

The Invisibility of Violence:

**A Necropolitical Analysis of the National Inquiry's Final Report on
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)**

Gurbani Purba

A thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in Criminology

Department of Criminology
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Chapter One: Introduction to the Research	1
The National Inquiry’s Final Report on MMIWG.....	3
Roadmap.....	5
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	9
Part I – Contextual Background.....	10
The Beginning of a Dark Chapter – The Indian Residential School System (IRS).....	10
The Indian Act.....	13
Part II – Violence against Indigenous Women.....	17
Economic and Social Circumstances Facilitating Violence.....	18
State Abandonment Sustaining Violence.....	20
Social Discourses to Define Indigenous Women.....	21
Conclusion.....	26
Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework.....	28
From Biopolitics to Necropolitics.....	29
Necropolitics.....	32
Necropolitics and Colonialism.....	33
Necropolitics as Structural Violence.....	37
Necropolitics as Organized Abandonment.....	40
Conclusion.....	46
Chapter Four: Methodological Approach.....	48
Data Collection and Sampling.....	48
The Paradigm Guiding this Research.....	50
Research Design: Qualitative Thematic Analysis.....	52
Conducting a Thematic Analysis of The National Inquiry’s Final Report on MMIWG.....	54
Limitations of Thematic Analysis.....	59
Validity and Interpretation.....	59
Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity.....	60
Ethical Accountability.....	61

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Conclusion.....	62
Chapter Five: Data Analysis.....	63
Theme #1: Biopolitical Functions of a Healthy Citizen.....	64
1.1 Insufficient Service Delivery: Healthcare.....	65
1.2 Insufficient Service Delivery: Police Responses.....	74
1.3 Insufficient Service Delivery: Canadian Justice System.....	77
Theme # 2: Death worlds.....	85
2.1 Underreporting of violence to police.....	87
2.2 Child welfare System.....	91
Theme #3: Organized Abandonment.....	99
3.1 Housing Insecurity.....	99
3.2 Barriers to Education and Training.....	103
Concluding Remarks.....	110
References.....	114

List of Tables

Table 1: List of Themes and Subthemes.....	57
--	----

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Vicki Chartrand, whose guidance has been integral to both this project and my academic development. Dr. Chartrand, your consistent mentorship, encouragement, and support throughout this endeavor have been invaluable. I am deeply grateful for your unwavering belief in my potential and your commitment to my growth.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my family and friends for their unwavering support throughout this process. In particular, I wish to offer a special acknowledgment to my immigrant parents and my late grandparents, who devoted their lives to creating a better future for their family. Their hard work, sacrifice, and determination to seek a better life for their kids and grandkids has provided me with endless opportunities, including the opportunity to pursue post-graduate education.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge my husband. Your patience, love and support has been remarkable throughout this process. I am so grateful to have you as my partner in life.

Abstract

The National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls represents one of the first comprehensive national studies that examines the acts of state-based genocide against Indigenous women and girls. The goal of this thesis is to investigate the findings of the National Inquiry to present a necropolitical insight into the heightened experiences of violence and death that affect Indigenous women and girls. Using a theoretical lens of necropolitics, as developed by Mbembe, and other scholars, this thesis provides an analysis of the National Inquiry's Final Report to see how the state is involved in the politics of death in the lives of Indigenous women and complicit in the violence against them. Where the National Inquiry made the state, practitioners, and the public responsible for addressing the murders and disappearances, this thesis highlights the limitations in this recommendation because, from a theoretical lens of necropolitics, violence, and death are inherent activities of the state. This thesis leads the path forward to welcome future research that envisions the need for community options outside of state-based operations in connecting and building community capacity.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Chapter One: Introduction to the Research

Considerable research shows that Indigenous women face systemic vulnerabilities, which significantly increase their risk of experiencing violence and death (Anderson, 2016; Martin & Walia, 2019; Palmater, 2016; Strega et al., 2014). The research shows that these vulnerabilities, including sexual assault, poverty, and unsafe housing, are living conditions maintained by the state. Few studies, however, consider the direct relationship the state has to produce such levels of violence and death. Moving beyond this, my research aims to examine how Indigenous women and girls are subjected to heightened experiences of violence and death by asking: how are these outcomes structurally enabled and sustained by the settler? To answer this question and consider how the state is implicated in maintaining the condition of violence and death, the study analyzes the four pillars of 1) culture, 2) health and wellness, 3) human security, and 4) justice of the *National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019).

This research contends that violence against Indigenous women and girls is not merely a legacy of colonialism, but an enduring phenomenon rooted in systemic racism perpetuated by the settler state. While existing scholarships frequently document disparities and the racialized treatment of Indigenous women, there remains a notable gap in critically examining the state's complicity in sustaining such violence (Simpson, 2013; Palacios, 2016). The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (2019) represents the first national investigation into this violence that broadly looked at culture, colonialism, child welfare, health, justice, and policing. The Final Report (2019) recognized the systemic racialized treatment of Indigenous women, placing the responsibility for its 231 Calls for Justice on the state, public practitioners, and the public to address violence against Indigenous women. Given the extensive level of

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

violence experienced, it is not unreasonable to question the implications of making the state and an apathetic public responsible for addressing a violence that has been endemic to Canada since colonization. This research analyzes the Inquiry's findings to show how the experienced violence is a patterned outcome that emerges when institutions repeatedly expose Indigenous women and girls to harm, deny protection, or withdraw resources through routine governance, institutional decision-making, and policy design.

To do so, this research applies Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, also known as the politics of death, to examine the institutionalization of state violence and how it becomes normalized and sustained under the guise of what would seem 'necessary' or 'reasonable.' Achille Mbembe's writing on necropolitics extends Michel Foucault's theory of biopolitics, grounded in the notion of *biopower*. This refers to a discursive expression of power exerted upon entire populations to deploy practices based on the preservation of a "valued" life. While biopolitics is instrumental in understanding how certain groups are permitted to live, necropolitics offers a distinct lens to analyze how groups are deliberately positioned to die. It does not supplement biopolitics; rather, it presents an alternative framework for theorizing death as a sovereign power over life.

I argue that, while the National Inquiry offers an important analysis of the disproportionate encounters of violence and death among Indigenous women and girls, it does not offer a deeper analysis of how the state is implicated in the violence. Where the National Inquiry made the state, public practitioners, and the public responsible for addressing the murders and disappearances, my research shows the limits in this recommendation because, from a theoretical lens of necropolitics, violence and death are an inherent activity of the state. My research focus then is on how the state governs by sorting populations into those whose lives are

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

supported and those whose lives are treated as expendable through neglect, slow violence, and abandonment. This includes the normalization of preventable harm, such as unsafe housing, inadequate healthcare, barriers to justice, and institutional disbelief, where Indigenous women's safety is routinely deprioritized. By linking these dynamics to the National Inquiry's four pillars, the thesis situates the Final Report not only as documentation of violence, but as a window into the political and institutional conditions that make that violence possible. I conclude that without this additional analysis of a politics of death, it may be difficult to change the ongoing experiences of violence and death that continue to affect Indigenous women and girls disproportionately.

The National Inquiry's Final Report on MMIWG

The Final Report (2019) includes testimonies, evidence, and submissions from survivors, families, experts, academics, and Knowledge Keepers and advocates for systemic change to address Indigenous communities' ongoing human rights violations. Rather than treating the Final Report solely as a policy document or summary of findings, this thesis approaches it as a critical site where the state both acknowledges systemic violence and simultaneously limits how that violence is understood and addressed. The document emphasizes the importance of relationships, truth-telling, and collective action in reclaiming power and place for MMIWG2S+ people. Additionally, it calls for fulfilling the 231 Calls for Justice to promote safety, security, health, and justice for Indigenous communities.

Some key findings include 1) a lack of meaningful action to address the underlying conditions perpetuating violence against Indigenous women, 2) systemic discrimination leading to a lack of health care available to Indigenous populations, and 3) the failure of police services to ensure justice and protection for Indigenous women and girls. The National Inquiry's Final

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Report (2019) examines how the state reinforces and continuously perpetuates violence against Indigenous women. This is relevant to my research because a necropolitical analysis requires an understanding of how violence is defined by state inaction, abandonment, and structural violence – all of which reproduce violence at the level of the state. The National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) was an ideal fit for this research, as its focus implicates the state and demands nuanced insight into the politics of death.

The National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) on The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) offers a comprehensive examination to understand the root causes of violence among Indigenous women. In response to the findings within the Final Report, over 1,200 recommendations were logged, with various reports and commissions linked to combating violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. Some key recommendations are addressing the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous women as a violation of their Indigenous and human rights through a gendered lens, addressing the lack of health care available to Indigenous populations, and ensuring justice and protection through adequate and bias-free policing services. The recommendations presented in the Final Report are directed to various stakeholders, including all levels of government (i.e., federal, provincial, and territorial), law enforcement agencies, service providers, community organizations, educational institutions, the research community, and non-Indigenous Canadians, to foster systemic change.

The recommendations presented in the Final Report call upon all levels of government to act to address systemic issues and barriers faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, including implementing policy changes, allocating resources, and ensuring justice and protection. The Report also calls upon law enforcement agencies, specifically police services, to improve their responses to cases of violence to ensure bias-free

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

policing, effective oversight, and accessible remedies for violence. The recommendations also call on service providers in sectors such as healthcare, social services, and justice to deliver culturally safe and trauma-informed services to Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. Service providers are urged to reflect Indigenous communities' unique needs and experiences in their practices. The report also calls on community organizations, like Indigenous-led organizations and community groups, to lead initiatives that address the specific needs and challenges faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

Furthermore, non-Indigenous Canadians are called to support the efforts to end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. They are called upon to act as allies, challenge stereotypes, and advocate for systemic change. Moreover, recommendations are also directed toward educational institutions to promote awareness, understanding, and respect for Indigenous histories, cultures, and rights. Lastly, the recommendations call upon the research community to improve data collection methods and research efforts related to violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as it plays a role in informing evidence-based policy and programming.

Roadmap

Chapter one begins with an investigation of the literature that looks at *how* violence against Indigenous women and girls is made possible. Part one of my literature review maps a contextual background that examines the colonial context and its role in shaping violence against Indigenous women, namely through the Indian residential school system and the Indian Act. The contextual background in part one provides a foundation for moulding part two of my literature review, which examines the development of discourses that continue to reinforce and normalize violence and death among Indigenous women.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework of Necropolitics (also known as the politics of death), which examines the institutionalization of state violence and how it becomes normalized and sustained in what would seem ‘necessary’ or ‘reasonable.’ Chapter three outlines the methodological approach that was used to collect and analyze data for my research on the National Inquiry’s Final Report on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

Chapter four presents the themes that were found throughout this research. The themes I found in this research were the biopolitics of a healthy citizen, death worlds, and abandonment. In establishing my first theme, I applied the theoretical concept of biopolitics to examine how mechanisms of control weigh on the human body to maintain well-being in a strict, control-like way. My second theme outlines how Indigenous women are circulated outside of social functioning as a result of a failure to take care of themselves or engaging in “risky” lifestyles, which is defined through the concept of biopower. Biopower refers to the power over life within the social sphere that develops or consolidates a norm, and those who deviate from these norms are perceived as abnormal. As a result, they are neglected or invisible, like ghosts that are present but not seen, because of the perceived inability to be self-controlled, autonomous, and well-adjusted members of a free society. In looking at the National Inquiry’s Final Report (2019), this is apparent when state institutions respond to Indigenous women and girls. For example, in the context of healthcare, I demonstrate how the healthcare system fails to provide adequate responses because of the underlying biopolitical functions that dictate who is deserving or worthy of care.

In establishing the second theme, I applied the theoretical concepts of structural violence that speak to how the state facilitates the creation of death worlds that routinely normalize and

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

justify violence against Indigenous women. The recommendations presented in the Final Report call upon all levels of government to act to address systemic issues and barriers faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, including implementing policy changes, allocating resources, and ensuring justice and protection. In developing my analysis, I discovered that state-based structural violence confines Indigenous women within these death worlds and prevents them from escaping because of how state-based structural violence normalizes and justifies violence against Indigenous women.

For my third and final theme, I applied the theoretical concept of organized abandonment (Gilmore, 2008) to establish how the politics of death is upheld through the deliberate and systematic withdrawal of state support and services. Using Gilmore's framework, I explored how intentional disinvestment in racialized communities contributes to the erosion of safe housing, reliable jobs, and a social safety net. My analysis revealed that the leading cause of violence and death experienced by Indigenous women and girls is the absence of adequate infrastructure within communities. This finding underscore how spaces marked by social and economic deprivation become sites where vulnerabilities persist.

This thesis sets out to examine how violence and death experienced by Indigenous women and girls are structurally enabled and sustained by the settler state and concludes by demonstrating how the state is far more implicated than the National Inquiry has shown. Ultimately, this thesis argues that addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls requires more than improved implementation of recommendations or increased institutional accountability. Without confronting the necropolitical foundations of the settler state, efforts to prevent death and harm risk reproducing the very conditions they seek to undo. This research, therefore, contributes to a deeper understanding of state violence by demonstrating how the

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

politics of death are embedded in the everyday functioning of Canadian institutions and that we need to move beyond it (see Chartrand & Foshay, 2022; Chartrand, 2022).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review examines how violence against Indigenous women is structured and sustained by colonial and state mechanisms to contextualize the necropolitical analysis developed later in this thesis. In addition to the extensive research carried out by the National Inquiry, the vast majority of the literature in the field centers the disproportionate experiences of violence among Indigenous women and substantiates how violence is ongoing, systemic, and normalized. By providing a historical trajectory to illustrate the profound and ongoing nature of these harms, this review reveals gaps in the existing literature, including a tendency to look to the state to rectify a violence that, as I argue, is inherent to its character.

As discussed in my introduction, where the National Inquiry makes the state, practitioners, and the public responsible for addressing the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls, my research shows the potential danger in this recommendation due to the state's involvement in upholding the conditions for violence and death. The objective of this literature review is to provide a summary of the research that focuses on the disproportionate experiences of violence among Indigenous women in Canada and to analyze how violence against Indigenous women is made possible as one of the primary activities of the state.

Part one of my literature review presents sources that provide a contextual background of the colonial context of violence experienced by Indigenous women, specifically through the Indian residential school system and the Indian Act as a disenfranchisement legislation. Part two discusses the rise of gendered violence and how colonialism and its discourses influence the experiences of violence and death among Indigenous women. The review examines prominent social discourses, such as the 'risky lifestyle discourse,' to understand how these contribute to

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Indigenous women facing violence. To conclude, the literature review offers a foundation for understanding how violence against Indigenous women is facilitated. As this research indicates, violence against Indigenous women is enabled by state operations, specifically through necropolitics.

Part I -Contextual Background

This section of the literature review discusses the historical context of how violence against Indigenous women in Canada occurs. It begins by highlighting how Indigenous women are disproportionately subjected to violence (Anderson, 2016; Luoma, 2021; Martin & Walia, 2019; Palmater, 2016; Strega et al., 2014) and explores its connection to the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) (Barnes & Josefowitz, 2019; Bombay et al., 2014; Burrage et al., 2021), as well as the marginalization of Indigenous women (Bhandar, 2016; Day, 2018; Joseph, 2018). In particular, the effects of the Indian Residential Schools in sustaining violence are discussed in this section. In addition to the Indian Residential Schools, the role of women within Indigenous societies was impacted as a result of European encounters, which is uncovered and further outlines how the *Indian Act's* disenfranchisement provisions further compromised the role of Indigenous women and how this continues to impact them today.

