis of media portrayals, content analysis of media portrayals etc. Many of these scholars focus on the role, including how it relates to gender. In this chapter I will present previous studies of First Ladies that I find are of interest to this study.

Analysis of First Lady Autobiographies and Oral Histories

In her article *Telling it Slant: Gender Roles, Power, and Narrative Style in First Ladies’ Autobiographies*, Mary Anne Borelli (2002) examine autobiographies by Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush. Borelli focuses on their White House years and the narrative descriptions of their first lady roles, which she analyses in gender terms. Borelli presents these roles as: *the nation’s hostess, public symbol, presidential protector* and *political partner* (p. 355). Further Borelli states that each of the first ladies’ gender-based roles blur the distinction between the public- and private sphere; the gender-based roles present their own challenge to traditional conceptions of women, meaning that their actions challenge both gender roles and underlying gender ideologies. Borelli claims that the office and role of the first lady has been in focus in cultural debates about women, gender and political power for decades. First ladies are considered executives responsible for a unit within the White House Office, but their authority as staff members of the White House has never been solidly established (Guy, Wasserman, 1995. Referred to in Borelli. 2002, p. 355). Borelli (2002, p. 355) observes that constant criticism has been directed at first ladies, as a consequence of ideological debates between conservatives and liberals over the nature of the first lady role. Borelli (ibid. p. 355) identifies two consistent narrative styles in her analysis of the autobiographers: a predominant “slant” (persuasive) narrative style, and a “direct” (argumentative) narrative style mainly reserved for counter criticisms. Borelli concludes that the “slant” narrative was used when the first lady’s role had not been criticized, and when the first lady had been criticized for her role performance, the “direct” narrative style was used (ibid. p. 368). In other words, this study shows that the public’ perception has been important for these previous First Ladies in relation to how they present or talk about themselves.
Ewa Maj (2015) examines the recorded oral histories from Jaqueline Kennedy in *Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy* (2011) and with Lady Bird Johnson in *An Oral History* (2012). Maj (ibid, p. 175) describes these two First Ladies as successful women who both influenced, and were influenced by the political careers of their husbands. According to Maj, the analysis of oral histories reveals that Lyndon Johnson and John F. Kennedy were the first Presidents of the American nation to get recognized for their personal virtues, but more interesting in the context of this study, were also influenced by their wives who made a powerful impact on their careers by receiving unfailing support from their wives. Further, Maj demonstrates how Lady Bird Johnson and Jacqueline Kennedy stressed that they were “only” their husbands’ wives, even though, as Maj points out, both first ladies played a crucial political and diplomatic role by supporting their husbands’ emotional and physical well-being and by promoting positive images of their husbands after their deaths (ibid. p. 175). My interpretation is that these First Ladies publicly played a traditional supporting wife role, which may have led to highly political implications. The role that these two First Ladies played might have set an imprint for the publics’ expectation of how a First Lady should act. These expectations might still be visual in today’s society.

**Analysis of the role of First Ladies**

In his article *Role constraints and First Ladies*, Gary D. Wekkin (2000) analyses the various roles First Ladies have adopted and the constraints they have faced. Wekkin concludes that for a First Lady, being a hostess is no longer enough. A First Lady must demonstrate social concern for the public and their fellow Americans in order to compete. Wekkin (p. 608) claims that the First Ladyship is an institution where the perception of how the role should be played has become a paradox. Wekkin states that: “None of these roles are prescribed for, or specifically prohibited to, the first ladyship by constitutional law” (p. 608). Further, Wekkin claims since the position of first ladyship is lacking constitutional footing he suggests that the first ladyship is best described as an American “institution”, rather than an office, comprised of understandings and conventions subscribed to by a range of critical audiences that embrace the American polity. Wekkin illustrates the American polity as the president, the “courtiers” of the White House Staff and the “barons” of the Cabinet who share regime with the president in a plural executive system, the congress, and lastly the news media who maintain the order by embracing the “Washington Community”. Wekkin also include the attentive portion of the sovereign public that follow politics and the government in Washington (p. 608). Wekkin
concludes that certain roles of First Ladies are more likely than others to attract elite or popular supports, meaning in other words that the ones that follow the traditional order are more likely to gain support than others who founder against the traditional order. This shows that media play an essential role in their depictions of First Ladies due to its impact on the public’s expectations.

Analysis of First Ladies and the Media

Tiffany J. Shoop (2010) performed a content analysis of 151 US newspaper articles that covered Michelle Obama and Cindy McCain during the presidential election in 2008. The articles studied were from the New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal. The aim of the study was to examine the common themes in the articles relating to the two potential first ladies. The major finding was that articles relating to both Obama and McCain contained references to controversies. In her content analysis Shoop raises the question of whether increased coverage of controversies is a price to pay for what she calls “having it all”, both professionally and personally, as a presidential candidate’s spouse (Shoop, 2010, p. 807). Shoop (p. 816-817) observes that these controversies range from the release of Cindy McCain’s tax returns to her former addiction to pain killers and from Michelle Obama’s statement about being proud of her country to Media’s reaction after an on stage fist bump (which is a gesture similar to a handshake or high five) with her husband, Barrack. Shoop (p. 817) states that the newspapers also focused a lot on their personal lives, using traits associated with professionalism and family orientation, and by focusing on their careers, children and individual qualities. The focus on Cindy McCain was mainly about her family business and wealth, whilst Michelle Obama’s South Side background and race were in focus.

Terri Finneman and Ryan J. Thomas (2014) conducted a discourse analysis on the New York Times’s coverage of a previous First Lady, Grace Coolidge, in the 1920’s. The study draws on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “conjuncture”. According to Finneman and Thomas (p. 222) Gramsci defined “conjuncture” as a period of deep crisis in which ‘incurable’ structural contradictions are revealed. During such a period, political forces struggle to conserve and defend the existing order and social structure. The authors further clarify that conjuncture is a term for a period of time, or era, when the existing order is ruptured and that it is characterized by struggle between the old and new. They are, in other words, referring to a struggle over the ability to shape meaning. According to Finneman and Thomas the role of First Lady is “one of
permanent conjuncture”, meaning that it is characterized by a struggle between tradition and modernity. Further the authors argue that it is problematic to represent a First Lady as an idealized figure of American womanhood, “particularly in the midst of destabilizing gender roles” (p. 220). In order to understand the idealized figure of American womanhood the authors draw on Wertheimer’s observation that first ladies are viewed as “Symbols of American Womanhood” (Wertheimer, 2004, referred to in Finneman, Thomas, 2014, p. 221). Finneman and Thomas extend to Wertheimer’s observation by explaining that symbols are socially constructed. Therefore, scholars need to examine the construction and nature of the discourses at work. The public’s perception of a First Lady and her office is filtered through how the media represents the role. During Grace Coolidge’s period as First Lady (1923-1929) the mass media was expanding and the public became aware and acquainted with her through the hundreds of pictures, articles and newsreels that she appeared in (Edwards, 2004, p. 151, referred to in Finneman, Thomas, 2014, p. 221). Finneman and Thomas (p. 221) points out that it is important to understand and analyze how the press presented the archetypical American woman at a time when the definition of American womanhood was in conjuncture; They identify a struggle between those who wanted to conserve and protect the traditional order and those who wanted to change the old order.

Lisa M. Burns (2004, p. 216-217) notes in her dissertation *First Ladies as Political Women: Press Framing of Presidential Wives, 1900–2001* that journalists embodied Hillary Clinton as a “feminist superwoman”, where she personified the working mother who has it all, and does it all, and represented “professional women” of the baby boom generation. The New York Times wrote that Hillary Clinton symbolized the strong, independent woman of modern times. Another reporter from the New York Times highlighted that Clinton was positioned as “an emblem of the modern women’s movement,” which, according to the author, threatened conservatives by her professionalism, feminist views and financial independence. Burns (ibid, p. 217) states that Clinton’s un-traditional views generated an “alternative” ideology, “the new traditionalist,” that countered the ideal of the feminist superwoman. Burns continues by writing that the new traditionalism was used by journalists and conservatives as a framing device in order to embrace the Cold War domestic ideal, and thereby rejected Hillary Clinton and the second-wave feminism.
Discourse Analysis as Theory and Methodology

Norman Fairclough (2010, p. 5) claims that critical discourse analysis (CDA) should be transdisciplinary in its analysis, which will be discussed later on in this text. Fairclough also states that he prefers to use ‘methodology’ rather than “method”, because he views analysis as not only a selection and application of pre-established methods (in which he includes methods of textual analysis), but also as a theory-driven process that includes constructing objects of research for research topics. It is not just theories of discourse, it is also other relevant theories. This is a sociological study, but theories from linguistics will be borrowed in order to analyze the newspaper articles. My two main starting points are the methodology of CDA and Yvonne Hirdman’s theories about gender system and gender contract.