The Beginning of a Dark Chapter – The Indian Residential School System (IRS)

The Indian Residential School System was one of the earliest examples of violent dispossession, forcibly taking Indigenous children away from their families with the aim of making them abandon traditional values and Indigenous ways of life on reserves, and assimilate into mainstream society (Kagedan, 2020, p. 32). The literature shows that the Indian Residential School System is considered an act of genocide that includes the erasure of language, culture and the destruction of families because political leaders demeaned Indigenous beliefs and practices. Scholars argue (Kagedan, 2020; MacDonald & Hudson, 2012) that the Indian Residential

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Schools (IRS) produced genocidal outcomes by instilling intergenerational trauma and promoting cultural disintegration. In addition, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) confirms that the IRS enacted by the Canadian government were a form of cultural genocide because the intent was to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Indigenous peoples and gain control over their land and resources, with the idea that if every Indigenous person had been absorbed into the body politic, there would be no reserves, no treaties, and no rights (Joseph, 2018). In an effort to assimilate these children, the residential school system carried out abusive practices, including the prohibition of speaking their native language and observing their culture and religious practices (Burrage et al., 2021; Hansen & Dim, 2019; Joseph, 2018; Kagedan, 2020). This idea was supported by Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, who wrote, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem...our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic... (Joseph, 2018, p. 8). Residential schools have had lasting consequences that continue to affect generations and communities today. Some of the significant long-term consequences that are relevant to this research are the disproportionate rates of violence affecting Indigenous women, as well as their social and economic status. The Canadian residential school system functioned as a deliberate tool of cultural erasure against Indigenous peoples that harboured mechanisms of assimilation, displacement, and destruction of Indigenous identity (Kagedan, 2020). The children were exposed to various harms and mistreatment, including sexual assault, harsh punishments like whipping, and the deprivation of food (Kagedan, 2020, p. 31).

There is a wide range of impacts that stem from the residential schools, including addictions issues, low self-esteem (Hansen & Dim, 2019; Burrage, Momper, & Gone, 2021), and

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

loss of connection to culture and family (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Barnes & Josefowitz, 2019; Burrage, Momper, & Gone, 2021). For instance, Burrage, Momper, and Gone's (2021) secondary analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada is a qualitative study that focused on the effects of the IRS and healing from attending the IRS. Their research found that the impact of the IRS experiences included individual losses (i.e., loss of wellness, voice, meanings, sense of self), losses of connection (i.e., family, community, and culture), and broader impacts (i.e., widespread suicide, substance abuse, domestic abuse) (p. 34). A key finding of their research highlights the individual losses, which broadly refer to loss of connection to family, culture, and language. The loss of family connection was due to the destruction of family bonds through removal and prohibition of interaction with family members at the residential school, difficulty giving and receiving love, poor treatment of loved ones due to experiences of abuse, and difficulties parenting (p. 34). Similarly, Barnes and Josefowitz (2019) discover a comparable finding from former students who recall feeling lonely and lacking for affection.

A significant impact stemming from the IRS is the multi-generational effects that are widespread across communities. For instance, a study conducted by Burrage, Momper, and Gone (2021) shared examples of suffering parents and grandparents whose children had gone to the IRS, highlighting broader impacts, such as family disintegration, suicide, bullying, and widespread sickness (Burrage, Momper, and Gone, 2021, p. 36). Using a sample of 143 First Nations adults, Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2014) investigate the legacy of the IRS and the effects on the mental health of the next generation. The study conducted by Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2014) demonstrates that the trauma of IRS attendance does not end with survivors but continues to affect their children, resulting in an intergenerational effect. Their

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

study suggests that second-generation survivors may be more sensitive to stress due to inherited trauma and systemic marginalization (Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman, 2014, p. 326).

Colonial harms, like the Indian Residential Schools, have perpetuated in the ongoing victimization, criminalization, and overincarceration of Indigenous women (McGuire & Murdoch, 2021). The overrepresentation of Indigenous persons in Correctional Services Canada (CSC) was shown to replace the Indian agent (Chartrand, 2019), especially for Indigenous women who represent the fastest-growing prison population (Pollack, 2019; McGuire & Murdoch, 2021). The Canadian penal system was shown to be shaped by colonial goals of controlling and eliminating Indigenous presence. For example, Chartrand (2019) shows in her work how the Canadian penal system is not a neutral institution, but one that is designed to support the settler colonial project through displacement and dispossession. Similar to the IRS, the prison functions as a modern instrument of displacement, like forced relocation.

The Indian Act

The *Indian Act* was the official policy that enacted the Indian Residential School system. It played a pivotal role in governing and disenfranchising Indigenous life through punitive rules and violent prohibitions. The 1876 legislation encouraged, rather than compelled, Indigenous peoples to give up their Indian status in exchange for a settler colonial benefit, like the right to vote (Kelm & Smith, 2018, p. 96). *The Indian Act* attempted to eradicate the role of Indigenous identity, specifically on the role of Indigenous women, by affecting their status as Indigenous persons in cases where they married non-Indigenous men or left the reserves.

Before European contact, Indigenous communities were predominantly matriarchal societies (Anderson, 2000; Joseph, 2018; Tucker, 2016). In some communities, women maintained the tribes, and the authority lay with them, including keeping the lands, fields, and

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

harvest (Joseph, 2018, p. 20). They were also historically the ones who served as arbitrators of peace and war, arranged marriages, and had authority over children; the order of succession was founded on matrilineal descent (Joseph, 2018, p. 20). Since Indigenous communities were primarily matriarchal, the shift to patriarchal societies significantly hindered Indigenous women's presence. In their research on colonial constructs of the "traditional woman," Martin-Hill (2003) stresses that colonial patriarchal values have deeply impacted Indigenous women's social relevance:

The emergence of an Indigenous "traditional" woman who is silent and obedient to male authority contributes to the image of a voiceless woman whom I call She No Speaks, born from the tapestry of our colonial landscape...defeated, hunched over, head down, and with no future (Martin-Hill, 2003, p. 108).

The *Indian Act* has been known for displacing the social and political position of women within societies through disenfranchisement, which was propelled by how Indigenous women were broadly conceived among white settler societies.

The literature suggests that the colonization process began by dismantling gender equality within Indigenous communities, which was central for gaining access and control over lands. This was accomplished by reorganizing family and community structures and transforming Indigenous women into subordinates (Anderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2004). Kim Anderson (2000) provides multiple examples from various nations across the Americas, examining the status of Indigenous women in land-based communities of the past. She discusses the process that took place when Western patriarchy infringed upon and altered an understanding of womanhood.

Traditionally, men were responsible for hunting and protecting the community. In contrast, women worked in agriculture, food harvesting/preparation, early child care, and housing. The division of labour was based on practical needs, as women were both reproducers

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

and producers. At the same time, men procured the necessary items, which were then transformed into food, shelter, or clothing (Anderson, 2000, p. 35). However, the imposition of the European division of labour trapped women within the limitations of the domestic role, with men making tribal decisions while women played secondary, less important roles, and childbearing and caregiving roles were diminished.

The European political system was employed to break down the political and economic power of Indigenous women with the introduction of disenfranchisement, which was fueled by a shift from matriarchy to patriarchy. The *Indian Act* displaces the social and political position of women within societies through disenfranchisement. The following specifications set out the criteria that defined who was able to hold Indian status: any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band, any child of such person, and any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person (Bhandar, 2016; Day, 2018; Joseph, 2018). These disenfranchisement provisions, including section 12 of the 1951 *Indian Act*, outline that when an Indian woman marries a non-Indian man, she no longer is entitled to be registered as an Indian and loses their status (Bhandar, 2016; Joseph, 2018).

According to a report published by Public Safety Canada, the *Indian Act's* disenfranchisement provisions have created issues of dislocation and isolation for Indigenous women because they are forced to leave their families and communities to relocate to urban settings. Jessica Stark (2009) argues that patriarchal elements of the *Indian Act* inhibit the social disempowerment of Indigenous women, which is consequently internalized within Indigenous communities today. For example, Stark (2009) highlights that in an attempt to eliminate sexually discriminatory consequences, the Canadian government tabled amendments to the *Indian Act* through Bill C-31 in 1985, which determined that marriage was no longer an indicator of Indian

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Status and those who lost their status are eligible for reinstatement (Stark, 2009, p. 49). However, under Bill C-31, there was a separate class of women who qualified for status yet were disqualified for band membership. These women fell into a category known as *bandless Indians*, who had been denied reserve residency and all affiliation with their band councils (p. 50). While there are attempts to retract the discriminatory disenfranchisement provisions of the *Indian Act*, the patriarchal remnants continue to persist. The disenfranchisement provisions within the *Indian Act*, which pose issues of dislocation and dispossession for Indigenous women, are linked to social and economic marginalization by placing them in precarious positions, such as living in poverty due to a lack of access to housing, education, and employment. This finding relates to this thesis by establishing how socio-economic factors place Indigenous women in precarious circumstances, which in turn exposes them to experiencing further violence and death.

As a result of the social disempowerment of disenfranchisement, Indigenous women are placed in positions of living in poverty due to barriers related to housing, employment, poor health, and access to social support (de Finney, 2017; Stark, 2009; Wabie, 1998; Wesley, 2012). The literature demonstrates that since the colonization process, many societal gaps have been created that directly impacted the lives, roles, and responsibilities of Indigenous women (de Finney, 2017; Stark, 2009; Wabie, 1998; Wesley, 2012). For instance, the gaps within the formal education system are indicative of how young Indigenous women are living in poverty due to the barriers mentioned above (de Finney, 2017; Stark, 2009; Wabie, 1998; Wesley, 2012). Moreover, the increased exposure to impoverished lifestyles opens the floodgates to experiencing violence and death at disproportionate rates (de Finney, 2017; Day, 2018; Stark, 2009).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Establishing the relevance of how Indigenous women were socially disempowered is critical to understanding the violence because of its connection to social and economic marginalization (Amnesty et al., 2019; Martin & Walia, 2019). This literature is connected to my research by factoring into how the state sustains the conditions for violence and death through state-based structural policies and practices, resulting in violence and death.

Part II -Violence against Indigenous Women

Whereas Part One provided the foundation, Part Two of this literature review examines how the colonial context shapes the violence experienced by Indigenous women. In contrast, part two of this literature review examines how the colonial context and its discourses currently shape experiences of violence and death among Indigenous women.

The literature suggests that Indigenous women are at a greater likelihood of encountering violence compared to non-Indigenous women (Hansen & Dim, 2019; Luoma, 2021; McDiarmid, 2019; McGruder, 2022; Monchalin et al., 2019; Rule, 2018). The General Social Survey (GSS) in 2014 found that Indigenous women had an overall rate of violent victimization double that of Indigenous men (Boyce, 2016, p. 3). The findings of high victimization rates among the women could not be fully explained by an increased presence of other victimization risk factors, and Indigenous identity remains one of the primary risk factors for violent victimizations (Boyce, 2016, p. 3). Andrea Smith (2003) similarly argues that violence is not only an attack on her identity as a woman but on her Indigenous identity (Smith, 2003, p. 71). In the context of sexual violence, Smith (2003) shows how sexual violence is inseparable from colonialism through years of violent dispossession as discussed above. Smith (1999, p. 32) contends that colonialism and sexual violence cannot be separated because the notion of rape is considered to be a tool of racism and colonialism.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The literature indicates that settler colonialism, similar to the Indian Residential Schools, is responsible for the disproportionate experiences of violence and victimization that Indigenous women face today. Specifically, the embeddedness of colonialism within the political, social, and economic fabric of society contributes to the ongoing vulnerability to violence and victimization (Martin & Walia, 2019; Monchalin et al., 2019). The ongoing vulnerability of violence and victimization among Indigenous women, driven by numerous factors, is discussed further below.

Economic and Social Circumstances Facilitating Violence

Much of the literature in the field indicate that the disproportionate experiences of violence can be linked to the socio-economic position of Indigenous women (Amnesty et al., 2019; Martin & Walia, 2019). A seminal text, Carol Muree Martin and Harsha Walia's report, *Red Women Rising* (2019), examines the disproportionate levels of violence, poverty, homelessness, child apprehension, criminalization, and fatal overdoses within Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

The Downtown Eastside Women's Center (DEWC) is at the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. It provides support to women and their children through a drop-in center and a low-barrier emergency night shelter for all self-identified women who face homelessness and violence. Over 70 percent of women who access this center identify as Indigenous, and a vast majority of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the DTES accessed DEWC. Over five months, Red Women Rising reported 113 Indigenous survivors of violence, who comprise biological family members or families of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, and 15 non-Indigenous women who are friends or street families of Indigenous women who are missing, have overdosed, or died from violence within the DTES. This report highlights how poverty is one of the main factors contributing to increased vulnerability. For instance, the report suggests

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

that the national poverty rate for Indigenous women is 36%, which is more than double the rate for non-Indigenous women (Martin & Walia, 2019, p. 18). A separate study cited within this report indicates that one-third of women on welfare reported staying or returning to an abusive partner for financial reasons (Martin & Walia, 2019, p. 18). Furthermore, *Red Women Rising* further highlights how violence against Indigenous women is a manifestation of the colonial-gendered violence that has targeted Indigenous women and girls since European contact.

In addition to their economic position, the literature gives attention to how Indigenous women are at a greater risk of experiencing violence due to social barriers and systemic racism. Amnesty International's (2004, p. 106) report examines discrimination in acts of violence carried out against Indigenous women in Canadian towns and cities, which takes the form of overt cultural prejudice and implicit or systemic biases in policies and actions of government officials. The discrimination that plays out in policies and practices puts Indigenous women in harm's way. Amnesty International's (2004) report is a compilation of several published reports, findings of inquests, government inquiries, and interviews with survivors, families, and organizations. This research shows how responses to violence are shaped by systemic biases in policies and actions of government officials, which contribute to further instances of violence.

Similarly, Jessica McDiarmid (2019) outlines how systemic racism and indifference have developed a climate where Indigenous women and girls are overpoliced and yet under-protected. The findings of this research highlight how the social and economic structure leads to continued precarity for experiencing violence and victimization, like mental illness, homelessness, and poverty (McDiarmid, 2019, p. 4). This finding is relevant to my research, where I examine the social and systemic barriers beyond a human rights and discrimination lens to identify how these colonial structures recreate the conditions for violence and death to occur, as the historical

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

analysis has shown. The literature consistently reveals that disproportionate experiences of violence are linked to social marginalization that sustain violence among Indigenous women.

State Abandonment Sustaining Violence

The literature in the field also emphasizes how violence is upheld by state institutions, including how the police fail to take violence against Indigenous women seriously. For instance, Pamela Palmater (2016) contends that one of the reasons why the phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is an epidemic in Canada is due to the culture of racism and misogyny in society that willingly turns a blind eye. She employs cases like Tina Fontaine, a fifteen-year-old girl from Sagkeeng First Nation to support her findings that missing and murdered Indigenous women is an epidemic due to a lack of state protection. Hours before her death, Tina was found in a vehicle with an intoxicated older man at 3 a.m. She was later found unconscious by paramedics, who took her to the hospital for treatment, and she was released into the care of Child and Family Services (CFS). She was put up in a hotel by CFS, from which she disappeared. Palmater (2016) contends that Tina was left unprotected by an entire system that is indifferent to the well-being of Indigenous women and girls because those who were legally bound failed to fulfill their responsibilities (Palmater, 2016, p. 261).

Murphy-Oikonen et al's. (2022) secondary analysis examines women's experiences with reporting sexual assault. This sample included 23 women from Northwestern Ontario who identified as at least 50% Indigenous, experienced sexual assault, and reported it to the police, but no further action was taken. This thematic analysis revealed four themes: a) victimization across the lifespan, b) violent sexual assault, c) dismissal by the police, and d) survival and resilience. This research highlights the specific ways Indigenous women face violence and injustice from police when reporting sexual victimization. Martin and Walia (2019) outline how

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

the failure of the police forces to take violence against Indigenous women seriously is one of the ways that contributes to ongoing violence. For example, the case of Robert Pickton, a serial killer, was first arrested and charged in 1997 for assault involving a knife and attempted murder of a woman on his property. The prosecutor decided to stay the charge, and Pickton was released. In the time that it took to arrest him again, many more women went missing and were murdered (Martin & Walia, 2019, p. 44). This research highlights how state officials place Indigenous women in precarious circumstances rather than acting as a remedy, because of how the police in the DTES failed to prevent and protect Indigenous women and girls from violence and failed to investigate violence diligently when it occurred (Martin & Walia, 2019, p. 44). This literature demonstrates that the failure to intervene is evidently how the state is complicit in upholding the conditions for violence and death to occur among Indigenous women. In the context of this research, this literature demonstrates the state's complicity or absence.

Social Discourses to Define Indigenous Women

This section explores how social discourses reinforce violence against Indigenous women and how these narratives influence the perceptions of the state and the public. One of the most prominent discourses is the "risky lifestyle discourse," which portrays Indigenous women as "willing victims" who "deserve" violence because they live a high-risk lifestyle. This is often revealed within the context of sexual violence, since Indigenous women are especially perceived as 'willing victims' because Indigenous women's bodies are considered sexually viable (Smith, 2003).

The risky lifestyle discourse is a prominent discourse that justifies violence against Indigenous women. This discourse is shaped by gendered and racialized stereotypes, which in turn aggravate experiences of violence due to notions that construct Indigenous women as

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

‘willing victims’ (Martin & Walia, 2019, p.16; Monchalin et al., 2019; Morton, 2016, p. 299). For instance, Katherine Morton (2016) illuminates how the intersections of race, gender, and mobility are central to the numerous cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women. This finding is based on a critical discourse analysis of the billboards along the Highway of Tears. The first level of analysis of these billboards reveals the negative language on the billboard, which is met with the phrase “Ain’t worth the risk sister” (Morton, 2016, p. 309). This message contains a latent meaning that the decision to hitchhike is associated with a perceived riskiness of behaviour. This unacceptability of hitchhiking is intrinsically connected to race and gender because of the narrative that is constructed surrounding risky behaviour and violence against Indigenous women.

On the second billboard, the imperative in the statement is, “Girls don’t hitchhike,” which is important because it demands behaviour or an issue. In this case, the demand on behaviour is “don’t hitchhike” as opposed to “men don’t rape”, for example, and targets the behaviour of hitchhikers or would-be hitchhikers. The first billboard is also described as using imagery of several crosses along the highway and ghosts surrounding the hitchhiker to visually represent the deaths. The second billboard blatantly shows the faces of missing and murdered women. A commonality between these billboards is the presence of caution/hazard signs, which puts the onus on the viewer to prevent harm (Morton, 2016, p. 311).

According to Morton (2016), the act of hitchhiking has a reputation for being dangerous and undesirable as a mode of mobility, often used as a last resort. In Northwestern British Columbia, hitchhiking is expected, given the lack of transportation and expansive highway, but it is also stigmatized for being dangerous and socially unacceptable. Absent from these billboards is any consideration of the socio-economic factors that lead to hitchhiking. It reveals that women

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

who hitchhike are always at least partially to blame for any violence they encounter along the highway (Morton, 2016, p. 317). Overall, this study illustrates that challenging racial and gender elements within the billboards further subordinate Indigenous women who hitchhike as deviant social outsiders (Morton, 2016, p. 317).

The risky lifestyle discourse is also prominent in experiences where Indigenous women are working as sex workers (Hansen & Dim, 2019; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Razack, 2000; Strega et al., 2014). The literature discloses that the risky lifestyle discourse is coupled with moral blameworthiness, as one's lifestyle choice is tied to whether one "deserves" it or not. Many of these authors speak to how Indigenous women are responsible for the violence they impose as a result of engaging in a high-risk lifestyle, like sex work.

Razack (2000) argues that the murder of Pamela George, an Indigenous on-street sex worker, is a case of racial and gendered sexual violence that went unacknowledged because she belonged to a space where violence routinely occurs upon a body that is routinely violated (Razack, 2000, p. 93). Razack argues that what deems certain bodies as undeserving of personhood has as much to do with class and race because it is poverty and racial location in the inner city that influenced how George was treated in life and law. She further articulates that a white woman in a similar circumstance and place would be racialized the same way (Razack, 2000, p. 94). The spatial location of race was blamed for the violence imposed on George, a sex worker.

Furthermore, several studies suggest that the discourse of a risky lifestyle facilitates the ideals of a "worthy victim." For example, Strega et al. (2014) explore the discourses of Western Canadian print media accounts of street sex workers. Their findings suggest that Western Canadian print media were dominated by two discourses: vermin-victim discourse and risky

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

lifestyle discourse. Their analysis suggests that non-Indigenous Western Canadian print media continues to draw upon historically situated knowledge that constructs street sex workers as vermin (Strega et al., 2014, p. 12). Their findings indicate that print media was overwhelmed with the risky lifestyle discourse in how violence against street sex workers is normalized through repetitive media descriptions of street sex work as having a "high-risk lifestyle" (Strega et al., 2014, p. 16). The type of work that a victim is doing prior to her victimization is noteworthy in determining the deservingness of the violence, but also informs ideals surrounding a worthy victim.

The literature also shows that the ideals surrounding a *worthy victim* characterize violence against Indigenous women and tend to seep into state responses (Jiwani & Young, 2006; Monchalin, 2019). Jiwani and Young (2006) conducted a study examining 128 articles from the Vancouver Sun, published between 2001 and 2006, on women who have gone missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Their studies cite that violence against Indigenous women tends to be treated as atypical instances of symptomatic women who "ask for it," to which violence against sex workers regards an already suppressed group as even more blameworthy because they are in the wrong place doing the wrong kind of work (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 901). The study finds that the prevailing and historically entrenched stereotypes of Indigenous women in the sex trade continue to shape the boundaries of respectability and degeneracy. They identify a need to highlight the interlocking nature of these representations; just as a 'good' woman is contrasted with a 'bad' woman, the racialized body is contrasted with the white body, wherein one occupies the spotlight of crime, and the other is seen as inhabiting the law-abiding shadow of society (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 902).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Similarly, this interlocking between racialized status, such as Indignity, is associated with prostitution to position these women in the lower rank of the moral order. The findings in this study reveal that the coverage of the missing and murdered women in the representation of the Robert Pickton trial, for example, was framed as a singular, pathological, or deranged individual who violated the social and normative order. The results show that attempts to elicit empathy for these women and to reclaim their respectability could not "stick" - even considering that 67 women had disappeared – because of how factors related to Indignity, geography, and tropes related to the degeneracy of the Downtown Eastside had come into play. In looking at how the boundaries of respectability and degeneracy impact how Indigenous women are perceived as victims, whether they are worthy or unworthy, factors into state decision-making and how they ultimately respond to instances of violence against Indigenous women. The relevance of this literature to my research is the findings of how the state responses are shaped by these discourses, which facilitate how Indigenous women are confined within these death-like worlds.

Lisa Monchalin et al. (2019) argue that colonialism is not only a contextual factor to situate individual violence, but instead that the embeddedness of colonialism within the political, economic, and structural aspects of society leads to continued precarity in how Indigenous populations experience violence and victimization. The authors contend that the legacy of trauma and structural violence are underlying factors, such as racism, inequality of income, disparities in wealth, housing, and poor health indicators, that create the conditions in which violence goes unnoticed. In circumstances where it is visible, such violence is attributed to individual failings rather than as a result of the broader social organization (Monchalin et al., 2019, p. 213). They suggest that indicators that create the conditions in which violence goes unnoticed can be

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

understood through the social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way – also known as 'structural violence' (p. 213).

A common conclusion based on examining the risky lifestyle discourse reveals that the normalization of violence among Indigenous women is deeply informed by negative stereotypes that construct Indigenous women as *unworthy* because they deserve the violence they encounter. Referencing the historical context outlined in the previous section, the social construct of Indigenous women who are characterized as *unworthy* underscores the colonial patriarchal values that are emphasized by Martin-Hill (2003) in how he understood the social presence of Indigenous women. Martin-Hill (2003) stressed in his passage where he talks about *the emergence of an Indigenous 'traditional' woman who is silent and obedient to male authority*, where she is described to be *defeated hunched over, head down, and with no future* (p. 108). This demonstrates, not only how these colonial perspectives are rampant, but also how they are deeply ingrained in how state institutions operate today.

Conclusion

The goal of this literature review is to provide an overview of how violence is made possible for Indigenous women. This literature review began by mapping a historical context, which paved the way for a discussion on looking at violence against Indigenous women more today and to examine how factors like race and gender broadly define violence. The scholarship within the literature finds that a large part of how violence is made possible among Indigenous women is through the social, political, and economic factors, which ultimately feed into social discourses and representations of how Indigenous women are exposed to violence.

This literature serves as the foundation for understanding and grounds the work of this thesis, which takes it a step further by examining the National Inquiry and how the state is explicitly

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

implicated in the violence at the various levels discussed in Part Two. This literature, not only echoes and reinforces the findings of the National Inquiry but also expands the analytic frame to show how death becomes structurally possible through legal, social, cultural, and economic arrangements.

In the next Chapter, I outline the literature that applies explicitly a necropolitical framework to various facets of life, showing how the state can and does make violence and death possible. This enhances the directive resulting from the National Inquiry's findings by offering a different analysis of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to emphasize the state's involvement in upholding violence against Indigenous women. The goal of this research is to investigate the findings within the National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) to present a different insight and conclusion into the heightened experiences of violence and death that affect Indigenous women. More explicitly, my research uniquely applies a necropolitical analysis of the National Inquiry's findings to identify the state's involvement in reproducing violence against Indigenous women. It's this collective, holistic and systemic pattern that a necropolitical lens is designed to expose which is why this literature is necessary to show the foundation and supports the findings and analysis.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

For this research, I employed Achille Mbembe's theory on Necropolitics (2003) to explore how violence and death are structurally enabled and maintained by the settler state through the conditions outlined in the National Inquiry's Final Report. The decision to apply Mbembe's necropolitics to this research is to provide a framework for understanding the violence at the level of the body in relation to death because settler-colonial governance operates through embodied control and disposability. This research uses biopolitical ideas to explain how biopolitical mechanisms are embedded in the ways the state maintains conditions that allow violence and death among Indigenous women. Necropolitics offers a means to illustrate how violence is institutionalized in state practices, often in what appear to be necessary or reasonable ways. In this chapter, I use biopolitics and necropolitics as conceptual tools to support the three analytic themes that emerged in my findings: the biopolitics of the healthy citizen, the production of death worlds, and organized abandonment.

In this chapter, I first explain Foucault's (1978) idea of biopolitics as it informs a necropolitical theory. Specifically, I discuss how biopolitical practices deploy mechanisms of social control on entire populations, levied at the human body, to unpack Mbembe's theory of necropolitics. Next, I provide an overview of scholars who connect necropolitics with settler colonialism (Deer, 2009; Simpson, 2013; De Finney, 2017, 2018, 2022). Next, I examine how states define worthiness based on structural forms of violence, which determine how specific populations are 'designed' for death and consider the socio-economic and political factors that contribute to this process. Finally, I outline the concept of organized abandonment to examine how the sovereign sustains the conditions for violence and death to occur through forms of abandonment and neglect.

From Biopolitics to Necropolitics

Achille Mbembe's (2003) writing on necropolitics is an extension of Michelle Foucault's theory on biopolitics. Biopolitics rests on the notion of *biopower*, referring to a discursive expression of power exerted upon entire nations or populations to deploy practices based on preserving life (Foucault, 1978). According to Foucault, modern sovereignty "is not the right to put people to death or to grant them life; nor is it the right to allow people to live or to leave them to die. It is the right to take life or let live" (Berlant, 2007, p. 756). According to Foucault, sovereign agency is the power to permit any given life to endure, or not, and biopower reshapes the sovereign power about how life is regulated. Foucault claims that the right to decide who lives and dies is a sovereign power, while biopower focuses on the processes specific to life, such as birth, death, reproduction, migration, and disease (Vilchis-Díaz, 2021, p. 11). Foucault refers to biopolitics as how state institutions govern human life through biological and pathological traits (Vilchis-Díaz, 2021, p. 11).

Biopolitics is a theory that explores how states and institutions regulate populations through health, behaviour, and social norms to promote productivity and social order. The power that emerges from biopolitics, or biopower, refers to the power over life within the social sphere that develops or consolidates a social norm, such as those that cast specific bodies and their competence at maintaining health or other conditions of social belonging. For example, Lauren Berlant (2007), who explores obesity as a means to consider how certain individuals, families, or communities, positioned by race, poverty, sexuality, or a combination, are presented as examples of states of 'dangerous' health. Berlant (2007) highlights that biopower operates when a hegemonic bloc organizes the reproduction of life in ways that permit a political crisis to be cast as conditions affecting specific bodies and their ability to maintain health or other conditions of

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

social belonging (see also Million, 2013, p. 151). The hegemonic bloc that Bertlant (2007) refers to is the social group that is dominant or upholding the social health of society. The hegemonic bloc, which is perceived as adhering to societal expectations of health, can shame or segregate populations that do not meet the standard of acceptable health. As Berlant (2007) illustrates in her example of obesity, the dominant bloc is empowered to judge the problematic body's subjects, as their agency is perceived to be fundamentally destructive. Here, health emerges as a particularly dynamic site, where, in this example, the concept of a 'healthy' body is normalized, and those who fail to maintain a 'healthy' body are judged and publicly scrutinized.

Biopower is connected to violence against Indigenous women because of how it exposes individuals or groups for failing to uphold the state's idea of a 'healthy body,' as desired by the state. As Berlant points out, these social norms or standards are shaped by factors such as race, poverty, or sexuality. In the context of looking at violence against Indigenous women, Million (2013) finds that social norms are a side effect of successful normativity (Million, 2013, p. 151). For Indigenous women, the deviation from the social norm is predicated on the ongoing effects of poverty and marginalization, in that they are faced with the need to "heal." Behaviours associated with a failure of will, self-care, or a failure to manage one's passions for food, alcohol, drugs, or sex. These, among others, not only violate a social norm, but the individual performing such behaviours is treated as a lesser citizen (Million, 2013, p. 151). In looking at violence against Indigenous women, their bodies are marked for excessive policing and neglect because of the perceived lack of self-control, autonomy and ability to be well-adjusted members of a modernity (Million, 2013, p. 151).