Basics of Discourse as a Concept

The philosopher Michel Foucault is a key figure in discourse analysis (1977, referred in Bryman, 2008, p. 474). According to Bryman, Foucault viewed ‘discourse’ as an expression designating how a certain set of linguistic categories is related to an object and how our way of describing this object affects how we understand or interpret it. Discourse creates a version of the object, and in addition, the version of an object will establish, or constitute it. Foucault has however, according to Marian Winther-Jørgensen and Louise Philips (2000, p. 19), been criticized for working within a male perspective, excluding gender issues in his theories. Further, Winther-Jørgensen and Philips refer to the Foucault’s term monologism, indicating that Foucault only identified one knowledge regime in each historical era. According to Winter-Jørgensen and Philips, today’s discourse theorists agree that several discourses exist in parallel, often conflicting with each other. In addition to Foucault’s discourse concept Winther-Jørgensen and Philips (ibid, p. 7) argue that there are many definitions of what a discourse is and what it means, though they simplify the concept as a way of speaking about, and understanding the world. They further describe that discourse relates to how language creates patterns and structures that underlie how we act within different social spheres. Discourse analysis is the tool of analyzing these patterns.
Three types of Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis can vary in form. Winther-Jørgensen and Philips (2000, p. 13-14) highlight three main focuses of discourse analysis; discourse theory, discourse psychology and critical discourse analysis. The authors suggest that a researcher can combine these three approaches and create his/her own version of a critical discourse analysis.

Discourse theory by Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe is a post-structural theory that focuses on understanding the social world through discursive constructs. The starting point of discourse theory is the post-structural idea that social phenomena are not fixed or congenital. Meaning cannot be definitely fixed, which leads to constant conflict about definitions of society and identity. The keyword of discourse theory is discursive struggle, which means that multiple discourses exists in parallel and “struggle” to achieve hegemony (ibid, p. 13). In other words, the predominance of a certain point of view about the social world. The aim of the discourse analyst is to study this strive to establish unambiguousness in the social world. Winther-Jørgensen and Philips point out that Laclau and Mouffe’s texts are mainly focused on theory development, which they claim does not give any practical tools for textual discourse analysis (ibid, p. 13-14).

Discourse psychology is a social constructive approach developed within social psychology as a critique of cognitivism. In the cognitive approach, there is a perception that language is a reflection of the outer world or a product of underlying mental representations of the world. (ibid, p. 97). Discourse psychology focuses on individuals’ active parlance, in contrast to discourse theory that assumes that texts and parlance are constructions of the world that are oriented towards social actions (ibid, p. 14).

Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Norman Fairclough (2010, pp. 6-7) implies that CDA includes analysis of text and the methodology might differ depending on research topic. The selection of methods depends upon the object of research which is “constructed” by the researcher. CDA is situational and there is not a ‘correct’, or step by step way of performing a CDA. CDA differs from discourse theory and discourse psychology due to its linguistic focus on text analysis and parlance in social interaction. Laclau and Mouffes’ discourse theory is not oriented towards systematic empirical
studies of parlance, and discourse psychology empirically study rhetoric, but not linguistic studies of parlance (Winther-Jørgensen, Philips, 2000, p. 68-69).

A central aspect in Fairclough’s CDA is that discourse is an important form of social practice that reproduce and alter knowledge, identities, social relations and power relations. At the same time discourse is also shaped from previous social practices and structures (Winther-Jørgensen, Philips, 2000, p. 70). Fairclough (2010, p. 4) writes that CDA is not an analysis of discourse ‘in itself’, but analysis of dialectal relations between discourse, other objects, moments or elements and analysis of internal relations within the discourse. Analysis of such relations cross conventional boundaries between disciplines, for instance linguistics, sociology, politics. To clarify, Fairclough’s approach focuses on detailed textual analysis from linguistics, macro-sociological analysis of social practices, and the interpretive micro-sociological tradition (Winther-Jørgensen, Philips, 2000, p. 72). Fairclough address, according to Winther-Jørgensen and Philips, that textual analysis alone is insufficient as discourse analysis, because it does not pay attention to the relation between texts and societal- and cultural processes and structures. The textual analysis needs to be combined with social analysis, and is therefore interdisciplinary. The macro-sociological tradition assumes that social practices are shaped by social structures and power relations. The purpose of using the micro-sociological tradition is to shape an understanding of how people actively construct and maintain a “regular world” in everyday practices (ibid, p. 72).

**Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Model**

I have chosen to focus on Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis and his three dimensional model mainly because it offers a framework that I find useful when analyzing discourses in texts. The framework of the model consists of three main aspects, or levels: text, discursive practices and social practices. These aspects can be studied separately, or together depending on the empirical evidence and purpose of the study (Winther-Jørgensen, Philips, 2000, pp. 69-70). The framework is, in other words, a means of exploring the overlaps between language and social-institutional practices, and beyond these, the intimate links between language as discourse and broader social and political structures (Fairclough, 2010, p. 1). At the textual level the focus is on studying the structure of the text through the help of linguistic tools, as for instance through grammar, choice of words and metaphors. The focus here is on the construction of phenomena (Winther-Jørgensen, Philips, 2000, pp. 69-70).
Text and discursive practices represent two different dimensions in Fairclough’s model and will therefore be separated in the analysis. The analysis of discursive practices (the second level) focuses on how authors build on existing discourses and genres when constituting written texts, it also focuses on how the reader uses discourses and genres when consuming and interpreting texts (ibid, p. 75). Winther-Jørgensen and Philips (Ibid, p. 77) refer to ‘Interdiscursivity’, which is a term used when multiple discourses occurs in the same text and contradicts each other. Winther-Jørgensen and Philips implies that a high level of interdiscursivity is a sign for social change, and low interdiscursivity means that the current social pattern is maintained. Interdiscursivity is a form of intertextuality. Intertextuality represents the relation that communicative events are constructed from previous events, which means that authors uses words that have been used before in previous texts. A particularly significant form of intertextuality is manifest intertextuality, where texts in obvious ways are built from former texts, for instance by referring to previous content. A written text can be seen as a part of an intertextual chain, where series of texts are incorporated by elements from another text or other texts, as for example the chain that combines scientific reports with media reports (ibid, p. 77).

The third level, the social practices, focuses on the consequences of the discursive practices which is, according to Fairclough (2010, p. 7), the critical aspect of CDA. Critique highlight a normative aspect into analysis, meaning that it focuses on the social consequences of the discursive practices. In other words, it focuses on societal and institutional flaws that could be changed for the better. The problematics around this, according to Fairclough (Ibid, p. 7), is that people have different ideas and opinions about the social world. Fairclough points out that at least the critical aspect highlight gaps between what societies claim to be fair, democratic or caring contra what they are in reality. Further Fairclough (Ibid, p. 7) states that there is a possibility to distinguish negative critique, which is analysis focusing on how societies produce and perpetuate social wrongs, and positive critique that focuses on how people seek to mitigate or remedy them. Therefore, CDA has a primary focus on the effect of inequalities and power relations in producing social wrongs. In other words, with a focus on ideology and on the dialectical relations between discourse and power.

**The Study of Language: Semiology and Semiotics**

Simon Lindgren (2005, p. 61) points out that the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure laid the foundation for structural linguistics, which runs through the concept of semiology.
Saussure claims, according to Jostein Gripsrud (2011, p. 145), that a sign in its entirety consists of a *material* signifier (like a sound, printed word, or image) and an *immaterial* content, what Saussure calls the signified, which is “the thought”. An expression can consist of lines, dots, figures, soundwaves or other physical phenomena in which we connect to an idea, conception or image. Further Gripsrud (ibid, p. 145) states that we hardly ever think of this connection since it exists in certain rules or codes that we have been taught to understand. These conventions are established in a collective agreement by the language- and image users. A rule or a convention combines an expression with content. Gripsrud (ibid, p. 145) claims that Saussure was primarily concerned with written communication and *verbal communication*. A specific feature in verbal communication in comparison to images is that the relation between the expression and the content is *arbitrary*, meaning that it can be accepted and conventional for some, but also uncertain and unconditional to others. Gripsrud further exemplifies through the word ‘dog’, meaning that a dog does not understand the intention of the word. But also, dog is called ‘chien’ in French, and ‘hund’ in Swedish, meaning that the animal is the same, but the word is not universal. Gripsrud (ibid, p. 145-146) takes the example further and points out the difference when it comes to visual signs, meaning that if we watch TV and see certain lines, surfaces and colors that looks like a dog, we can say that this is a display that could be associated to a dog. Also, the word dog is a general aspect, meaning that it is not intended to be a specific race or name. But if the dog is photographically ‘realistic’ or realistically drawn we can distinguish more than just the word dog, maybe that it is a border collie or a pit-bull. Gripsrud (ibid. p. 146) in other words describe that photographs and realistic drawings are coded signs, meaning that they are expressed through perception codes that are used in the daily life, but they may not be common between cultures. But this becomes more visual when we step aside from the more realistic illustrations. Gripsrud here exemplifies through the common way of how children draw a sun, a circle with sprawling lines. Meaning that visual signs are based on conventions or codes, due to the fact that we know for sure that a sun does not look near the former presented demonstration, but we relate it to the same object (ibid. p. 146).