Forms of biopower that determine the state of a 'healthy body' are a function that is intimately connected to the necropolitical processes that harness the experiences for persistent

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

violence and death to occur. For example, Tsang's (2020) ethnographic research on experiences of gay sex workers living in China with HIV examines how state-sanctioned stigma discourages gay sex workers from receiving health care services. The overall results from this study show that gay sex workers living with HIV explicitly criticized themselves and even expressed hatred towards sex work, HIV, and homosexuality, and often, did not reveal their work as a prostitute to parents and relatives, as they typically used drugs to escape thinking about it (Tsang, 2020, p. 5). The stigma that is felt and experienced by gay sex workers living with HIV in China fuels the biopolitical modes of governing homosexuals to a point that is intrinsically linked to instances of leaving them to die.

The results of their study show that government officials and healthcare providers remove support. Where the care services are absent, negative associations exist, and stigmas sustain the conditions for the state not to intervene, reinforcing the violence they experience. For example, their study references Majian's testimony, where he explains how most people blame gay sex workers for their sexually risky behaviour, he says,

“If they know I have HIV, they will stare and keep a distance from me. Therefore, I don't dare to let them know. Some government officials consider me as “scum” and say we do not deserve to receive proper treatment. The department of health and the security department (e.g., police) think we are troublesome because we increase their workload” (Tsang, 2020, p. 6).

Majian's testimony, along with others who echo a similar sentiment (e.g. Menrui, Mao, Jianhui, and Chen), speak to how systems of stigma and othering through negative associations make these populations alive but invisible, and ultimately justifies the conditions that result in violence and even death. Menrui explains how he has been infected with HIV for five years and explains how stigma impedes not only the care and protection received but also creates an overall intolerance:

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

“The government did not really want to see us. They want us to be quiet, and we didn't complain, though we don't enjoy medical care in urban China. They did not like us because we make the city look bad and dirty. We are the liability and stumbling stone of China's modernity! The discrimination against HIV comes from the government, medical doctors, and cadres. I can tell the government just wants to dump us into a landfill, ship it to the outlying island to let us die and be forgotten. The government doesn't care about us.” (Tsang, 2020, p. 6-7).

This study connects the experiences of gay sex workers living in China by examining how they experience a sense of *felt stigma* and *enacted stigma*. The *felt stigma* refers to an internalized sense of shame based on socially acceptable differences. In contrast, *enacted stigma* refers to the experience of unfair treatment by others due to these socially acceptable differences (Tsang, 2020, p. 3). Majian's testimony, highlighted above, is indicative of the *felt stigma* that comes from government officials, as it is part of the stigma that connects to an internalized sense of shame. This study elucidates how both felt and enacted stigmas highlight the conditions necropolitics discussed in the next section.

Necropolitics

Theoretical scholar and founder of necropolitics, Achille Mbembe (2003), argues that biopolitics is insufficient to establish how life becomes subordinated to the power of death. Biopolitics governs life at the level of population through regulation and norm-setting, while necropolitics is a power over death and disposability to those who fall outside these norms. For example, the study of African countries, where the proliferation of weapons and the existence of 'death worlds' are standard features, and impoverished groups are marked by the sovereign as the "living dead" (Vilchis-Díaz, 2021, p. 13). Necropolitics offers a way to understand how some populations, which fail to self-regulate or meet standards, are positioned as destined for death. As my research shows, state inaction, abandonment, and structural violence are state-induced conditions that facilitate Indigenous women to experience violence and death.

Necropolitics and Settler Colonialism

Necropolitics manifests within settler colonialism by setting the standard for who is permitted or forced to die by a colonial logic. This section examines how Patrick Wolfe's (2006) centrality on the logic of elimination exemplifies how settler colonialism is defined as a system aimed at erasing Indigenous peoples from the land for settler occupancy. This section will unpack the relationship between Patrick Wolfe's logic of elimination and biopolitics to show how settler colonial systems operate as a mechanism of exclusion, and ultimately demonstrate how settler colonialism operate as a distinct form of necropower.

Patrick Wolfe defines settler colonialism as a structure, rather than a one-time event, because it is a system that is designed to eliminate and replace Indigenous peoples to secure land for settlers (Wolfe, 2006). Patrick Wolfe's theory on the "logic of elimination" is central to his theory of settler colonialism, which explains how this structure seeks to erase Indigenous peoples from the land for permanent settler occupancy. As Wolfe (2005, 2006) argues, the logic of elimination is broader than genocide, yet remains fundamentally eliminatory because its goal is to secure settler access (Wolfe, 2006, p. 401). While it can involve genocide, it also includes other forms of erasure, like assimilation and displacement, including physical removal (e.g., forced relocation), cultural erasure (e.g., residential schools) (Wolfe, 2006, p. 398), and legal and political exclusion (e.g., denying sovereignty, undermining land rights) (Wolfe, 2006, p. 391).

Settler colonialism operates as a broad structural system through which both biopolitical and necropolitical powers are exercised. Biopolitics, as rooted in the logic of elimination, involves the regulation and control of life, at the level of race. For example, the erasure and replacement of Indigenous peoples may occur not solely through racism that facilitates violent

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

removal, but through efforts to assimilate and incorporate Indigenous peoples, cultures, and lands into the settler nation (Morgensen, 2011, p. 56). This argument aligns with Wolfe's articulation of settler colonialism, which is a present and ongoing structure that ultimately makes settler occupation appear and Indigenous erasure inevitable. Dietrich (2017) also reveals how settler colonialism uses biopolitical governance to manage populations and land that reinforces hierarchies that privilege settler life while marginalizing Indigenous existence.

Biopolitics operates within a settler colonial structure rooted in the logic of elimination, which seeks to remove and replace Indigenous peoples. Chartrand (2019) explores this relationship by examining how the Canadian penal system—and the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration—are tied to the ongoing colonial project in Canada. The author challenges the notion that colonialism is merely a historical event, arguing instead that its logic and institutions persist through contemporary penal practices. She argues that carceral power, like Indian Agent or the prison, marks populations for elimination (Chartrand, 2019, p. 307). Through the example of the penitentiary, she demonstrates how the penal apparatus is tied to a sovereign power that continues to exercise control over life and death through shifting carceral modalities of exclusion, like targeting racialized individuals, the incarcerated, and the mentally ill (Chartrand, 2019, p. 313). This literature offers critical insight into how state institutions, such as prisons, function as sites of biopolitical governance, regulating the lives that are valued and expendable in ways that uphold and reproduce settler colonial power.

Settler colonialism uses biopolitical modes of governance to manage populations and land that reinforce hierarchies that privilege settler life, while eliminating Indigenous existence. Through biopolitical modes of governance, there is a necropolitical power that is inherently eliminatory through violence and death in its aim to remove and replace Indigenous peoples

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

(Bakshi and Sharma, 2024). This literature enhances our understanding of how colonial violence persists through modern institutions and politics, and where a necropolitical governance actively perpetuates it.

Scholars have identified how necropolitics is and continues to be a constituent of colonial rule (Deer, 2009; Simpson, 2013; De Finney, 2017, 2018, 2022). De Finney (2022) explores how necropolitical logics shaped rurality in Canada, with a specific focus on how stark rural inequities lead to racialized and gendered deaths by enabling incessant white entitlement to Indigenous bodies. To support her argument, De Finney (2022) employs the example of anti-Indigenous and, more specifically, racialized and gender-based violence linked to resource exploitation, agri-industrial and corporate expansion, and environmental neocolonialism occurring in Canadian rural landscapes. For example, she argues that gendered sexualized violence has always been a function and an effect of the necropolitical state due to the threat posed by the vital intersecting forces of Indigenous land, reproduction, kinship and governance (De Finney, 2022, p. 477). To make her point clear, she refers to resource extraction contexts that explain the connection between Indigenous women and Indigenous land. For instance, ‘man camps’ are associated with the resource extraction industry because they are implicated in higher rates of violence against Indigenous women.

The link between violence against Indigenous lands and Indigenous women is key to understanding how necropolitics functions as part of colonial rule. Simpson (2013) offers an analysis of how Indigenous land, reproduction, kinship, and governance are under constant threat and where both Indigenous women and Indigenous lands were cast as colonial and patriarchal property and thus “rapeable” and disposable (Simpson, 2013, p. 11). Simpson’s claim is pertinent to our understanding of how necropolitical functions are motivated by various factors,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

like race, gender, and the hypersexualization of Indigenous women. In addition, Sarah Deer (2009) emphasizes that rape and sexual violence are deeply embedded in the colonial mindset (Deer, 2009, p. 150), which fuels the objectification and hypersexualization of Indigenous women. This contributes to their disposability and ungrievability (de Finney, 2017; de Finney et al., 2018) – a condition where their suffering and deaths are not mourned or socially acknowledged and reinforces that their lives are worth less.

The literature has shown how Indigenous women are *disposable* and *ungrievable* in deeply gendered and sexualized ways. For example, Razack's *Gendering Disposability* (2016) attempts to show how sexualized violence is key to disposability, especially for sex workers, whereby colonial power continues to control their bodies. Razack (2016) identifies how Indigenous women are exposed to sexual violence in a way that marks them as a visible target based on their social, physical, and racial location. This is similar to Katherine McKittrick's theory of "slave geographies," characterized as "sites of unprotected female flesh which are sexually/violently accessible." The auction block displayed and scrutinized black women's sexual bodies in response to the need to reproduce the slave population. Buyers could poke and prod the nude body at purchasing sites, which publicly displayed and humiliated the black body (Razack, 2016, p. 293).

Razack (2016) also employs the use of a slave narrative to underscore the legal difficulties that arise in the prostitution contract and the limits to the violence that ensues during such relations. For example, slavery gave whites the right to use a slave in any capacity they pleased, where enjoyment comprised the right to use, take delight in, and possess, where all are inextricably linked (Razack, 2016, p. 305). Razack refers to how "prostitution is a place/practice where no form of law seems to offer protection...because it incorporates aspects of the law and

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

assumed contractual agreements, dehumanization (the use of a body, the person's will/desire notwithstanding), and disposability (the use of a thing)" (Razack, 2016, p. 305). Like the slave, prostitution in the law undermines the severity of violence as a form of contractual right to labour and entertainment. As a result, perpetrators are absolved of moral and legal responsibility because they commit violence on bodies that are already contractually 'owned.' The slave narrative demonstrates how violence and prostitution are a legal grey zone facilitated by the state, and whereby perpetrators are also absolved of moral responsibility. This provides an opportunity to highlight a gap in understanding of how the state, by extension of the law, protects some individuals but not others.

Necropolitics as Structural Violence

Many scholars have adopted a theory of necropolitics to demonstrate how hierarchical conceptions of worth are institutionalized, positioning certain lives as existing in a state of living in a dead world. to understand how these death worlds form, examining necropolitics as a form of structural violence offers a framework. It reveals how social, political, and economic marginalization expose certain populations to harm through stigmatization and othering. Throughout my analysis of the National Inquiry's Final Report (2019), this research seeks to understand how Indigenous women are brought into close proximities to death through state-based conditions, like 'gradual wounding', that increase the risk of vulnerabilities, which heighten experiences of violence and/or death.

Structural violence can be defined as the political, economic, and social arrangements that put populations in harm's way, which lead to greater burdens of morbidity and mortality among disadvantaged groups due to stigmatization (Padilla & Madera, 2021, p. 27). For example, Padilla and Madera (2021) discuss how Puerto Rican transwomen traverse their gender

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

transitioning process, including the use of informal and unregulated medical technologies, and the abandonment and mistreatment of transwomen by the formal healthcare system. Drawing on ethnographic data, this scholarship considers the bodily harms resulting from the proliferation of lay procedures in which many transwomen engage in the use of injectable silicone and hormones that are procured through informal street markets, as manifestations of the necropolitical abandonment of transgender populations in Puerto Rico (Padilla & Madera, 2021, p. 28). These unregulated procedures are a means of achieving gender-related goals but elevate the risk of infections, chronic illnesses, and death. Their work speaks to how transwomen experience a form of social death due to their non-normative expressions of masculinity, and their lives are marked by stigmatization, othering, and abandonment (Padilla & Madera, 2021, p. 27).

The concept of structural violence is also examined by Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2017), who describe structural violence as “embedded in ubiquitous social structures normalized by stable institutions” (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 47). Similar to Padilla & Madera (2021), these structures are violent because they result in avoidable deaths, illnesses, and injury by reproducing violence among marginalized people through restraining their capabilities and agency (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 47). For example, the authors show how Cholera became the leading infectious killer of young adults in Haiti during the international humanitarian response to the January 2010 earthquake (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 52). The short answer to the matter is that these diseases disproportionately affect poor people, as the investments in prevention, like sanitation systems and vaccines, remain largely absent or unavailable to young adults in Haiti.

Where physical violence shows, structural violence is invisible (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 53). It is the taken-for-granted that makes structural violence so apparent – those who

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

can access resources and services do not see the pervasiveness of structural violence that can connect to violence in various contexts, like politics, religion, hunger, racism, sexism, and social classes (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 51). Scholars suggest that state-sanctioned violence is operationalized not with the intent to kill, but to eventually eradicate populations towards death. Padilla and Madera (2021, p. 36) refer to this as the “kill before the killing,” where the constant gradual infliction of injury occurs through violence that manifests through abandonment, neglect, and stigmatization, such as by denying spaces to take refuge, social services, and work or educational opportunities.

Examining how social and political death occurs at the hands of the state, Mayblin et al. (2020) conceptualize how the everyday lives of migrants of precarious status, particularly asylum seekers and undocumented people, experience daily harm due to the inability to access daily sustenance (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 108). For instance, each interviewee gave detailed descriptions of the food they miss from their home country. Many interviewees also explained that they are often hungry and must eat foods that are both filling and affordable, such as rice and pasta, which is indicative of poverty (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 114). The lack of home and food is tied to daily harms because it exposes asylum seekers to gradual wounding in ways that keep them alive, but in a type of injury through dispossession (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 120). Here, we are reminded of Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2017), who have shown how structural violence is not always physical and operates in ways that are connected to social relations and arrangements. This study demonstrates how the state can determine who is deserving of what while fulfilling its legal obligations to asylum applicants. In these not-alive or death worlds, the legal obligations are fulfilled to such a minimum to keep alive but never fully patriating state (Maybin et al., 2020, p. 111).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

This scholarship highlights a ‘gradual wounding,’ where conditions of impoverishment and endangerment are so severe that participants are primarily occupied with survival. Any possibility for resistance or protest was disempowered. For instance, one interviewee explained that he had a heart condition and needed to go to another city an hour away by train to have an operation. As a result, he has to borrow money from friends to cover train fares to the city for his appointments. He says, “The doctor said I need to eat better and healthy food. Because I am sick, I need to take good care of myself, and I am trying my best, but the money is not enough” (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 118). All of the interviewees believed that if they could work, everything would be different, as they would have enough money, friends and more normalcy. In fact, many of them assumed that they would be expected to work while awaiting a decision on their application (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 119). Since they cannot work, they heavily depend on the state for their survival. These conditions that create these dependencies and deprivations of nutrition, healthcare, or stable housing constitute not just harm, but cumulative, slow violence. This form of death-making does not rely on direct violence, but on institutional conditions that ensure the slow erosion of life. These experiences of ‘gradual wounding’ facilitate the creation of these death worlds, heightening the possibility for death to occur. This ultimately reflects the broader dynamics of necropolitics and the state's role in the systemic devaluation of certain lives.