Ferdinand de Saussure originated semiology, but other scholars have developed his thoughts on further notes. For instance, the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev who developed de Saussure’s structural linguistic through the semiotic theory *denotation* and *connotation*. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a word, in other words the ‘dictionary definition’ of a word. Connotation refers to the associations, or related emotional suggestions to a word, in other words indirect meanings of a word (ibid, p. 148). Gripsrud highlights that the distinction
between denotation and connotation was important to the insight that signs and their context varies in time and space. This means that there is no absolute connection between an expression and a certain content. The same expression can mean different things for different people in different times. Words or expressions that earlier had positive connotations might not be positive now. Gripsrud (ibid, pp. 148-149) exemplifies through the swastika symbol, which earlier during the Viking age had positive associations. But today, after the Interwar period, it is almost impossible not to associate the symbol to Nazism, which is associated with negative meanings (for instance concentration camps, brutality and war).

The American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce coined the term *semiotics* around the same period of time as Saussure, which according to Gripsrud (ibid, p. 154) was built of similar thoughts. Although, their methodology differ, and Peirce’s definition had a different interpretation about the elements of signs. Peirce assumes that a sign is everything that in one way or another stands for something else for someone. Gripsrud (ibid. p. 154) clarifies that Pierce did not focus on the verbal language like Saussure. For Pierce signs are more extensive, meaning that everything is signs to the extent of what matters to us. Pierce’s semiotics is in other words both a perception theory and an epistemology (knowledge theory) firsthand, before it eventually becomes a communication theory. It is also pragmatic because it translates the meaning of signs as situational. Gripsrud explains this through the example that what signs are to me, might not be what signs are to you.

I will use Saussure’s concept of semiology in this study, followed by the development of Saussure’s structural linguistic through Louis Hjelmslev’s semiotic theory *denotation* and *connotation*. The reason why I have chosen the concept of Saussure and Hjelmslev is because I interpret that it offers a framework when analyzing texts. I agree that a sign consists of a *material* signifier and an *immaterial* content, at least that there is a conventional meaning to a word, and when looking at immaterial content, I presume that words are intended to relate to something more specific. I also agree that conventions are established in a collective agreement by the language users, image users etc. At the same time I also agree with Peirce that signs are situational and the interpreter is the decision maker for the meaning of a sign. Still, I find that explanation more problematic in this study because I find it difficult to use in a framework due to the focus on subjectivity when interpreting signs. I find Hjelmslev’s theory about denotation (the literal meaning), and connotation (the indirect meaning) useful in this study when analyzing the newspaper articles. Mainly because I presume that certain words are chosen when writing
a text in order to create an intended emotional response. Even though this concept is very similar to Saussure’s material signifier and immaterial content, I find Hjelsmlev’s explanation easier to apply, mainly due to its simplicity. This means that when I analyze the empirical evidence at the textual level, I use Saussure’s concept, as well as Hjelmslev’s development of the semiotic theory of “denotation” and “connotation”.
Empirical Approach

Fairclough specifies that his version of CDA is a ‘critical realist’ approach, which he explains as a recognition that the social and natural worlds differ. In other words, the social world depends on human activity and action for its existence and therefore is ‘socially constructed’. Although Fairclough states that the critical realist approach is a ‘contingent’ or ‘moderate’ form of social constructivism, I choose to position myself ontologically in social constructionism. Social constructionism assumes that social phenomena and their meanings, purposes, and “truths” are created in a historical, social and symbolic context. The meaning of a symbol is not fixed, on the contrary the meaning varies and is in relation to context and other symbols (Bryman, 2008, pp. 36-37).

Regarding the empirical study, I will start off at the textual level by describing the newspaper articles as accurately as possible from a qualitative perspective. The framework of CDA consists, as earlier mentioned, of three main aspects or levels: text, discursive practices and social practices. The first two of these levels are in focus in the analysis. The third level (social practices) will be focused on in the discussion section. The motive is to analyze the content inductively in order to identify themes and categories of discourse practices regarding the depiction of Melania Trump as First Lady. This means that, when overlooking the structures of the chosen newspaper articles, themes about the portrayal of Melania will be drawn in the analysis. I will, as earlier described in this text, use Saussure’s concept of semiology and Hjelmslev’s semiotic theory involving “denotation” and “connotation”.

However, the main focus of this study is on the portrayal of Melania Trump in her role as First Lady, which means that the main priority is identifying representations of Melania in relation to the role. “Denotation” and “connotation” will also be discussed in the analysis section. Since I have decided to analyze the newspaper articles chronologically in order from oldest to newest, I will iteratively focus on intertextuality, as explained by Winther-Jørgensen and Philips, to look for repeated patterns that might be shaped from previous newspaper articles. The focus on intertextuality will become more visual in the analysis the further it goes. Interdiscursivity will mainly be focused on in the Summary of the results section. The photographs used in the articles will be described, but the main attention when analyzing is to focus on the written texts in the articles.

The third level of abstraction (social practices) will be in focus in the Discussion section. The
intention is to discuss the consequences of the discursive practices in a broader social context. Hirdman’s gender system and gender contract regarding the First Lady role will further be discussed in the Summary of the results and Discussion section. I also intend to make use of Fairclough’s negative and positive critique in the Discussion section to focus on perpetuation of social wrongs, and how people seek to mitigate or remedy the productions, with a focus on the dialectical relations between discourse and power.

**The New York Times**

New York Times is a popular newspaper in the United States. After Donald Trump won the election November 8, 2016, the New York Times have had a net increase of around 132,000 paid subscriptions, which was 10 times more than the same period of time a year earlier. The president and CEO of the New York Times Mark Thompson states in an interview with CNBC that NYT reaches about half of everyone who reads the news online, claiming that they have around 125- to 130 million visitors every month (CNBC, 2016). This highlights that the New York Times is a highly influential newspaper in the U.S.

The public editor of the New York Times Liz Spayd wrote an article saying that they receive daily complaints from readers indicating that they “sways to the left”. Spayd explains that she asked around the newsroom about these claims, in which the reporters responded “All sides hate us. We’re tough on everyone. That’s nothing new here”. Further Spayd writes that she talked to Dean Baquet, the executive editor, regarding claims of liberal bias. Baquet’s response was, according to Spayd, that he does not believe that the coverage on most days has a liberal cast, also that he does not think campaign ads or the editorial front-page generate that perception. Further Baquet implies that The Times reach to be wide, followed by the response that “I want us to be perceived as fair and honest to the world, not just a segment of it. It’s a really difficult goal. Do we pull it off all the time? No.” (New York Times, 2016). This show’s that the perception of the New York Time’s editors is that the content of the news reports is intended to be written from an objective perspective, but Dean Baquet also admits that sometimes it isn’t objective. New York Times also make presidential endorsements every four years, where the editors give their readers the name of the candidate considered best suited to fit the needs of the nation. The first endorsement was in 1860 for Abraham Lincoln, and the most recent one was for Hillary Clinton in 2016. The first six endorsements were for Republicans and the first endorsement of a Democrat was for Grover Cleveland in 1884.
Since 1884 New York Times has endorsed Democratic candidates twenty-six times, and Republican candidates six times. The last endorsed republican was Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956. A third-party has only been endorsed once in 1896 (New York Times, 2016). This information shows that a republican president have not been endorsed in over 70 years, which might have an impact regarding the portrayal of Melania Trump.

**Selection of Articles**

The chosen articles are online publications from the New York Time’s homepage. I wanted the articles to be news reports, and not written from an opinion, or editorial perspective. Five of the articles are from the “Politics” section, and one from the “World” section. I used the search function, or search bar on the webpage. The keywords were “Melania Trump*, *Melania Trump AND First Lady*”. The exact number of hits is not displayed on the website, but I consider it being irrelevant since I was looking for articles written after the inauguration that took place in January 20, 2017. The search function has an option to sort articles by the categories: Newest, Oldest and Relevance. Since I wanted the newest article’s I used the options Newest and Relevance, looking for dates past January 20, 2017. The goal was to find articles with a main focus on Melania Trump. She was often mentioned in articles mainly focused on President Donald Trump, but those articles were not of interest to me, since I wanted a rich material to analyze from regarding Melania Trump. Also, since I specifically wanted to look at the display of Melania Trump as first lady, the numbers of articles are limited mainly due to the short period of time at her position as First Lady.

At firsthand, I looked for articles that consisted of at least 400 words because I wanted the articles to be rich on information for the analysis. That criteria was met with five of the chosen articles. But the article; “Melania Trump Thanks Model Who Defended Her Against a Reporter’s Insult” is only about 300 words. However, I decided to use that article for my empirical evidence since it involves a controversy with a New York Times reporter, which I do find relevant for this study because it shows that there might be bias from news reporters against Melania Trump. When analyzing the articles, I have chosen to present them chronologically in order of date, because I think it will ease the focus on intertextuality, in order to look for repeated patterns.

The chosen articles in this study is in my opinion well suited to its purpose. Mainly because the articles are rich on information and directly related to Melania Trump and the portrayal of her
as First Lady, which is a crucial criteria that I consider being relevant due to the aim of this study.

The chosen articles from the New York Times are:
“Melania Trump’s Absence from Washington Raises Questions about Her Role” February 7, 2017, 1050 words
“In libel Suit, Melania Trump Cites Loss of Chance to Make Millions” February 7, 2017 – 429 words
“Melania Trump Thanks Model Who Defended Her Against a Reporter’s Insult” February 13, 2017. 277 words
“Melania Trump Reads Dr. Seuss to Children in First Solo Outing as First Lady” March 2, 2017, 502 words
“Stepping Out, Melania Trump Honors Women Affected by Bias and Abuse” March 29, 2017. 695 words
“Melania Trump Meets Queen Rania, as White House Grapples with Crises” April 5, 2017, 570 words

**An Analysis of the New York Time’s portrayal of Melania Trump**

The focus of this chapter is to examine how the New York Times portrays Melania Trump in her role as First Lady of the United States. This is done by studying six substantial articles about the current First Lady from the “Politics” and “World” sections of the newspaper. The aim is to try and discern themes and discourses about the portrayal of Melania as First Lady. The chosen articles are dealt with separately. Each article is individually summarized and analyzed. The articles will be discussed altogether in the Summary of the results section in relation to previous research. The discussion section will focus on the gender contract of the First Lady role followed by the lifted abstraction regarding social practices.

**Summary of Article 1**

This article goes by the title; *Melania Trump’s Absence from Washington Raises Questions about Her Role*, and contains over a thousand words. The article deals with the “absence” of Melania Trump in her position as First Lady, after the inaugural parade that took place in Washington on January 20, 2017. The article was published February 1, 2017 and appears under the “Politics” section of the newspaper. The article has two images. The first image is of
Melania Trump during the walk at the inaugural parade. She is smiling and waving, wearing a light blue dress and gloves in the same color. She is surrounded by seven men; closest to her is Donald Trump, the President. The photo is taken at an angle at which Donald Trump’s waving hand covers his face. The men in the background are blurred out in order to illustrate that the focus is on Melania. The second image is of President Donald Trump and his daughter Ivanka Trump, walking next to each other in black clothing, on their way to pay respect to a fallen member of the Navy SEALs.

The article starts off by highlighting that President Donald Trump was accompanied by his daughter Ivanka instead of Melania Trump when they traveled to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to pay their respects to a fallen member of the Navy SEALs. Melania Trump’s absence at the solemn ceremony is described as conspicuous; the article adds that she vanished from public view days after her husband’s swearing-in. Further, the article observes “(…) it [Melania’s absence from the ceremony] raised new questions about what role, if any, she plans to play as first lady”.

The reader is informed that Melania Trump broke with decades of tradition when she decided that she would not move into the White House when her husband took office, but would instead remain in the family’s Manhattan penthouse so that the couple’s 10-year-old son, Barron, could finish his school year. This decision, the article claims, “has made for an unusually slow transition into what has traditionally been a hectic, demanding and heavily scrutinized [First Lady] role”.

Further the article observes that Melania Trump asked Lisa Reynolds, formally working in the White House under President George W. Bush, to be her chief of staff, just a few days before the article was written. The article compares Mrs. Trump to former first ladies by indicating that most of them had already filled this position before Inauguration Day. It also mentions that Mrs. Trump has still not filled other crucial positions, including communications director and social secretary. The article highlights that there have been thousands of unanswered requests for White House tours, which is traditionally run by the first lady’s office. Regarding this, the article reveals that this information comes from anonymous sources - from people familiar with the process of the White House office- who were not authorized to discuss the matter in public. Further in this section, the reader is informed that White House events are among the heaviest tasks for First Ladies, and the article explains that it is not clear how much Melania Trump has been involved in planning such events. This observation is followed by a quote from professor
Myra Gutin, who specializes in the role of first ladies, saying that Melania is “far behind the curve” in terms of the development of her role, compared with previous first ladies when their husbands had taken office; Gutin adds that “We are in uncharted territory here”.

Next, the section tells us that people close to Melania Trump claims that she is working behind the scenes to adjust the job on her own terms. This is compared to Michelle Obama, who according to this article was deeply ambivalent to the role, but left with a 68% approval rating, which the article claims is “perhaps the most vaunted celebrity status ever enjoyed by a first lady”. The article then quotes Melania’s approval rating is 37% according to a Gallup poll conducted a month before the article was written, not only worse than Michelle Obama, but also substantially lower than previous First Ladies in general. The article also claims that Mrs. Trump is considered an “enigma”, saying that one in four Americans had no opinion of her, or were unfamiliar with who she was because of her absence. The article further claims that Melania Trump has pushed back the traditional confines of her position due to her absence. Michelle Obama wanted to stay in Chicago, but her political aides instructed her that the public would never accept such move and therefor she moved to the White House.

In the next section, the article’s author writes that Melania Trump has chosen the interior designer for White House private quarters, and that she is about to hire a former Obama administration protocol official as her social secretary. This is followed by a quote from Melania Trump: “I am putting together a professional and highly experienced team, which will take time to do properly”, followed by another quote: “I am excited to be organizing and bringing together such a dynamic and forward thinking group of individuals who will work together to make our country better for everyone.”

The article further tells the reader that a lack of staff has deprived Melania Trump’s control over her image, which leads to public speculation about everything from her moving date to her state of mind. The article indicates that her absence from Washington has fueled rumors that she might never move to the capital, and that social media has seized instead on a meme based video of Melania Trump frowning during the inauguration, this video goes by the hashtag #SadMelania.

At the end of the article spokespersons states that it has only been a short period of time since
the inauguration, and that Melania Trump is going to go about her role in a thoughtful and pragmatic way that is authentic and unique for her, and that the White House Visitors Office will soon be fully staffed and operational. Plans are in place for the Governors’ Ball, a black-tie event at the White House for the nation’s governors. Anita McBride, Laura Bush’s former chief of staff, states that “Mrs. Trump should have space to define her position in the way that felt most comfortable to her”, followed by “Everybody has expectations of what they think it should be, but the reality is it’s really for the first lady to determine how she can fulfill the role that’s true to her,” and “We’re just used to seeing these announcements done before an inauguration and everybody in place on Day one, but that doesn’t mean it has to happen that way”.

Analysis of Article 1

This article is about Melania Trump, yet it starts off with a focus on President Donald Trump and his daughter Ivanka Trump. The absence of Melania Trump is illustrated by the presence of Donald Trump and Ivanka Trump. The description that the absence at the solemn ceremony is conspicuous, and that she vanished from public view is highlighted afterwards. Looking at these words in relation to the content, it seems though as the word absence in relation to the denotation of the word was not enough. By adding that it is conspicuous, and that she vanished, in my opinion, forces the reader to interpret the words metaphorically through connotation, which in this case might lead the reader to interpret it as something negative. Here we see Melania Trump depicted as an absent First Lady.

Further in the next section, her absence raised new questions about what role, if any she plans to play as first lady. In a contradictive way, it seems that the portrayal of Melania in this section is that she is absent by focusing on motherhood and is expected to be more active in her role as First Lady. At the same time the author claims that the position of being First Lady is a role and not a job. By adding “if any” to the question about what role she plans to play is in my opinion a statement that might lead the reader into a scepticism about her capabilities of being First Lady of the United States. Here Melania Trump is depicted as an absent First Lady and that she prioritizes motherhood over the First Lady role.

The next section about Melania Trump breaking with decades of tradition when she decided not to move into the White House is followed by a statement that the decision “has made for an
unusually slow transition into what has traditionally been a hectic, demanding and heavily scrutinized [First Lady] role”. Here I find that the reader might interpret that this tradition is something a First Lady should hold on to. But at the same time, since it’s specifically mentioned as a role, it makes me question why it has to be played in a certain way? Also regarding the use of “breaking with decades of tradition” is, in my opinion, vaguely put. Meaning that the connotation in this sense might relate to something negative. The reader might interpret that “breaking decades of tradition” is disrespectful and harmful to the public. It does not necessarily have to be negative to break with traditions, but here it seems that it is displayed as being negative. Here Melania Trump is depicted as a non-traditional First Lady.