Necropolitics as Organized Abandonment

In understanding the politics of death and the role of the state, the concept of abandonment arises in terms of how the sovereign sustains the conditions for violence and death to occur, also through abandonment and neglect. Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s concept of organized abandonment helps us to understand how the absence of adequate services and resources in northern and remote communities is a result of the state’s disinvestment. Organized

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

abandonment, following Gilmore, is treated here as a necropolitical technology, one that facilitates structural violence through state withdrawal while maintaining state control.

Organized abandonment refers to an intentional disinvestment in communities that often occurs within racialized and marginalized communities, which leads to the gradual disappearance of safe housing, reliable jobs, clean water, and a social safety net. Forgotten places are also intimately shaped by the geographical space. For Gilmore (2008, p. 35), ‘forgotten places’ are spaces that not only speak to an absence or lack but are planned concentrations or sinks of hazardous materials and destructive practices that are, in turn, sources of vulnerabilities to premature death.

Gilmore’s (2002) earlier works more specifically point to how racism is a practice of abstraction. The violence of abstraction is coined as an integral concept that refers to the production of fetishes, in which states, races, and normative views fit into and make places in the world. Gilmore (2002) offers the example of prisons, illustrating how they represent a part of the state-building project. According to Gilmore (2002), prisons are geographical solutions to social and economic crises because of their political organization. Gilmore contends that racism is a limiting force that is increasingly monetized and profit-driven, and politically distanced. Those who are unable to seek relief from those costs are subsequently driven into forgotten spaces.

People within these “forgotten places”, who lack social or economic mobility or cannot move away, act within and against the constraints of the state’s disinvestment and changing participation in the landscape. For instance, gentrification, as examined in the work of Riley et al. (2024), reveals that populations already residing within the community, who cannot leave, are compelled to adapt to the changing social landscape because their economic circumstances prevent them from doing so. Similarly, Indigenous women’s ongoing disappearance of safe

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

housing, reliable jobs, and a social safety net set the stage for them to be exposed to vulnerable conditions. Similarly, what my research shows is the state's complicity in facilitating the conditions that expose Indigenous women to vulnerable conditions and heighten an experience of violence.

Organized abandonment is rooted in the logic of elimination. Organized abandonment predominantly affects low-income, Black, and other communities of colour through policies and practices that result in the flight of economic activity, jobs, few public services, inadequate housing, environmental degradation, and underemployment (Riley et al., 2024, p. 2). Riley et al. (2024) draw on Ruth Wilson Gilmore's concept of organized abandonment (2008) to examine how structural racism historically evolves, particularly in relation to racial health equity. They use examples from Seattle, Washington – such as redlining, gentrification, and policing – to show how disinvestment and extraction are enforced through carceral systems. Redlining, in particular, refers to the historic practice of denying mortgages and investment in predominantly Black and Indigenous neighbourhoods, which lays the groundwork for long-term exclusion and eventual elimination.

In their study, Riley et al. (2024) found that there is a substantial connection between redlining, gentrification, and policing in Seattle, Washington, that is indicative of the active perpetuation of structural racism by institutions over time. Using a concept of organized abandonment in their research, they identified the distinct spatial and temporal patterns of historical disinvestment. For example, their study found that police stops were higher in both (Black and Indigenous) neighbourhoods that were historically disinvested and remained low-income and disadvantaged (Riley et al., 2024, p. 7). For example, Police stops were found to be more intensive, particularly in neighbourhoods affected by disinvestment, extraction, and

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

revenue generation, including frisking. Additionally, a higher police presence was noted in historically disinvested neighbourhoods compared to those that were historically invested in. Police manage organized abandonment through what Gilmore refers to as “organized violence,” which is managed by activities to conduct stop searches and widespread arrests and criminalization (Riley et al., 2024, p. 3). Due to the disinvestment in necessary social supports and resources for communities of colour, police also play a role in policing and removing their services in response to the crisis born from organized abandonment.

The findings from this study reveal the importance of research in adopting concepts like organized abandonment to expose the evolving, adaptive racist logics of disinvestment, extraction, and enforcement used to accumulate privileges and wealth for other communities (p. 7). For this research, the concept of organized abandonment is a useful tool for illustrating how community disinvestments within Indigenous communities continue to have a lasting impact.

The connection between organized abandonment and the politics of death is also shaped by how categories of people become socially invisible as they are abandoned to extreme living conditions. Joao Biehl’s ethnographic study (2001) documents the experiences of marginal and poor people afflicted by AIDS in Brazil. In southern Brazil, Vita was founded in 1987 by Ze das Drogas, a former street kid and drug dealer, who opened a place where people like him could find God and find redemption. What began as a small initiative to run a rehabilitation center for drug addicts and alcoholics, the center eventually enlarged to service the increasing number of homeless, mentally ill, and dying people, who were dumped by the police, psychiatric and general hospitals, and families. Biehl’s ethnographic study (2001) sheds light on how the poorest and sickest populations occupy a “dead” space while awaiting their death or a death world. It is

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

in these spaces that Biel refers to as “zones of abandonment,” where the poorest and sickest are left to die.

Biel (2001) sheds light on the concept of “letting die,” which is not only fixed on the isolated individual who loses symbolic support for their existence, but also on the abandoned in Vita, who are the carriers and witnesses of how the social destinies of the poorest and sickest are organized. Biel claims that Brazil’s welfare system has been historically structured in such a way where the state’s intervention varies according to the population segment claiming social protection” (Biel, 2001, p. 136). Biehl (2001) claims that “selective” “marketable” groups are addressed as “the society” and reorganized in terms of individual “improvement” (through prevention campaigns and access to antiretroviral treatments); while the poorest and biopolitically “useless” are made absent from epidemiology, policy, and healthcare (Biehl, 2001, p. 138).

Biehl’s ethnographic journey in Vita, Brazil, uncovers the deposit of life’s “leftovers,” situated on a hill crowded with tents, a wooden chapel, and an inadequate kitchen lacking hot water and bathroom facilities. An infirmary separates the recovery area by a gate, which is policed by volunteers, who ensure the sickest do not freely move around the hill. Even though Vita is largely a rehabilitation center, drugs move freely between Vita and the village, and there was a consensus among city officials and medical professionals that nobody recovered at Vita (Biehl, 2001, p. 132). Biehl examines the bureaucratic procedures that make these people socially invisible, as they are abandoned to this most extreme form of death.

Melissa Wright’s writings on *Necropolitics, Necropolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border* (2011), employ necropolitics to examine drug-related murders and femicide in relation to gendered violence and its use as a tool for securing the state

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

(Wright, 2011, p. 708). She questions whether the dead bodies in Ciudad Juárez's streets indicate a failing state or a stronger one.

Wright (2011) shows how the politics of death and gender are intertwined. In her work, Wright investigates how the concept of a *public woman* relies on a negative interpretation of prostitution. A public woman represents a type of woman who is contaminated by her activities in the public sphere (Wright, 2011, p. 713). The contamination of her activities in the public sphere factors into how violence against a public woman is perceived to be inevitable or normal. For instance, Wright (2011) mentions that the police reiterated when they told worried families and friends of women and girls who had gone missing that the women were most likely living "double lives" and continued to repeat this same message when their bodies were found (Wright, 2011, p. 714). Instead of responding to the violence, they told families that there was nothing they could do. Wright further contends that "girls who lived double lives often end up dead, so the lack of investigations and convictions was not a problem given that there was nothing wrong with the violence" (Wright, 2011, p. 714). This discourse is a key tool for positioning the political order and "restoring" the political peace of northern Mexico because of how the removal of these women performed a type of urban 'cleansing,' which in turn restored the moral and political balance of society.

Wright's (2011) discussion of the public woman not only shows how violence is normal or inevitable but also reveals the gendered element of violence. For example, the *public woman* is associated with derogatory references compared to that of a *public man*, which is another way of saying "citizen". In her work, Wright (2011) emphasizes the gendered element that is central to the violent dynamics which lead to the proliferation of gendered violence. For instance, she refers to this as "getting what they asked for". This is demonstrated by the police when they say

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

that the dead women and girls were ‘hookers’, or heroin-users and suggest that these women are responsible for their own deaths (Wright, 2011, p. 714). In claiming that these women caused the violence that ended their lives, the violence is justified as a way to rid society of trouble because if she is the source of the violence, then her murder provides a means for ending it.

This scholarship adds to Gilmore’s concept of organized abandonment because it provides a lens into how communities of intentional disinvestment turn into “death worlds – where there are few opportunities for recovery or ways of escape because of how these places are kept alive and depend on the social dysfunction of these groups. Mbembe points out that states create these sorts of death worlds, where vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of ‘living dead’ (Mbembe, 2003, p. 92). Similar to how Biel (2001) articulates that among those men who possess one last social function (Biel, 2001, p. 145), Mbembe (2003) describes the structure of the plantation system as an example to illustrate how enslaved people possessed a social function that is considered to be their *last* before their death since their labour is needed and used (Mbembe, 2003, p. 75). Mbembe’s notion of the ‘living dead’ captures how certain populations, though biologically alive, are rendered socially and politically dead. For Indigenous women, as I show later, this manifests in routinized neglect, systemic failure, and symbolic erasure, which are forms of abandonment that are central to my analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn from biopolitics, necropolitics, organized abandonment, and structural violence to build a conceptual framework for understanding how the state regulates Indigenous women’s lives and deaths. These concepts are not isolated. They interact and overlap together to form a necropolitical logic in which Indigenous women are rendered disposable,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

denied care, and confined to social death. This theoretical framework provides a way to understand how necropolitical functions illuminate the problematic relationship between sovereign power and Indigenous women, specifically where the state's primary function upholds the conditions for violence and death. As shown above, these designations are tied to gender, race, poverty, and other social status indicators. The framework that I have outlined will be applied to the National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIW) to establish how violence and death are inherent to state-based operations.

Chapter Four: Methodological Approach

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach to collecting and analyzing data for this project. This research was conducted by using a qualitative thematic analysis on the four pillars of *The National Inquiry's Final Report on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019) to answer the question, how is violence and death inherent to state-based operations? The National Inquiry identified many systemic problems and made 231 Calls for Justice, calling upon the state to address the violence. As noted in the introduction, this research analyzes the Inquiry to consider how making the state responsible can also present a problem, given that I show how violence is inherent to its exercise. As my findings show, the state is deeply implicated in sustaining the conditions for violence and death to occur. While the state should be responsible for addressing violence against Indigenous women, a necropolitical analysis highlights the more invisible areas of concern.

This chapter will identify the step-by-step approach to conducting a qualitative thematic analysis and outline how this method was conducted on the four pillars of The National Inquiry's Final Report on the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)*. Next, this chapter will identify the benefits and limitations of qualitative thematic analysis and address how to overcome the shortcomings of this methodology, including the consideration of the researcher's role and reflexivity. Lastly, this chapter will outline how this research employed a hybrid research design, combining deductive and inductive strategies to ensure greater validity and rigour.

Data Collection and Sampling

The National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) *on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (MMIWG) is a Nationwide inquiry that reveals the persistent and deliberate

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses that are at the root of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The truths shared within the National Inquiry's Final Report tell thousands of stories that speak to the acts of genocide against Indigenous women and girls. Contributing to the final report is more than 2,380 people participated in the National Inquiry into MMIWG. Of the 2,380 people, 468 family members and survivors of violence shared their experiences at 15 community hearings, over 270 family members and survivors shared their stories in 147 public or in-camera sessions, 750 people shared through statement gathering, and 819 people created artistic expressions. An additional 84 expert witnesses, elders, knowledge keepers, front-line workers, and officials provided testimony.

The Final Report (2019) is one of the first of its breath and depth to extensively identify how violence against Indigenous women and girls contributes to the race-based genocide that is empowered by colonial structures, and is notably linked to the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and breaches of human and Indigenous rights.

The Inquiry's Final Report was selected as a source of data for this research because it represents the first nationwide study to examine violence against Indigenous women and girls. The National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) is a two-volume report, spanning over 1,000 pages, with 11 chapters and concluding with 231 Calls for Justice, making it the most comprehensive public record on this issue. The Inquiry is a comprehensive framework that seeks to understand the systemic issues that contribute to the heightened experiences of violence and death and advocates for concrete action to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

By examining the findings from the Inquiry, and particularly the stories of the families and survivors, I investigate more cohesively the violence at the root of system, and the

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

conditions that shape its possibility. My analysis focused on the four pillars identified in the Inquiry: the right to culture, the right to health, the right to security, and the right to justice. In total, the pillars comprised 405 pages of the Final Report and were selected because they represented the four main areas identified as problematic. The four pillars contain many of the testimonies from survivors and their families, which is ideal source for identifying and analyzing how necropolitical power operates between people, institution and state practices.

The Paradigm Guiding this Research

In research, it is essential to know the foundation of how knowledge and “social phenomenon” are acquired, its ideas about what should be studied, why and how it should be studied, how it should be analyzed/assessed, and what ought to be done with it (Strega, 2005, p. 200). A paradigm is a set of fundamental beliefs that represent a worldview, defining the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to the world (Guba & Lincoln, 2003, p. 21). This research aligns into a critical paradigm, as it focuses on power, inequality, and social change. The critical paradigm is committed to addressing the underlying structures of oppression and inequality, utilizing the findings to advocate for social change. The fundamental beliefs that define a paradigm can be summarized by the responses to three key inquiries: ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2003). These are at the forefront of shaping a paradigm and its relationship to the world.

An ontology is a theory about what the world is like - what the world consists of and why. Another way to think about ontology is to consider it a worldview that shapes a researcher’s epistemological foundation (Strega, 2005, p. 201). A critical ontology is situated within a historical realist perspective that encompasses a reality, but is malleable and shaped by political, historical, economic, cultural, and social factors. Through this understanding, these

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

factors have crystallized a series of structures that are perceived as honest, natural, and unchangeable. However, these structures are actual only because we believe they are (Guba & Lincoln, 2003, p. 26). This research aims to understand how reality shapes and transforms current oppressive, discriminatory, and exploitative structures relevant to MMIWG2S+ people. This research closely aligns with this paradigm ontologically because it examines how a series of structures are shaped by political and social factors that oppress a marginalized population. This approach enables us to examine how state systems perpetuate violence and disposability, serving as a critical paradigm that not only questions knowledge production but also exposes the normalizing logic of death-making within state operations.

Epistemology deals with who can know and under what conditions we can know, focusing on the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched (Strega, 2005). The epistemology of a critical paradigm is transactional and subjectivist, where the investigator and the investigated are assumed to be interactively linked (Guba & Lincoln, 2003, p. 26). They are assumed to be linked because the investigator (i.e., the researcher) can mould the types of responses from the subject (i.e., the data).

When conducting a thematic analysis, identifying, selecting, and reporting themes involves more than simply viewing and experiencing the data as objects. Instead, the themes reside within the researcher's thoughts, which ultimately link to judgments of the data (including presuppositions) and how this manifest in the interpretation of themes (Ho et al., 2017, p. 1760). The development of my themes aligns with my theoretical framework. However, the development of these themes is inevitably linked to the researcher. For example, *Death World* is a theme that examines how the politics of death sustains the conditions for creating worlds that amplify possibilities for violence and death to occur. The development of this theme is

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

interactively linked to the researcher, as they define and redefine the scope of what can and cannot fall under this category.

Science is viewed as one of the forces that shape reality. Therefore, research and science are both moral and political acts. It is believed that science is never neutral and is often used as a tool for social control; however, it can also be utilized as a tool for social change. This paradigm accepts that knowledge is a political activity and challenges researchers to consider whether they want to support or challenge existing power structures (Strega, 2005, p. 72). This research embodies a critical paradigm because it attempts to challenge how the state is implicated in upholding violence against Indigenous women, which, as my findings show, is more than what has already been shown by the Inquiry's analysis.

Research Design: Qualitative Thematic Analysis

According to the scholarship (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005; Tisdell & Merriam, 2015; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016), a thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within a given data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). A qualitative thematic analysis, in addition to revealing patterns or themes, it is concerned with uncovering the structure of meanings that embody human experiences in text form (Van Manen, 2014). This is a benefit that allows the researcher to associate meaning within a text document and convey how a social phenomenon shapes the human experience. The benefit of a qualitative analysis is to discover multiple interpretations of a documented reality within the data, shaped by its multiple components, and in this case the contributing voices and dynamic formats of the inquiry.

Qualitative thematic analysis is primarily shaped by hermeneutic phenomenology, which refers to the study of human experiences (Ho et al., 2017). The benefit of a thematic approach is

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

that understanding language as a world with multiple interpretations enables researchers to consider the diverse lived realities of the human experience (Ho et al., 2017, p. 1759). To illustrate different interpretations, a thematic analysis provides an approach to construct the meaning of lived experiences through the identification of themes. For instance, even though the National Inquiry's analysis is grounded in a human rights framework, I could still use its multiple formats, stories, and findings to construct a necropolitical analysis through a thematic approach by bringing in pre-existing theoretical concepts, as well as exploring emergent themes. While this study uses thematic analysis as its formal method, it is informed by a hermeneutic phenomenological approach that recognizes interpretation as a socially situated, meaning-making process.

A thematic analysis consists of two types of themes: semantic and latent. These types of themes are concerned with the 'level' at which themes are identified, that is, through a *semantic* (explicit level) or at a *latent* (interpretative level) (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). A thematic analysis at the semantic level identifies themes explicitly, otherwise known as surface-level meanings of the data, where the research does not look beyond what has been said or written (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytical process involves a progression from *description*, where the data have been organized to reveal a pattern and summarized, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 1990).

A thematic analysis at the latent level attempts to identify or examine the underlying assumptions, ideas, and conceptualizations (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This type of analysis involves a progression from a description, where the data has been organized to reveal patterns in semantic content, to an attempt to theorize the significance of these patterns and their broader

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

meanings and implications. For example, this project employed a thematic analysis at the latent level, utilizing the content of the data to examine how violence is a necropolitical phenomenon. This project also offers a surface-level analysis, as it examines what is said and provides an explanation. This research references testimonies from the Inquiry to explain how Indigenous women are governed through necropolitics. Conducting this type of analysis would require an analysis that extends beyond the semantic content of the data, as it necessitates close attention to the underlying ideas and conceptualizations that emerge from the codes and themes.

Conducting a Thematic Analysis on The Four Pillars of The National Inquiry's Final Report on MMIWG

When conducting a thematic analysis, several key steps should be considered. Phase one of this process involves developing familiarity with the data and reviewing it to search for meanings and patterns before coding. The initial read-through will shape ideas and identification (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, at the beginning of this project, phase one began with an initial read-through of the four pillars of The Final Report (2019) to gain familiarity with the data before the coding process. Through an initial review of the data, I gained a sense of how my theoretical concepts could be applied to the Inquiry's findings. This process involves immersing oneself in the data (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 34), as it provides an opportunity to identify potential coding categories.

The second phase of this process involves generating initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). Codes enable the organization of data into meaningful units, but they have yet to be themed, as themes are broader and may encompass several different codes. At this stage of the research process, I coded for as many potential themes, as the value of some codes may become apparent later in the process (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 34). According to Johnny Saldana (2016), a code in qualitative research is a word or short phrase that

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. A code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or “translates” data in research. Throughout my research, I drew on necropolitical concepts and theories to guide my coding and analysis, including wounding, injury, and abandonment as central concepts to the theory and also identified in the literature review. Examples of codes that emerged from the data were housing insecurity, economic insecurity, safety in child welfare, mental health services, negligence, and police apathy. Where the codes were each distinctive and overlapping, it was also clear that many of the emergent codes fell into a respective necropolitical theme.

Throughout my research, deductive coding was informed by theoretical concepts (i.e. biopolitics, necropolitics, and organized abandonment), while inductive coding was used to identify unanticipated patterns that emerged from the data. As noted, I implemented deductive and inductive strategies as part of my research where a deductive approach identifies a theory or premise and applies it to the data, and an inductive approach involves collecting and analyzing data to develop a theory or concepts (Patton, 1990). Both deductive and inductive strategies have their benefits and limitations. For instance, deductive practices in qualitative analysis can be employed to organize data or categorize it into predetermined categories, as supported by the literature or theory (Bingham, 2023). However, deductive strategies are limited as they may force the data to fit into preconceived categories. In contrast, inductive analysis involves reading through the data and identifying codes, categories, and patterns as they emerge, which can help explain findings using theory and literature (Bingham, 2023). Applying the combination can help mitigate these limits to ensure the theory is not limiting findings, while at the same time offering new insights, outside of the already given framework, of human rights in this case.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The decision to use a deductive research design is to organize and focus the research, and to employ inductive strategies to understand the different codes and themes that emerge from the data, explore their relationships, without forcing the data (Bingham, 2023). A mixed-methods research design, or ‘hybrid’ approach, ensures greater validity and rigour because it allows emergent codes from the data while staying focused on a particular issue or subject matter. The case for a hybrid approach to qualitative thematic analysis has been demonstrated to show greater rigour (Fereday and Cochrane, 2006; Proudfoot, 2023). For example, Proudfoot (2023) offers a study that employs deductive and inductive thematic elements to investigate teachers’ motivational responses to performance management and professional development (Proudfoot, 2023, p. 311). In their study, the deductive element of the teacher motivation study collected open survey responses and semi-structured interviews. These responses and interviews were analyzed inductively to generate themes throughout the first round of coding. For example, I went into the coding process that were informed by the theory (e.g., wounding, injury, and abandonment). There were also codes that emerged from the data, for example, every time I noticed instances of inadequate housing I had coded it as housing insecurity. A second round of coding was done to refine the categories to help shape the development of the final themes, as further elaborated below, where the data set was coded through a specific theoretical lens and inductively analyzed, as further discussed below. In doing this, it did not force the data into my theoretical framework (Bingham, 2023).

Three themes emerged from the data: biopolitics of a healthy citizen, death worlds, and organized abandonment and serve both as conceptual frames and findings that illustrate how violence against Indigenous women is embedded within state practices. The first theme of biopolitics of a healthy citizen finds that Indigenous women are circulated out of social

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

functioning as a result of their “risky lifestyles”. The second theme speaks to how state-based structural violence confines Indigenous women within “death worlds” that amplify violence and death that are difficult to escape because of how the practices are routinized and routinely normalized and justified. The last theme of organized abandonment examines how social disinvestment in communities contributes to the lack of adequate infrastructure that is ultimately linked to heightened experiences of violence and death among Indigenous women.

Once all the data were coded, the next phase involved sorting the codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). This step refocuses the researcher on broader themes rather than codes to illustrate a collective and holistic picture of what the data is conveying and to shape a necropolitical analysis. During this phase, I identified and named the central idea in each theme to define and operationalize it. This process also involved further breaking down of broader themes into categories, referred to as subthemes (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 35). For example, the broader theme of biopolitical functions of a healthy citizen, identified in my research, was broken down into three subthemes as found through the coding process: insufficient service delivery, denial of care, and stigmatized care. The breakdown led to the examination of three state-based institutional systems: healthcare, policing, and justice. The table below shows how broader themes were broken down into subthemes:

Table 1: List of Themes and Subthemes

Category	Theme # 1	Theme # 2	Theme #3
Theme	Biopolitical and Healthy Citizen	Death Worlds	Organized Abandonment

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Subtheme(s)	1. Insufficient service delivery broken into three categories: 1.1 Healthcare 1.2 Police 1.3 Justice system	2. Underreporting of violence 2.2 Child welfare system 2.3 Institutional wounding	3 Infrastructural disinvestment 3.1 Housing insecurity 3.2 Barriers to Education and Training
--------------------	---	---	---

Although categorized into distinct themes and subthemes, the codes overlapped considerably. For example, one of the research codes was “insufficient service delivery,” which fell under the theme of the biopolitical functions of a healthy citizen and death worlds. After careful coding, insufficient service delivery was placed under the theme of biopolitics as it consistently represented a biopolitical definition throughout the data, whereby the state circulates Indigenous women out of health care.

A thematic analysis may involve detailed descriptions of the data set or a detailed account of one aspect (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final phase of drafting an interpretative analysis involves a detailed analysis of the deductive necropolitical themes and inductive codes and their relationship, while highlighting points made through coded passages of the inquiry. This research employed data analysis, aiming to provide a nuanced account of a group of themes that address my research question. This research does not account for or attempt to resolve other parts of the data, like the experiences of trafficking of Indigenous women, as this project is limited to address the more structural question of what makes the violence and death more possible. This analysis is what Tuckett (2005) refers to as “the sculpting of fully contoured ideas” (Tuckett,

2005, p. 84), where the development of each theme is an effort to make sense of the selective data as a cohesive narrative. A theme captures something important about the data and the research question, representing a patterned response or meaning within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Limitations of Thematic Analysis

Validity and Interpretation

When conducting research, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations related to validity, reliability, and ethics. Internal validity concerns the extent to which research findings accurately reflect reality and how well they align with reality. (Tisdell & Merriam, 2015, p. 242). Ratcliffe (1983) offers a perspective on assessing validity in research and claims that “data does not speak for themselves, as there is always an interpreter or translator” (Ratcliffe, 1983, p. 149). In conducting a thematic analysis, themes do not speak for themselves because the idea that themes can “speak” is a passive account of the analysis process and denies the active role that the researcher plays in selecting patterns/themes of interest to report to readers (Taylor & Ussher, 2001). Meaning does not simply “speak” passively but is constructed through the researcher’s interpretative lens.

In addition, Starks and Trinidad (2007) argue that the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis, which involves making judgments about coding, themes, and decontextualizing the data. Roger and Sigurvinsdottir (2015) also attest to this criticism, where research is vulnerable to being swayed by the personal values and beliefs of the researcher. This vulnerability is also a sensitive issue in qualitative research. This is an important consideration, as the themes derived from my research are a product of the research question that is guided by my thinking and beliefs. To prevent bias in searching for codes, I had completed a general overview of the data

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

and conducted two rounds of coding to address these concerns. While this does not eliminate bias, since individual interpretations of the data will always be present, measures were taken to mitigate it. For instance, codes like negligence, disinvestment in communities, trauma, and normalization of violence are examples of codes that are closely tied to the theoretical concept driving my research. While the researcher's concerns about involvement in the analysis are valid, the codes I employed throughout my research were closely aligned with a theoretical framework that could offer new insights, departures and potential solutions.

Thematic analysis is often criticized for being a less structured method (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2015). As Riger and Sigurvinsdottir (2015, p. 36) highlight, the lack of structure provides more opportunities for the researcher to influence the outcome. While this is a valid concern, most qualitative research carries the burden of the researcher bringing in their internal worldviews, biases, and values (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2015). Braun and Clarke (2015) also emphasize the importance of acknowledging our theoretical positions and values, as the theoretical framework and methods align with what the researcher wants to know, and that the researcher is mindful of their decisions and identifies them as *such* (Braun & Clarke, 2015, p. 80). A method to minimize the intervention of one's biases is to recognize and reflect on one's positionality and adopt practices of reflexivity to ensure that the research is not impacted by undue influence.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Bell Hooks, author of *Feminist Scholarship: Ethical Issues*, raises a concern about writing about the experiences of a group to which we do not belong. When conducting research, Bell Hooks reminds us to be mindful of how our actions will be used to reinforce or perpetuate domination (hooks, 2015, p. 43). This is particularly important to remember as a researcher,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

given the role researchers play in describing the lived realities of marginalized groups, especially pertinent to the context of this research on population made vulnerable through political and social practices like research, among others.

Exploring a topic, such as this, requires engagement in critical practices, like reflexivity and the researcher's positionality (hooks, 2015, p. 44). For instance, throughout the duration of my research, I critically reflected on my own positionality. Lawrence and Dua's (2005) concept of *complex complicity* reflects this struggle between "researcher and researched", especially in how the researcher may or may not be complicit in the ongoing project of colonization (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 122). This concept comes to mind on how my position on this research is complex because I am an inhabitant of Canada and, therefore, live in and own land that has been appropriated from Indigenous peoples; however, I come from a family of immigrants who have endured hardships and encountered struggles. Therefore, my collaboration is complex, as Lawrence and Dua (2005) highlights. My position as a female researcher from an immigrant family is not to reproduce harm or be the voice that is representative of Indigenous women, but to highlight how violence is part of the nature of the state.

Ethical Accountability

Some scholars argue that the interpretation of data is a reflexive exercise through which meanings are constructed rather than discovered (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 414). Reflexivity is an essential aspect of the research. There is the assumption that the researcher, the method, and the data are separate entities rather than interdependent and interconnected (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 414). The researcher's role and connection to data collection and analysis should also be considered because the research will inevitably be driven by the researcher's interests, pre-conceived notions, one's understanding of the data, and other social and cultural locations that

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

play a considerable role in what themes are developed and how they are understood. Throughout my research, I was aware of what I could find within the data because I had preconceived notions about the data and how it could answer my research question. For example, my research question was focused on specifically understanding the state's complicity in upholding the conditions of violence and death, which imposes a framework without direct accountability for whom this research is focused.

To enhance the credibility of qualitative research, Cope (2014) recommends that researchers adopt active engagement, persistent observation, and reflexivity. Efforts to enhance the credibility my research included the allocation of adequate time to collect and obtain an understanding of the data, and to actively attending to speak in a respectful and mindful a manner by referring to the literature as a guide to the use of language and what would be appropriate, especially when speaking about a topic concerning a population to which I do not belong. While selecting public data did not require additional ethics approval, I took the necessary ethical and political precautions to ensure that I approached the data with care.

Conclusion

Overall, this research conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of The National Inquiry's Final Report on the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIW)*. Reflexivity, ethical awareness, and interpretive rigour were central throughout the process. This hybrid qualitative methodology, grounded in a critical paradigm and informed by a necropolitical theory, allows for a nuanced reading of the Inquiry's findings that exposes the state's complicity in maintaining conditions of violence and death.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

The National Inquiry's Final Report (2019) on the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)* is a nationwide investigation that reveals the persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations as the cause behind Canada's high rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The Inquiry's findings underline the Canadian state's failure to protect Indigenous women, framing this neglect as a form of ongoing colonial violence. In the analysis of this report, necropolitics is a useful theoretical framework to further the Inquiry's analysis to understand how the state facilitates violence and death among Indigenous women. As my discussion will show, not only does the state fail to protect Indigenous women or violate their rights, but it continues to perpetuate colonial violence. This research finds that the healthcare system, the police, justice system, and child-welfare – all of which are state-based institutions consistently fail to adequately provide life-sustaining services that produce the conditions for violence to occur. Where the Inquiry made the state, practitioners and the public responsible for addressing the murders and disappearances, my research shows the limits in such recommendations, given how I consistently document the necropolitical operations of the state.