Further when the article presents Lisa Reynolds as chief of staff, Melania Trump is compared to former First Ladies, where it’s concluded that she has not made enough efforts in filling crucial positions. When using the word crucial in this sense it highlights the importance of the role of a First Lady. The description of the thousands of unanswered requests for White House tours followed by the association to an anonymous source, is in my opinion, explained in a subtle and confusing way that makes me struggle to understand the importance of this information. Especially since the source is not confirmed in any way. The specialist quote from professor Myra Gutin “far behind the curve” is to me another connotation where the reader most probably would interpret the expression being negatively viewed, also regarding the quote “We are in uncharted territory”, is in my opinion a confusing metaphor to use because it is difficult to interpret what it even means. Here Melania Trump is depicted as an irresponsible First Lady.

When nearing the end of the article, Melania’s own opinions are finally displayed about her excitement to put together a highly experience team. This is quickly followed by the implication that the lack of staff has deprived Melania Trump of control over her own image which results in public speculation and that it has “fueled rumors” that she might never move and also relates to the meme based video of Melania frowning during the inauguration under the hashtag #SadMelania. In my opinion, the displayed comments about Melania’s personal thoughts is quickly overshadowed by shifting the focus to public speculation and rumours. I find that it might confuse the reader through negative connotations about the perception of her. Here Melania is depicted as an unhappy First Lady.

In the last section the spokespersons is given room to comment that the staff soon will be fully operational, followed by the quote from Laura Bush who defends Melania by indicating that
she needs space to define her position in the way that feels most comfortable to her and that people have expectations of what they think the position should be, but in reality it is up to the First Lady. I find it surprising that these statements are placed last in the article, because this questions the ideology of the perception of a First Lady by indicating that there are no specific rules. It is almost as if this would have been moved up earlier in the article, the rest of the information would be pointless.

**Summary of Article 2**

This article is named; *In Libel Suit, Melania Trump Cites Loss of Chance to Make Millions*, and contains over 400 words. This article is about a lawsuit filed by Melania Trump where she accuses The Daily Mail, a British tabloid, of libel for reporting claims last year that the former modeling agency Melania worked for in the 1990s also was an escort service. The article was published February 7, 2017. The article is found under the “Politics” section, and has one image of Melania Trump. The photo is unrelated to the title, as she is stepping out of an airplane, wearing a black jacket and large black sunglasses. Behind her is President Donald Trump, as he is about to exit the plane. A railing is in the way, covering most of Donald’s face.

The article starts by the statement “A lawsuit filed by Melania Trump depicts her heightened profile as a “unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” to make millions of dollars in business, once again raising questions about the relationship between President Trump’s official role and his family’s business interests”.

The next section raises that the lawsuit was filed on Monday (a few days before the article was published) in a New York State Court. As earlier mentioned, the lawsuit was filed against The Daily Mail, as the tabloid had reported that she was a model for a modeling agency in the 1990s in which they claimed also was an escort service.

Further the author writes: “The new complaint does not refer explicitly to the White House or Mr. Trump, or even her status as a candidate’s wife when the article was published and now as first lady”. Instead, the article quote from what I believe is the lawsuit file stating: “to launch a broad-based commercial brand in multiple product categories, each of which could have garnered multimillion dollar business relationships for a multiyear term during which plaintiff is one of the most photographed women in the world.”
The next section explain that because of the Daily Mail article, again quoting from the lawsuit: “plaintiff’s brand has lost significant value”. Further in the section the author states that the lawsuit claims 150 million dollars in damages for greatly reducing the opportunities.

Further the author claims that a spokeswoman, not saying whom, said that Mrs. Trump was not trying to make money from her role as first lady.

The next section is focused on Donald Trump, in which the author claims that he fend off criticism that his business around the world generate conflicts of interest in his official role as President, and over the fact that he have put his adult sons in charge of his businesses instead of selling his assets or put them into a blind trust. Further the author writes that “On the day he took office, the White House altered its online biography of Mrs. Trump, after complaints that the original wording promoted her line of jewelry”.

As the article continues, the focus is shifts back to The Daily Mail, the author claims that on September 1, 2016, Melania Trump sued the Daily mail in a state court in Montgomery County, Md., and that The Daily Mailed published a retraction the same day. The reader is informed that the Maryland court dismissed the cased, indicating that it did not have jurisdiction. Last up in this section the author writes “The new case against Mail Media, a corporation that operates the Daily Mail’s website, was filed in State Supreme Court in Manhattan”.

In the last section the reader is informed that Melania Trump also sued a Maryland blogger, Webster Tarpley, who also published similar claims as those cited by The Daily Mail. The author claims that Melania settled that case, and that her lawyer, Charles J. Harder, said that Mr. Tarpley had agreed to pay Mrs. Trump a “substantial sum as a settlement”.

**Analysis of Article 2**

This article focuses on lawsuits filed by Melania Trump. The first statement that Melania Trump depicts her heightened profile as a “unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make millions of dollars in business” is, in my opinion, confusing. Instead of focusing on the allegations, it seems that this is put in a way that it is “all about making money”. These allegations might be completely wrong, but I get the feeling that it’s more about the opportunity of making money than the focus on the allegations not being true. Here Melania Trump is depicted as a greedy First Lady.
The root to the lawsuit is revealed in the next section where the reader is told that the tabloid The Daily Mail reported that she was a model for a modeling agency in which they claimed was also an escort service. This is, in my opinion, where the reader is introduced to the actual content of this article. Further, regarding the statement that “The new complaint does not refer explicitly to the White House or Mr. Trump, or even her status as a candidate’s wife when the article was published, and now as first lady”, makes me wonder why this information was necessary to use at all. Especially since the article quote from the lawsuit file moments after, by stating “to launch a broad-based commercial brand in multiple product categories, each of which could have garnered multimillion dollar business relationships for a multiyear term during which plaintiff is one of the most photograph women in the world”. After reading this, I feel that there was no reason to highlight that it wasn’t about her status as a presidential candidate’s wife or a first lady. It makes me feel that the connotation might be interpreted as “maybe it was.” Another indication of this is the random statement from an unknown spokesperson saying that Melania was not trying to make money from her role as first lady, in which I get the same feeling indirectly as a reader: “maybe it was?”. The fact that this is highlighted two times from two different sources tend to confuse the reader.

The focus is further shifted to Donald Trump and his own businesses where he left his sons in charge instead of selling it or putting it in a blind trust. The focus is then shifted back on Melania, where the reader is told that there were complaints about the White House online biography where the original wording promoted her line of jewelry. It seems to me that the article is trying to tell me something as a reader, but I cannot grasp it in a direct sense through the denotations of the text. It forces me into connotations that leads me away from the content into speculations to “read between the lines” that both Donald and Melania Trump are greedy.

When looking at the last section, the reader is informed that Melania received a “substantial sum of settlement” from the Maryland blogger Webster Tarpley. This could be viewed as an indication that the accusations about Melania being related to an escort service are false, especially since the blogger paid settlement. But instead of using this information to strengthen Melania’s innocence, it seems that the focus instead is that Melania only tries to make money. It seems so far that Melania is accused of various allegations, in which, she has to defend herself from. Again, Melania Trump is depicted as a greedy First Lady.

Summary of Article 3
This is a shorter article named *Melania Trump Thanks Model Who Defended Her Against a Reporter’s Insult*, and it is about Melania Trump’s response on twitter to a women who defended her after hearing an insult about Melania Trump from a New York Times reporter. The article was published the 13th of February, 2017. This article is framed under the section “politics”, and it displays one photograph on Melania Trump, and also an image from her twitter statement. The photograph is on Melania Trump with Akie Abe, Japan’s first lady. The photo is taken at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens in Delray Beach, Florida. The shot is taken in front of Melania Trump as she exits a door, while Akie Abe is standing behind her, as it seems, also getting ready to exit the door. The focus of the photo is on Melania, and she is wearing a white dress with a white cardigan.

The article starts of by indicating that Melania Trump thanked the model and actress Emily Ratajkowski on twitter, as they state “for defending her against a reporter’s derogatory comment”. Further the article explains how Ratajkowski defended Melania, which was through a twitter statement, where she sat next to a reporter from the New York Times at an event. Ratajkowski had stated that the reporter had said that “Melania is a hooker”, in which she defended the first lady on Twitter. Also, the reader gets informed that she did not identify the reporter who said it.

Further the article focuses on Melania’s thank you message on twitter, as they explain that she praised women who support one another, and mentioned Ratajkowski by her Twitter handle. The article quote Melania’s response: “Applause to all women around the world who speak up, stand up and support other women!” Followed by a printed image of her twitter message.

Further the article claims that the tweet was Mrs. Trump’s fifth since her official White House account was created a month before the article was written.