Through themes of organized abandonment, the biopolitics of a “healthy citizen”, and the concept of “death worlds”, this chapter identifies the mechanisms by which structural inequities, resource deprivation, and societal stigmatization perpetuate harm. The analysis not only extends the Inquiry's conclusions but also challenges its mandate that makes the state responsible for remedies without considering how violence is embedded within the very fabric of state operations. Each theme is explored through the lived experiences and stories documented in the Inquiry, revealing the state's role in sustaining the violence faced by Indigenous women, girls,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

and communities. These findings show that the systemic injustices are not only failures of governance but a structure endemic to its exercise, where the spaces of exclusion it creates heighten exposure to violence, maintain a colonial status quo, thus highlighting a need to reimagine safety and accountability. Overall, this analysis takes the Inquiry one step further to identify how necropolitics is inherent to state power and provides a more fulsome analysis of some of the invisible areas of concern.

Theme #1: Biopolitical Functions of a Healthy Citizen

This section will discuss how Indigenous women are made socially invisible because of their perceived inability to maintain the standards or norms that govern the politics of healthy citizenship. As a result, those who fail to maintain the health of their bodies and the nation are poorly served and thus are excluded from support and the eventual ability to function. In understanding the biopolitics of a healthy citizen, the lack and/or denial of state services and supports is indicative of how the state shapes who receives services, or an overall absence of state services through an invisibility in epidemiology and healthcare.

I begin by examining inadequate service delivery within the healthcare system as a form of control over life. Next, I examine police responses as described in the Inquiry to understand how perceived stigmas and stereotypes are embedded. Lastly, I discuss how stereotypes and stigmas that are born out of biopolitics seep into how the justice system normalizes and undermines violence against Indigenous women. In looking at how the biopolitics of a healthy citizen interacts with the healthcare system, police responses, and the courts, I identify how colonialism is conflated with biopolitical powers to reinforce the conditions for violence that ultimately place Indigenous women into death worlds.

1.1 Insufficient Service Delivery: Healthcare

The National Inquiry provides substantial evidence documenting the lack of quality healthcare services for Indigenous women (Inquiry, 2019, pp. 461-471). While there is ample evidence in the Final Report (2019) to show the absence or lack of quality healthcare services, the National Inquiry does not examine the processes that facilitate the healthcare system's denial of intervention and care, or that make access to care conditional or difficult. The denial of healthcare acts as a form of control over not only healthcare but life itself, a centring feature of colonial (see Literature Review) and bio-political powers that usher in the politics of death.

The lack of sufficient healthcare services among Indigenous women is deeply rooted in the ongoing colonial project, as expert Witness Allan Wade explains,

You could say it consists of a ... message: you are deficient. Disordered, ill, heathen, Indigenous, queer, savage, non-white, female, poor, uneducated, suffering, drug-addicted. You are deficient. There is something that matters to you. The second part of the message is that I am proficient. Christian, European, male, white, closer to God, expert, mentally well, educated, elected, wealthy, secure. And we know that I am proficient because I am the one that gets to say that you are deficient (Inquiry, 2019, p. 466).

As Wade describes, the colonial mindset is comprised of the idea that dominant groups, like the educated or wealthy, who are 'proficient', are the same population that has the power to define or determine individual worth. In a First Nations Regional Health Survey published by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) 2015-2016 (see Inquiry, 2019, p. 421), it reports how the high rates of chronic health conditions do not occur in isolation but are shaped by the inseparable relationship between health and generations of racist colonial policies.

Referring back to the literature review, scholars argue that colonialism is not only a contextual factor in violence, but rather the embeddedness of colonialism within the political, social, and economic structure of society that leads to the continued health precarity (Monchalin et al., 2019;

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Martin & Walia, 2019). To support this, Smith (2003) argues in the context of sexual violence that it does not simply occur within the process of colonialism, but that colonialism is itself structured by the logic of sexual violence since it is considered to be a tool of racism and colonialism.

This section will specifically elaborate on how colonial structures are deeply embedded in the way the healthcare system operates. It will show how the testimonies, combined with the First Nations Regional Health Survey (2015-2016) from the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), lay the foundation for understanding how the biopolitics of a healthy citizen weighs in on how specific populations are deemed unworthy of receiving life-sustaining services due to their perceived inability to uphold societal norms. This analysis will bridge the gap in understanding how care is denied due to stigmas and negative stereotypes, which makes the state a necropolitical agent of power.

In describing the encounters with mental health professionals, witnesses highlighted how power, hierarchy, and racism are deeply embedded within the healthcare system. For example, Sharna S. describes the condescending and dismissive treatment that she received from a healthcare professional within a mental health facility at a time when she needed support following a drug relapse. Sharna S. describes her experiences following her return to the mental health unit, along with instructions from the court:

I don't even know if he was a nurse, but he was always on the unit ... [and he] wouldn't let me back into the mental health unit. Because it says on it there's some type of wording that says "if" or something like that. And he's reading it, and he's being cocky. And he says, "It doesn't say here that I have to let you back in here." And I said, "You're letting me back in here." I said – he had my stuff all packed. He said, "You didn't come back here last night." I said, "I was removed here by the police last night...." [The worker] wouldn't let me in. Hands me all of my stuff in a white plastic bag and says, "We have already given your room to somebody else" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 466-467).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

In response, Sharna, by her description, “became desperate,” taking all of the medication she could find so she could get admitted into the hospital as an overdose patient. Only when in proximity to death did Sharna have access to mental health services. In this case, the healthcare system operates as an agent of necropolitical power, determining the conditions under which individuals can access life-sustaining services. The act of denying care or making access to care conditional or difficult reflects a form of biopolitical control over life. In Sharna’s case, her right to care is conditional upon reaching a crisis point. As this discussion will show in the subsequent section, structural violence places individuals in a “death world” where their survival is contingent upon extreme and potentially deadly actions to receive life-sustaining support. Sharna’s action, while desperate, also reflects how the politics of death and life are acutely understood by those who are subject to these death worlds.

Lauren Berlant (2007) argues that individuals, families, and communities who are positioned by race, poverty, sexuality, or a combination are proffered as examples of states of ‘dangerous’ health. For instance, she outlines how obesity is a dangerous health condition because it reflects a failure to manage one’s passion for food, which is perceived as a lack of self-control or autonomy. The state of ‘dangerousness’ is defined by the biopolitical conditions that cast expectations on specific bodies and their competence at maintaining health. Similarly, Melissa C. demonstrates how she was placed in a dangerous situation that could have led to further harm or violence if she had not been assertive:

“I was visiting a cousin in the northwest area of the city. There was just the two of us, and we were watching a hockey game. A woman showed up, and she provided me with marijuana that had been laced with something, and I didn’t know. I overdosed. I stopped breathing. I had a grand mal seizure, and I was transported to the (deleted) hospital. Despite the fact that I had no jacket, no shoes, no money, I was asked to leave at 6:30 a.m. on that cold fall...morning. It was dark, and it was cold and I was alone. Nobody knew where I was...So, I went back and begged them to help me. And the worker at that time only got annoyed with me, but I was persistent,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

because I didn't want to go walking by myself...After a lot of begging and asking, I was granted a taxi slip" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 462-463).

Melissa C. explains further that the next month, a body was found right where she was supposed to walk. Similar to the experiences shared by Sharna S., the level of service is contingent on first attaining a level of health, or otherwise belonging to non-entitled health services (Berlant, 2007; Million, 2013). Those who fail to participate in the maintenance of health, like Sharna S. and Melissa C., who have a history of drug use, are considered to be failing, and therefore, do not yet qualify for adequate health care services.

The National Inquiry heard from Paula P., who described a similar experience in which the negligent mental health treatment she received had exacerbated her mental health problems. Paula reported that, at one point, she went for counselling to deal with her sexual abuse. After six months, the counsellor told her that she initially believed everything Paula had told her was untrue (Inquiry, 2019, p. 467). Paula felt "psychologically" raped as the counsellor had to investigate everything before she would help her (Inquiry, 2019, p. 467). Despite the known violence and trauma experienced through colonialism, Paula's condition was "unbelievable" and highlights how she was forced to justify support and resources for her mental health treatment. Simpson (2013) and Deer (2009) speak to how colonial rule is intertwined with how forms of race and gender anchor the disposability and ungrievability of Indigenous women. This is supported by the Inquiry, in which Sharna, Melissa, and Paula were required to attain or prove their worthiness to receive health supports.

The inadequate support in a healthcare context demonstrates how the state exerts a form of control over life, setting a base standard for practices and population worthy of support. Vanessa B. similarly testifies on behalf of her sister, explains that therapists had a negative perception of her sister and would not provide helpful treatment. She says, "She could have used

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

these services, and she could have had these services, but if she felt at some point that she wasn't getting what she needed, you're not really helping her, are you? So...there we go. We have failure right there" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 467-468). The inadequate healthcare supports are indicative of how practitioners consistently project women as at a level undeserving of their time or assistance and projecting them into a limbo of care.

Through a necropolitical lens, Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi (2020) demonstrate how the life of an asylum seeker represents 'gradual wounding', where conditions of impoverishment and endangerment are so severe that these populations are primarily occupied with survival. As described by Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi (2020), gradual wounding is similarly shaped in the everyday life of an asylum seeker, such as shopping or eating, which tend to be areas of stress and anxiety. For instance, one of the interviewees explains that budgetary constraints may lead to reduced food intake and describes how stress is linked to loss of appetite (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 115). Recognizing how simple aspects of everyday life can be a source of anxiety and stress shows that 'gradual wounding' is not only physical but also psychological. The authors emphasize that these outcomes are not accidental but somewhat intentional. Referring back to Sharna, her act of desperation forces her into a necropolitical state, where conditions of endangerment make her, along with Paula, primarily concerned with survival.

The gradual wounding of Indigenous women is also relevant in understanding how they are forced into these death-like worlds through bio-political power, where violence and death continue to be ever-present. For example, Dianna B. and others shared disturbing stories about how the health care needs of their loved ones or themselves were minimized when those needs were a result of violence. As Dianna explained, in relation to the death of her nearly 80-year-old mother, who was severely beaten:

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

So when the ambulance came, and this is what my mom told me, when the ambulance came she was on the ground and in excruciating pain. And she thought they were treating her as though she had fallen over because she was drunk.

And they picked her up – and she was a fairly heavysset woman – they picked her up and put her on her feet, and she fell again, because she had a broken hip in the beating. And they laughed at her. And they picked her up again. She said, “I can’t. It hurts. My hip hurts.” And when she fell again then they thought maybe there was something else wrong, so they – I guess they put her on a stretcher and they took her away to the hospital.

Accessing mental healthcare services that are free from bias, as seen through Sharna, Paula, Vanessa, and Dianna’s testimonies, demonstrates how a state-run healthcare system is designed to cater to those who are ‘deserving’ or ‘worthy of care’. In addition, the Inquiry hears from Robin R., who shares her experience with the emergency responders after they refused to take her daughter to the hospital until she found her daughter’s health card:

“[The] ambulance came into my house and they checked my daughter’s vitals. They went to get a stretcher and they asked for her care card. I didn’t know the number of her care card off the top of my head and we didn’t have a family doctor. But the ambulance insisted that they needed the care card before they drove her to the hospital. And it was like, they refused to leave my house unless I had her care card to go to the hospital. So I went into every drawer in my house and I ripped everything else out of the drawers. I ripped everything off the shelves. I ripped everything open. I was panicked. I was scared. And my house was in disarray after. I ripped apart my house looking for the damn care card because the ambulance said they wouldn’t leave unless they had that number” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 470).

Robin’s daughter later died of her injuries. In addition, the detective interpreted the disarray caused by her looking for the care card as her house being “strewn with garbage,” and Robin believes it contributed to her losing custody of her other child. Robin’s testimony highlights how care is made conditional, or absent, as shown for Robin’s daughter and where the state brings populations to wounded and eventual endangerment or death. Robin’s testimony is also indicative of how various systems are intertwined in sustaining the wounding of marginalized groups. As future discussions will highlight, the child-welfare system is responsible for bringing Indigenous children into conditions of endangerment and impoverishment.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Based on the testimonies that were highlighted above, conflated stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and addictions play a role in the kind of treatment that they can access (Inquiry, 2019, p. 463). This is analogous to Tsang's (2020) ethnographic study depicting the experiences of gay sex workers living with HIV in China. Tsang's (2020) analysis demonstrates how government officials stigmatize to deny support. For example, the study references Majian's testimony, where he explains how most people blame gay sex workers for their sexually risky behaviour, he says,

“If they know I have HIV, they will stare and keep a distance from me. Therefore, I don't dare to let them know. Some government officials consider me as “scum” and say we do not deserve to receive proper treatment. The department of health and the security department (e.g., police) think we are troublesome because we increase their workload” (Tsang, 2020, p. 6).

Majian's testimony, along with others who echo a similar sentiment (e.g. Menrui, Mao, Jianhui, and Chen), all speak to how stigma and othering depict these groups as contaminated, which poses a threat to the health of the state and ultimately justifies the conditions that lead to violence and death. Tsang's (2020) analysis depicting the experiences of gay sex workers living with HIV in China is analogous to the Canadian health care system that denies or dismisses Indigenous women of care due to how negative associations and stigmas are deeply entrenched within the healthcare system. To further this analysis, this discussion will further elaborate on how stigma and othering are upheld through state-based structural violence, and how this is linked to race and gender.

Million (2013), in relation to the testimonies mentioned above, demonstrates how forms of othering sustain the conditions to kill or eradicate populations towards death. Padilla and Madera (2021) demonstrate how these processes of othering are facilitated by the state, designed

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

to eradicate specific populations towards death through abandonment and neglect by denying spaces for refuge and social services (Padilla & Madera, 2021, p. 36).

As theoretical discussions by Berlant (2007) and Million (2013) show, we are reminded that health becomes normalized in ways in which health itself is seen as a side effect of successful normativity (Berlant, 2007, p. 765). These scholars remind us that the state determines the biopolitical function of health and that the creation of a standard or norm by the majority, or what is perceived as the standard to be upheld. Those who fail or deviate to manage one's passions, or will for food, alcohol, drugs, or sex, is considered as "out of control" or outside of stated norm and thus controlled through necropolitical power, such as in the case of Vanessa B's sister, or the denied health care such as with Sharna S., and Melissa C. These examples demonstrate how the biopolitics of a healthy citizen exposes specific individuals for failing to uphold a state of health, which is connected to experiencing further violence or death. The Inquiry highlights that negative stereotypes about Indigenous women and addictions are also how the maintenance of health weighs into the care that one receives. Other testimonial examples from the Inquiry further support this notion.