Lastly the article presents a statement from The Times, who described the reporter’s comment as inappropriate, and also that editors had spoken with the reporter about it. A quote from the official statement is presented: “At a party last night, a Times reporter who does not cover Washington or politics referred to an unfounded rumor regarding Melania Trump”. Further the quote continues: “The comment was not intended to be public, but it was nonetheless completely inappropriate and should not have occurred. Editors have talked to the reporter in question about the lapse”. The article ends by stating that The Times did not identify the reporter.
Analysis of Article 3

I find the focus of this article to be confusing. It starts off by indicating that Melania thanked Emily Ratajkowski on Twitter, for defending her against “reporter’s derogatory”. Further down in the section the reader is informed that it was a New York Times reporter, and that the derogatory was the reporter calling Melania a “hooker”, followed by the information that Ratajkowski did not identify the reporter. Instead of presenting the facts that Melania was exposed to derogatory first hand, I perceive the structure of the section to be very confusing. Almost as if if the derogatory is intended to be secondary. Melania’s gratitude to Ratajkowski seems to be the focus here. Melania is again forced to stand up towards accusations of sexual content, as earlier in the previous article about the allegations that her former modeling agency was an escort service.

The focus is further completely shifted to Melania’s message on twitter where she states; “Applause to all women around the world who speak up, stand up and support other women!” Regarding this, the reader is also informed that this was her fifth message on twitter since her official White House account was created. It seems that the content of what was actually said lapses and the focus shifts towards Melania’s own “defense speech”, or response about the derogatory. It seems that Melania is not stood up for regarding the derogatory, it is almost as if she is illustrated to deserve these allegations through negative connotation.

Finally in the last section the reporter’s derogatory is commented on and described as inappropriate. What I find most interesting in this section is that; “The comment was not intended to be public, but it was nonetheless completely inappropriate and should not have occurred”. Regarding the first bit of this sentence, I cannot understand why it needs to be defended that the comment was not intended to be public. As a reader I would appreciate the comment that the derogatory was completely inappropriate and that it should not have occurred. It feels like an unnecessary excuse to say that it was not intended to be public. Last up in the article, the reader is informed that The Times did not identify the reporter. I also find it interesting that the New York Times states that it was not intended to be public in relation to the fact that the reporter is not identified. I sense a connotation indicating; since this was not meant to be public, the derogatory from the reporter was indirectly OK. When looking at this
from a broader perspective, to call someone a “hooker” is in my opinion a very serious allegation, but in this case it seems to be normalized.

Summary of Article 4

This article is titled; “Melania Trump Reads Dr. Seuss to Children in First Solo Outing as First Lady” and it contains over 500 words, and covers Melania Trump’s first solo foray in public as First Lady, where she visits a hospital pediatric wing to read to sick children. The article was published 2 March, 2017. The article is found under the “Politics” section, and has one image of Melania Trump. The photo is taken at the Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. Melania is wearing a white jacket, and white skirt. It looks like the photo is taken unwillingly, as it seems that she just entered from a glass door. It looks as though she is slightly glaring towards the camera in a surprised manner.

The article starts off by stating that “Mrs. Trump, who has been reluctant to embrace the high-profile and ill-defined role of presidential spouse, began with a brief and simple outing: an afternoon reading of a Dr. Seuss book in honor of the author’s birthday and National Read Across America Day”. The next section illustrates the environment, describing children wearing hospital gowns, gathered at the playroom in the pediatric wing of the New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan. The article quotes Melania’s first interaction with the children; “So you know what it is today?” followed by the answer “It’s a reading day. So I came to encourage you to read, and to think about what you want to achieve in life”.

The next section states that Mrs. Trump’s aides had arranged for a small pool of photographers and reporters to cover the visit, and that she read from “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!”, a Dr. Seuss classic, claiming that it was one of Melania Trump’s favorites with an inspirational message. Melania is quoted reading: “You’ll be as famous as famous can be”,“(…) with the whole wide world watching you win on TV”.

The article further states that Melania Trump has mostly stayed out of the spotlight since President Trump took office and that she has appeared at her husband’s side for only a handful of official events, most recently accompanying him to the Capitol for his address to a joint session of Congress. Melania has avoided the press and;“(…) done nothing in public to carve out her own priorities or initiatives as first lady”.

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The next section is about Michelle Obama; the reader is told that she went on outings with young people and made unscheduled stops to spend time with them. Here the article’s author writes that the former First Lady [Michelle Obama] was “back at it, surprising students in a vocational program at a Washington public school”, and that she spent over an hour discussing the importance of pursuing higher education. Then follows a link to a photograph on Twitter of Michelle Obama’s visit at the Washington public school, which occurred a few days before the article was written. This is followed by the observation that Mrs. Trump’s hospital story time also appeared on her own Twitter feed.

Further on in the article, the author claims that Mrs. Trump has stated that she is interested in working to combat cyberbullying, but has yet to start a program for it. This section is followed by stating that Melania has still not announced the hiring of key positions, such as press secretary, communications director and other senior staff members. Instead the reader is told, again, that she focuses on her son, Barron, who is finishing his school year in New York.

In the closing section of the article, the reader is given a close description of how Melania got to the New York Presbyterian Hospital. She wore large black sunglasses, and stepped in to a car in a motorcade that transported her to the hospital about a mile and a half away. Lastly, Mrs. Trump is quoted from her interaction with the children; “I hope you are feeling well”; the author claims that after the book reading, Melania gave the book to a young girl who had been listening, adding, “I encourage you all to read a lot – to get educated”, which is how this article ends.

**Analysis of Article 4**

The first quote of this article; “Mrs. Trump, who has been reluctant to embrace the high profile and ill-defined roll of a presidential spouse, began with a brief and simple outing: an afternoon reading of a Dr. Seuss book in honor of the author’s birthday and National Read Across America Day” is opening in negative terms. As a reader, the connotation of this quote leads me into anticipating Melania Trump as a distant first lady who doesn’t embrace the role in a serious way. I feel that it overshadows the next section that illustrates Melania’s interaction with the children. Here Melania Trump is, again, depicted as an absent First Lady.

In the next section, I am particularly interested about the quotes from Melania when reading to the children; “You’ll be as famous can be”, followed by; “(…) with the whole world watching
you win on TV”. As a reader, it somehow forces me into connotation that Melania is advocating fame, and winning on TV as something to strive for in life. To be fair, I am positive that she read a lot of other sentences from the book, but I do find it interesting that these two sentences chosen to represented her reading in this article.

Again, in the next section, the reader is informed that Melania have stayed out of the spotlight since President Trump took office. The claim that; “she has appeared at her husband’s side for only a handful of official events” illustrates, from my point of view, a depiction of Melania as a non-supportive First Lady, and again absent. Also, in this section the reader is informed that Melania has avoided the press and “done nothing public to carve out her own priorities or initiatives as First Lady”. I interpret that this depicts Melania as an absent First Lady, which so far in the analysis have been illustrated numerous times in the articles.

The next section is fully focused on Michelle Obama. I find that this article is trying to compare Melania Trump to Michelle Obama, where I interpret Obama as “the winner”. By illustrating that Michelle is taking more time than scheduled in spending time with students, she indirectly gets described as a kind-hearted woman in relation to Melania who does not seem to care enough. I also find it interesting that this section ends up with an illustration that a photograph was presented on Michelle Obama’s Twitter feed. Right after that, the reader is informed that Melania also shared a photograph on her Twitter feed at the hospital story time. This illustration about Michelle Obama overshadows Melania Trump. When I interpret the connotations of this text, I get the feeling that Melania Trump is copying Michelle Obama by doing the same thing as her, but worse. Here, Melania Trump is depicted as mimicking other First Ladies.

When the article presents that Melania Trump is interested in work to combat cyberbullying, it is quickly overshadowed by the statement that she has still not announced the hiring of key positions. Instead she is focusing on her son, Barron, so he could finish his school year. Again, Melania is depicted as absent, and that she prioritizes motherhood.

I struggle to see the importance of the explanation in the last section about Melania Trump’s appearance when she got transported to the New York Presbyterian Hospital. The “large black sunglasses” and ”motorcade transport” does, in my opinion, fabricate connotations about a “privileged” and “classy” lifestyle. Although, the ending of the article gives me a positive impression about Melania as a caring woman. The fact that Melania gave the book that she read to a young girl with the inspiring message “I encourage you all to read a lot – to get educated”
is in my opinion fairly put. But this information could have been used in the section when Melania Trump was compared to Michelle Obama, instead the information is positioned at the end of the article.

**Summary of Article 5**

This article is named; *Stepping Out, Melania Trump Honors Women Affected by Bias and Abuse*, and covers Melania Trump’s attendance and speech at a ceremony at the State Department that honored 13 women who have faced rapists, acid-wielding attackers and prejudiced courts that often protect the attackers. The article was published 29 March, 2017. This article is also framed under the section “politics”, and is displayed through one photograph. The photo is of Melania Trump as she stands onstage, wearing a white dress, next to an award-winner at the State Department ceremony in Washington. The background is blurred to show that the focus is on Melania Trump.

This article starts off, again, by claims that Melania Trump has been absent since her husband became president, and her absence is described by displaying “(…) [her absence have resulted in] a spectral presence”. Further stating that “(…) the first lady stepped out of the shadows, speaking out on behalf of women who battle gender discrimination and violence around the world”. This is followed by a statement from Melania, who according to this article regarding these 13 women said; “Wherever women are diminished, the entire world is diminished with them”. Further the reader gets informed that Melania Trump was speaking softly, but firmly, reading from a teleprompter. The author of the article claims that Mrs. Trump encouraged the audience to put themselves in the shoes of these award-winning women that had been victims of gender bias, domestic abuse or violence. Also that she embraced that they fought laws and social norms that sought to perpetuate the injustice. The article further quote from Melania’s speech “Ask yourself if you would have the fortitude of spirit, the courage of your convictions, and the enormous inner strength required to stand up and fight against such overwhelming odds”, as she according to the author, gesture towards women, from Yemen to Sri Lanka, sitting behind her. The author continues on the quote from Melania; “Together we must declare that the era of allowing the brutality against women and children is over”, while affirming that; “the time for empowering women around the world is now”.
The article reflects on Melania’s husband Donald Trump, as he’s been criticized for his crude language about women after the release of a 10-year-old video that was released from the television program “Access Hollywood”.

According to this article, Melania’s speech at this ceremony was the first since becoming first lady besides the brief remarks at another women’s event at the White House. She is also compared to Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton. The author states that both of them addressed this theme, and that it was some of their most impassioned, inspiring and memorable speeches. Further the author quote Hillary Clinton from the United Nations women’s conference in Beijing; “Women’s rights are human rights and human rights are women’s rights”. The article reflects back at Melania’s speech, indicating that she did not mention the president in her eight minutes of remarks, and further claims that; “she left little doubt she believes the White House should act as a guardian of women’s rights around the world”. Further in this section, Melania is quoted saying; “Together with the international community the United States must send a clear message that we are watching. This is continued by a further quote from Melania: “As leaders of our shared global community, we must continue to work towards gender empowerment and respect for people from all backgrounds and ethnicities, remembering always that we are all ultimately members of one race, the human race”.

The article further continues by stating that Melania Trump’s appearance marked a period of greater visibility, and reflects it upon the choice of spending time with her son in New York. Melania Trump’s communications director Stephanie Grisham argues in the article that Melania have visited schools, children’s hospitals and taken parts in visits with foreign leaders etc. Further the article focus on Sean spencer, the press secretary who, according to the author, had a tense exchange with an African-American radio show correspondent. The article ends up by displaying how Donald Trump mocked a woman at his speech at a panel in the East Room devoted to women’s issues.

**Analysis of article 5**

Again, Melania Trump is introduced as absent, followed by: “(…) a spectral presence”. This metaphor is, in my opinion, telling the reader through connotations that she is practically a ghost in the role as First Lady. After the quote from Melania’s speech at the ceremony, the author claims that Melania is speaking softly, but firmly, and that she is reading from a teleprompter. My main thoughts regarding the accusation of reading from a teleprompter is interesting to me.
When thinking about it, does not practically every public person use a sort of script, or a teleprompter when they speak? I struggle to see the importance of highlighting the fact that she was reading from a teleprompter. When thinking about the statement about the teleprompter, the connotations makes me think that Melania has not written the speech by herself, and also that she does not understand the content of what she is reading. Here Melania Trump is depicted as illiterate.

Further when the article quotes from the speech about brutality against women and the courage and inner strength of these women, the finger is pointed at President Donald Trump in relation to Melania through criticism about Donald using crude language about women after the release of a 10-year-old video. The author states further in the text that Melania did not mention the President during the eight minute speech, followed by the indication that “she left little doubt she believes the White House should act as a guardian of women’s rights around the world”. My first thoughts on this is, why would she mention him during the speech for these women? She is an individual, and Donald Trump is an individual. They are not literally attached together. I struggle to see the point of why that would be considered her responsibility to discuss. Here Melania Trump is depicted as responsible for her husband’s actions.

The ceremony is highlighted as the first for Melania since becoming first lady. Here she is compared to both Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton. Again she is compared to previous First Ladies. When the author indicate that Both Obama and Clinton addressed the same theme as Melania, I sense a connotation indicating, in other words, that Melania is just following their footsteps. The last quote in this section from Melania about work towards gender empowerment and respect is left without further comments. Again, Melania is overshadowed by Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton. Again Melania is depicted as mimicking previous First Ladies.

The statement about Melania Trump’s appearance as a period of greater visibility is reflected upon the choice of spending time with her son. Looking at intertextuality, this is a repeated pattern that is common in relation to the previous articles. It is almost as if, as soon as something is lifted in a positive way, it re-directs to something negative or the other way around. The defense commentary about Melania’s absence is responded to by Stephanie Grisham, but the article rapidly shifts focus towards Sean Spencer and Donald Trump. Successively the further the analysis goes, it seems that Melania Trump also is responsible for others actions. None of these newspaper articles, so far, seems fully focus on Melania. As a reader, I jump between
associations to all sorts of things that forces me away from the content. Again, Melania is depicted as absent and that she prioritizes motherhood over the First Lady role.

Summary of Article 6

This article is titled; *Melania Trump Meets Queen Raina, as White House Grapples With Crises*. The article focuses on Melania Trump’s meeting with Queen Raina of Jordan as their husbands attended meetings and a news conference to condemn a chemical attack in Syria followed by discussions of brokering a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel. This article was published 5 April, 2017, and is framed under the section “world”, followed by the subcategory “Middle east”. This article has three images. First image is taken in the White House, as King Abdullah II sits in a chair shaking hands with President Donald Trump, who also sits in a chair next to him. Queen Raina and Melania Trump are standing behind their husbands, both looking towards their husbands as they shake hands. The second image is on Melania Trump and Queen Raina as they interact with children at the all-girls school Excel Academy. Both of them are smiling as they stand close to four students around a round table. The students seem to be working with a lab-assignment, as they sit in white coats wearing protection glasses. The third image is of Melania Trump and Queen Rania, walking next to each other as they are interacting. The photo is taken in front of them.

The article starts off by stating “A billionaire, a queen and an American first lady walked into a public charter school on Wednesday, collecting bouquets, examining owl pellets and hugging students amid the rapid-fire clicking of cameras”. Further the article informs the reader that Melania Trump and Queen Rania’s visit to the Excel Academy was meant to emphasize the Trump administration’s stance on school choice. Stating that this “(…) was also a part of a day of photo ops intended to cast a softer lens on a presidential administration grappling with several international crises, and provide another glimpse of a first lady whose sporadic appearances in Washington have revealed relatively little about her own leadership style”.

The next section is focused on their husbands. The article present Mr. Trump’s standpoint and opinion about the civil war in Syria, followed by a short presentation of King Abdullah, explaining that this was his second visit to Washington since the Inauguration day.

In the next section, focus is on Melania and Raina, as the author again pinpoints that Melania has revealed relatively little about her approach to the role of first lady. Queen Raina is
described as a woman who has been in the public’s eye for decades, explaining that she is an education activist and a member of Jordanian royalty. Further the author claims that Queen Raina’s public presence is well covered with bilingual updates on her trips to hospitals, family events and schools. Further in the article, the focus shifts back to Melania Trump’s and Queen Rania’s visit at the Excel Academy. The reader is told that they asked questions to the children by stating that; “Mrs. Trump stuck to the basics, asking the students for their names and grade levels”, while Raina asked follow-up questions about the coursework and curriculum. Later in this section, the author illustrates that Melania later made a statement that was relayed by the White House. The statement was “Education is critical to our efforts to shine a light on the topic of gender equality and empowerment of women”, further quoted “Hearing directly from teachers and the students who attend the school was an important step in the dialogue needed to further my agenda as first lady of the United States”.

The last section of this article focuses on Melania Trump and Queen Rania’s clothing. Their meeting is framed as; “battle of the stylish”, explaining that both women appeared in “structured looks”. Melania is described; “Mrs. Trump in a Kelly green dress with a center slit and belt” and the description of Queen Raina was: “(…) in a black ensemble with a high neck”. The chief fashion critic of the New York Times offers her analysis by stating that both of them seem to have dressed for business by covering themselves up. The critic states that “It’s a very safe look, for both women, if not one that conveys fun or relaxation - or even modernity. Rather, both looks respect the office, and the idea of a state visit. Though interestingly, there is also something subtly militaristic in the tailored lines of each outfit”.

**Analysis of article 6**

The introduction of this article is illustrated as if it was a fairytale: “A billionaire, a queen and an American first lady walked into a public charter school on Wednesday, collecting bouquets, examining owl pellets and hugging students amid the rapid-fire clicking from cameras”. This could, in my opinion, have been illustrated in so many other ways. The connotations through this metaphor leads the reader away from the actual content. Further when Melania Trump and Queen Raina visits the Excel Academy, it’s explained through the quote “(…) [this] was also a part of a day of photo ops intended to cast a softer lens on a presidential administration grappling with several international crises, and provide another glimpse of a first lady whose sporadic appearances in Washington have revealed relatively little about her own leadership style”. This
could be seen as condemnatory. The connotations regarding this quote makes me think that their meeting was only based on creating a positive public image, and nothing else. Again, when focusing on intertextuality, Melania Trump is depicted as absent and irresponsible.

Next section of the text compares Raina to Melania, where Raina is depicted through positive terms by explaining her public presence with bilingual updates on trips to hospitals, family events and schools. This is put in contrast to Melania, when they both asked questions to the children at the academy. The article reveals that Melania’s questions were basic, and that Raina’s questions more sophisticated. Here, Melania is again depicted as illiterate. The statement from Melania Trump regarding education is in my opinion neutrally put. Her statement is displayed without further comments, but somehow it is overshadowed by the earlier accusations about Melania’s basic questions. Looking at intertextuality, Melania Trump is compared to Raina which is similar to the earlier comparisons to Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton. It seems that she is constantly compared to other women, and so far she has never been displayed as the “winner”.

The last section about social media and the framing of the meeting as “battle of the stylish”, is somehow ironic. I don’t understand how their clothing would in any sort of way be of interest in a “Politics” section, especially when the article involves content of education, crises and serious matters in general. The statement from the chief fashion critic of the New York Times that “both looks respect the office, and the idea of a state visit”. This might force the reader to agree to this vague statement. It is almost as if it seems as if there are rules about how to dress.

**Summary of the results**

The main depictions found from the analysis are Melania Trump as: absent, non-traditional, irresponsible, unhappy, greedy, non-supportive, mimicking other First Ladies, illiterate, responsible for her husband’s actions, that she prioritizes motherhood, and in comparison to others. When looking at these depictions from a structural perspective of intertextuality, I have noticed that the most common portrayal of Melania Trump in relation to the role of First Lady is that she is absent. This has been observed in eight different occasions in the analysis. The depictions: Irresponsible, Mimicking others, Responsible for her husband’s actions, and that she Prioritizes motherhood has been observed at least two times each in the analysis. Looking at the interdiscursivity from a structural perspective of these newspaper articles, it seems that
there are expectations of what a First Lady role should be, although it is contradictory, because the articles have also shown that the position of first ladyship is a role without any particular rules.

It seems that, when Melania Trump is active, the focus shifts to the period of time when she was absent. In other words, it does not seem to matter what Melania does. Her actions are either compared to previous First Ladies who either performed better, or that she is mimicking others when she is active in her role. When something “good” is described, it is quickly followed up by something negative. In contrast to Wertheimer’s statement (Wertheimer, 2004, referred to in Finneman, Thomas, 2014, p. 221) that First Ladies are viewed as “Symbols of American Womanhood”, it seems that Melaina Trump is portrayed as unworthy of being a symbol of American womanhood. Although, I interpret that it is not mainly connected to her background or education. It seems that it has more to do with her husband Donald Trump. Melania Trump got depicted as responsible for her husband’s actions in the analysis, and it seems that the authors views on Donald Trump gives effect in the depiction of Melania. The statement from Finneman and Thomas (p. 220) that it is problematic to represent a First Lady as an idealized figure of American womanhood “particularly in the midst of destabilizing gender roles” is interesting to me. In accordance to the depiction of Melania as a non-traditional First Lady, it seems that, when looking at interdiscursivity, the symbol of the position is primarily expected to be traditional. When Melania is described as non-traditional I interpret it through negative connotation. It is interesting in comparison to Burns (2004, p. 216-217) who wrote that Hillary Clinton was presented as a strong, independent woman by the New York Times. Regarding Melania Trump, the perception is the contrary, the framing of Melania as un-traditional is illustrated in a negative light. The “deviance” from the traditional norms seems to be viewed as irresponsible and ignorant instead of strong and independent.

When looking at Wekkin’s (2000, p. 608) statement regarding the paradox that: “None of these roles are prescribed for, or specifically prohibited to, the first ladyship by constitutional law” it seems like there is a double standard in the perception of how a first lady role should be played. There are no specific rules, but yet a First Lady is expected to be fully active.

Wekkin propose, as earlier mentioned, that the first ladyship is an American “institution”, followed by statement that certain First Lady roles are more likely than others to attract popular support, and that the ones that follow the traditional order are more likely to gain support than those who founder against the traditional order (p. 608). I find this relatable to the portrayal of
Mrs. Trump, since she is depicted as deviating from the traditional role, which indirectly means that she struggle to gain support from the New York Times and their readers. I would therefore agree with Wekkin that the New York Times in this case embraces and maintains the existing American polity (ibid, p. 608). Instead of questioning the polity, the “blame” is pointed at Melania for not maintaining the expected order of the role. In article 1, as earlier mentioned, the article tells the reader that Michelle Obama wanted to stay in Chicago, but her political aides instructed her that the public would never accept such move, and therefore she moved to the White House. It is almost as if the article tells the reader that it does not matter what Melania’s personal opinion is, instead she should do what the public wants, because Michelle Obama did it.

In relation to Wekkin (2000, p. 608) it seems that the New York Times is trying to maintain the traditional order of the “Washington Community”. In Article 1, the reader is informed that White House events are among the heaviest tasks for first ladies. This is an indication that First Ladies are considered as *hostesses*. A further connection is evident through Borelli and her examination of autobiographies from the First Ladies: Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush, where Borelli analyzed their roles as: *the nation’s hostess, public symbol, presidential protector* and *political partner* (2002, p. 359). I suggest that these roles are “traditional” when looking at the duties and characteristics of women in terms of gender contract. Yet, it seems that these duties are still in evidence when analyzing a first lady in the 21st century. It seems that the New York Times is presenting the idea of a First Lady who is expected to fulfil the roles identified by Borelli. Although, as Wekkin (2000, p. 608) points out, being a hostess is no longer enough; a First Lady must demonstrate social concern for the public and their fellow Americans in order to compete. In the articles Melania Trump has shown social concern for women’s rights, internet bullying, education etc. Yet, the social concern seems to be overshadowed by various personal or impersonal allegations regarding her, her husband or his staff.
Discussion

The gender contract of the First Lady role seems to be in conflict in modern times. Hirdman’s (1990, p. 78-79) distinction of two logics: The separation of gender, and the primacy of the male norm is in my opinion evident when analyzing the portrayal of Melania Trump as First Lady. A First Lady seems to be bound to expectations of traditional character. Yet, we live in a modern society where gender equality is promoted in the mainstream broadsheets. There is a contradiction between the New York Time’s subtext regarding societal expectations of Melania Trump, and the newspaper’s image as a promoting modern gender norms. These discourses seem to be evident throughout this analysis. In terms of interdiscursivity, these two discourses seem to be in conflict with each other, and somehow the traditional view of a First Lady seems to be the discourse that is mainly promoted by the New York Times regarding the First Lady role.

When looking at the third level social practices, the consequences of the way Melania Trump is depicted as First Lady can be seen as problematic. As discussed earlier, The New York Times can be interpreted as portraying the role of First Lady from a traditional gender order perspective. It would be wrong however, not to discuss this through an ideological perspective. The last time a Republican Presidential candidate was endorsed by the New York Times was in 1956. The latest Presidential candidate endorsement was for Hillary Clinton (New York Times, 2016). I get the perception that the authors are biased against Melania Trump from an ideological perspective. This perspective might be related to bias against Donald Trump, and it would be interesting for future research to further examine how much Donald Trump affects Melania’s popularity. In relation to Liz Spayd’s article (New York Times, 2016) about complaints that the New York Times sways to the left, followed by the statement of the chief editor Dean Baquet saying “I want us to be perceived as fair and honest to the world, not just a segment of it. It’s a really difficult goal. Do we pull it off all the time? No.” I would say that the New York Times is not fair and honest to the world regarding the reports on Melania Trump.

From a structural perspective, the New York Times produces and reproduces a depiction of Melania Trump as an untrustworthy First Lady (viz. Fairclough’s negative critique). Readers absorb these depictions of her (viz. Fairclough’s positive critique). These analyzed articles about Melania Trump represent a particular ideological discourse, which means that she will always be found lacking.
References


**Empirical Newspaper Articles**