The Inquiry identifies that the stereotypes about Indigenous women and addiction factor into the treatment that they can access. For example, the Inquiry heard from Doris G., a survivor of childhood abuse, domestic abuse, and family violence who was forced into sex work as a teenager and started using crack and alcohol (Inquiry, 2019, p. 463). She reports that when she began to feel sick, her sister, who worked at the hospital, red-flagged her name, so that when she came in for help, they treated her like "an addict" and would medicate and send her home. She reports that eventually the doctors had to perform emergency surgery to remove her gallbladder and found a type of cervical cancer that could have been prevented with proper treatment

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

(Inquiry, 2019, p. 463). Similarly, Jaylene D. reported how negative assumptions affected the level of services provided to her sister and exposed her to danger. Jaylene, whose sister eventually overdosed, reports how her sister, in her early 30s, had bad sores on her feet requiring her to use a walker. She would go to the hospital to find relief to manage the pain, but due to her history with addictions, she was not getting the help she needed. Jaylene explains further:

“They weren’t properly medicating her to accommodate her pain. Because of that, she resorted to using drugs...On one of her trips to Edmonton, her last trip, she connected with one of her friends from school, and she ended up buying crystal meth. That crystal meth killed her. She went into cardiac arrest seven times within half an hour, and then was, I think, dead on arrival at the hospital” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 463).

Jaylene herself had a similar experience in trying to secure proper medical care: “I was in the hospital at one point...I was in so much pain, I couldn’t handle it. I, as well, have a history of drug addiction. When I was asking the doctors to properly medicate me, as well, in my file the history of addictions is there – one of the doctors told me that he is not going to give me anything to get me high” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 463). While the Inquiry argues that the lack of care among healthcare providers is a consequence of negative stereotypes, this research identifies the broader functioning of how stereotypes trigger a necropolitical response to construct different death portals. As this research will highlight within further discussions, the maintenance of health arises as a dynamic site where norms by the dominant bloc, as Berlant (2007) suggests, are how violence and death are inseparable from health. Testimonies from Sharna S., Melissa C., Doris G., and Jaylene D. are not simply a matter of insufficient service delivery, but look deeper into how the healthcare system is a part of a larger function that renders marginalized and racialized groups vulnerable to experiencing violence and death within these death worlds.

The analysis provided so far provides an understanding of how the state intentionally neglects or creates the invisibility of Indigenous women through the maintenance of health. The

following section will further substantiate how these state-generated death-worlds are facilitated by organized abandonment, in which the intentional disinvestment of communities creates an environment for these necropolitical processes to occur.

1.2 Insufficient Service Delivery: Police Responses

The findings of the Inquiry indicate that Indigenous women consistently fall into the category of individuals deemed undeserving of police protection due to racist stigmas, stereotypes, and lifestyle choices, which perpetuates a state of precarity (e.g. Inquiry, 2019, pp. 510, 627, 628-634, 648-654, 663, 665, 703, 705, 706). These findings illustrate how the police deliberately overlook issues related to the violence experienced by Indigenous women. My analysis demonstrates how stigmas and negative stereotypes are also linked to colonial and biopolitical power to deny criminal justice support. This analysis will ultimately establish that the stigmas and negative stereotypes perpetuated since the early settler colonial period in the mid-19th century and tied to their failure to take “care” of themselves, are fundamentally responsible for exposing Indigenous women to the let die function, known as necropolitics. In many of the testimonies heard by the National Inquiry, families shared how stereotypes and victim blaming slowed down or impeded the investigation into their loved ones’ disappearances or deaths (Inquiry, 2019, p. 648). For example, in June 2008, Bernice received a phone call during which she could overhear her daughter, who was supposed to be at home for her 18th birthday party, asking, “Where are we?” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 649). Bernice C. explains the fear that she felt to the Inquiry and recalls her experience when she approached the RCMP on June 23rd:

“I went to the police...I said ‘I want to report my daughter missing’. And, he said, ‘oh what’s her name’. I said, I “Jennifer...“Oh, how old is she?” Like that. That’s how he spoke to me. “How – how old is she?” I said, “She just turned 18 Thursday, her birthday.” “Oh, give her a week. She’s a drunk.” I said, “You don’t even know her to talk ... about her like that. You don’t know her.” He said, “Oh, give her a week. Give her a week.” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 649).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The responses that Indigenous women and girls receive during a crisis demonstrate how stereotypical assumptions have infiltrated policing practices, as documented throughout the Inquiry. By marking Indigenous women as irresponsible, deviant, or “choosing” risky lifestyles, the state sorts them into a category of life unworthy of care, urgency, or protection that translates directly into institutional practices that withdraw protection and normalize abandonment.

While the Inquiry identifies discrimination and rights violations, it does not clarify why these stigmas enable the state to refrain from intervening. This analysis reveals that processes of othering, driven by both race and gender, are perpetuated by state-based structural violence. The Inquiry documents how the police respond insufficiently in the context of missing and murdered Indigenous women. For instance, testimony from Jamie L.H., who explains to the Inquiry how the police officer had told her, “Oh, the women might have just moved away, nothing’s happened, there’s no evidence of anything going on” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 630). The Inquiry reports that because involvement in the sex industry is stigmatized, many people choose not to report information about their involvement, which is rooted in a long-standing view that sees those individuals as disposable or unworthy of attention (Inquiry, 2019, p. 656). Referring back to the testimony of Bernice, where she was met with the response to wait a week because her daughter is a ‘drunk’, suggests that responding to individuals who fail to comply with the maintenance of health is not a priority for general society. As a result, these populations are deemed unworthy of protection or care.

The intentional unwillingness of police to investigate the disappearance or death of many Indigenous women sends the message they are also policing the health of the body politic. For example, Diane L. recalls her Inquiry experience when she contacted the RCMP to express concerns about her sister, Tina's, safety. She explains that it took a month after she contacted

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

them to hear back. When they called her they said, “because of her lifestyle, you know, being a streetwalker, being a hooker, you know, she could be any place, she could be in Vancouver, she could be in any cities” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 665). The delayed police responses were because Tina lived a risky lifestyle, and due to this lifestyle choice, she did not require immediate intervention. In Padilla and Madera’s (2021) examination of transwomen in Puerto Rico, we are reminded of how othering and abandonment manifest in the necropolitical abandonment of these populations because of how unregulated procedures elevate the risk of infections and chronic illnesses (Padilla & Madera, 2021, p. 28). Similar to this, the Inquiry shows us in Diane’s case that forms of othering and stigmatization of her sister’s risky lifestyle are factors that determined the lack of concern for her safety by the police. The decision to lead a risky lifestyle is intimately linked to health because of how police responses are designed to cater to those who are worthy of intervention. These responses contribute to elevating the vulnerabilities of Indigenous women, which thereby heightens the experiences of violence and death, and as further discussions will show, is responsible for placing Indigenous women in a death-like world.

The denial or unwillingness to act is apparent in where the state dedicates its time, energy, and resources, and in the evidence within the Inquiry. For example, in describing an encounter with the RCMP in Alberta, Paul had gone to report his 20-year-old sister, Amber, missing; however, he was told to wait 24 hours. The Inquiry notes that for Amber’s family, this arbitrary time frame is embedded within negative stereotypes that perceive missing Indigenous women and girls as “out partying” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 151). The examples of contempt or dismissal are not simply a matter of ‘not worth’ the investigation, but demonstrate where the state puts its time, energy, and resources into those who are considered to be valuable or worthy citizens. As mentioned in previous discussions, Million (2013) reminds us that health is a

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

dynamic site because the concept of ‘health’ is considered a state to be maintained or upheld. As a result, and supported by police responses, those who fail to engage in this type of maintenance or upkeep are judged and publicly scrutinized. The stereotypes that the Inquiry notes, like “she’s a drunk” or “there’s no evidence of anything going on”, are predicated on individuals’ failings and ultimately position them as unworthy of care.

The police also operate as an agent of necropolitical power, as they hold the power to determine who receives protection or care, often through a biopolitical lens. In the examples noted above, we can see how insufficient police responses reflect a form of control over life. As the testimonies provided by Bernice, Jamie, Pamela, Diane, and Paul show, perceived stigmas and stereotypes surrounding lifestyle choices are embedded in how colonial and biopolitical powers operate as agents of power by the state, which is ultimately responsible for reinforcing violence against Indigenous women.

1.3 Insufficient Service Delivery: Canadian Justice System

The National Inquiry has provided considerable evidence to suggest an absence of criminal justice intervention for victims and families who are affected by violence (see Inquiry, 2019, pp. 511, 518, 626, 627, 663, 665, 666, 693-700). This section will outline how Indigenous women and girls are positioned within the court system as being responsible for the violence they encounter through subtle acts of victim-blaming. In particular, this section defines how the biopolitics of a healthy citizen undermines violence against Indigenous women by transferring focus to negative depictions of the victim, instead of the violence itself. This section will specifically focus on how this occurs throughout the Canadian courts, where there is a tendency to rely on explanations of lifestyle choices to justify and account for violence among Indigenous women.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The National Inquiry heard testimonies from families who found it difficult to attend court and listen to the disturbing characterizations of their missing or murdered loved one. For instance, Marilyn W. spoke to the National Inquiry, who described how the negative portrayal of her daughter within the courtroom and media during the trial:

“We went to trial just down the block from here and day after day I had to sit in the courtroom with the man who killed my sister. Day after day, I had to sit in that courtroom with the media, who all the while they were writing things dehumanizing my sister, revictimizing me and my family” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 695).

Pamela F. describes a similar sentiment where negative depictions of the victim tend to be the focal point rather than the murder itself (Inquiry, 2019, p. 696). Pamela F. explains to the Inquiry about how the criminal courts dehumanize victims, which in turn re-victimizes the families of the deceased:

"It hurts. You don't want to hear someone say untrue things about your child, and you know they're untrue. But you can't, you can't really go and get mad and scream in court, why is he allowed to say that? Why can't I say what he did? You can't do that cause then you're going to get thrown out of court" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 696).

Systems and institutions control narratives to shape the social and political reality in a way that extends beyond the physical act of murder, affecting the memory and dignity of the deceased and their families. This mechanism of power effectively reduces the Indigenous women's lives to be less grievable, unworthy of public outrage or grief, which only reinforces the violence that they experience (Butler, 2006). This mechanism of power effectively promotes injury among Indigenous families because of how the courts reduce Indigenous life as less grievable, and therefore, reinforces the violence they experience (see testimony from Marilyn W., Pamela F., Robin Bourgeois). In this sense, the state's ability to determine whose lives are valued and whose losses are publicly recognized reflects a necropolitical logic: the power not only to let certain populations die but to manage the social meaning of their death. By

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

controlling which stories are told, which harms are acknowledged, and which lives are mourned, the state exercises a form of “death governance” that extends the original violence.

Both Marilyn's and Pamela's experiences illustrate not only how the court disregards the loss of life but also an intentional lack of will and commitment within the courts to hold to account those victims who engage in a risky lifestyle. As discussed within the review of the literature, the risky lifestyle discourse reinforces violence against Indigenous women because of how these discourses seep into the state and the public's perception of violence. For example, the risky lifestyle discourse depicts Indigenous women as “willing victims” who “deserve” the violence because of their lifestyle choices (Razack, 2000; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Strega et al., 2014; Hansen & Dim, 2019).

The risky lifestyle discourse is also relevant in understanding how depictions of Indigenous women are represented within the courts. While the previous section also speaks to how lifestyle choices impact police responses, social stigmas within the court system are operationalized with an intent to uphold and even legitimate the social and physical death of Indigenous women. This analysis is relevant to a necropolitical analysis as it informs where violence is routinely undermined and normalized.

The Inquiry emphasizes that depictions of the victim receive greater attention than the violence itself within Canadian courts. For example, Robyn Bourgeois explains to the Inquiry that when a perpetrator is charged, the courts heavily focus on the hypersexualization of Indigenous women and girls:

“Our Canadian courts, they really...they rely heavily on the hypersexualization of Indigenous women and girls to not only erase the violence because they will erase it by saying, *oh, you know what? She consented to this, or she, you know, was engaged in prostitution, or you know, she, you know, was drunk and promiscuous, or any of those things*” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 696).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The hypersexualization of Indigenous women is comparable to the experiences of gay sex workers living with HIV in China (Tsang, 2020), where state condoned stigmas are at the heart of shaping the necropolitical experiences of these populations and, eventually, how they are confined within these death worlds. In the context of how Indigenous women are represented within the court, the negative depictions and stigmas not only operate to undermine violence against them but are a key function in upholding the social and physical death of Indigenous women. By framing Indigenous women as inherently risky, deviant, or responsible for their own victimization, the legal system effectively situates them outside the boundaries of those whose lives merit safety, justice, or grief. This relegation is central to necropolitics.

The Canadian court system is an institution that marks Indigenous women as ‘deserving’ of the violence they experience. The Inquiry shows that the risky lifestyle discourse is especially prominent in experiences where Indigenous women are working as sex workers. For example, Diane L. explains to the Inquiry about the way that her sister, Tina, was represented within the court system:

“In the hearing in Dawson Creek, they said her name right from – right, like, in the beginning, but it started there that they kept referring to her as “this hooker,” “that prostitute,” “this hooker.” And then when we went to the trial it continued, and all during the trial I was sitting there listening to all of them, the prosecutors, the lawyers, the crown prosecutors, the lawyers, the defense, all of them, and including him when they questioned him, they would never ever use her name, call her by a name. They would always refer to her as “this hooker,” “that prostitute.” I was so upset. It really, really hurt me. I was so upset” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 665).

The way that Tina is framed within the Canadian criminal courts is an institutional response that overtly vocalizes an intolerance for risky behaviours. As previously discussed in the review of the literature, Katherine Morton’s critical discourse analysis of the billboards along the Highway of Tears shows that hitchhiking is a dangerous activity that should be avoided, thereby categorizing it as socially unacceptable. As Morton (2016, 311) shows, the messages on these

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

billboards make hitchhiking onerous, as any harm that results from hitchhiking is perceived as a failure to adequately manage one's risk. In the same vein, Diane's testimony is indicative of how a failure to manage one's risk is associated with an inability to manage one's state of well-being. This is used against the individual to silence or deny them of intervention, since their risky activities represent a deviation from a social norm or standard.

In their work, Simpson (2013) and Deer (2009) highlight how race and gender are implicated in how Indigenous women are cast as disposable and ungrievable, which is a key topic for a necropolitical discussion because of the continued exposure to violence and death. For example, theoretical scholarship of Padilla & Madera (2021) provides an understanding of how gender trajectories are marked with various forms of systemic violence. They use necropolitics to consider the ways that the transgender body in Puerto Rico is systemically excluded and 'designed to die'. They show how transgender women achieve gender related goals through the use of informal and unregulated medical technologies as a result of being pushed out of mainstream healthcare. This results in an elevated risk of infections, chronic illness, and death because they are procured through informal street markets. Similar to how transwomen experience forms of othering by the formal healthcare system, the Canadian justice system also relies on the negative perceptions of Indigenous women in upholding their disposability and ungrievability. This is linked to how the state intentionally exposes Indigenous women to violence and death by attacking their personhood and keeps them trapped into these death-like-worlds.

The Canadian court system is an institution that not only upholds responses that overtly vocalizes an intolerance for risky behaviours; but, erases acts of violence by not holding perpetrators responsible. For instance, the Inquiry hears from Marilyn W., who explains the

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

miscarriage of justice that took place during her sister's murder trial. Her testimony identifies the ways in which ongoing discrimination and racism directed towards Indigenous women and girls is rooted in the miscarriage of justice that took place during the murder trial of the man accused of murdering her sister:

“I sat in that courtroom, and I saw how the prosecutor was trying to argue my sister’s case, and I saw how that judge kept defending the person who killed her, and I knew –I knew the judge already – before the outcome, I knew that the judge already – already as going to side with the man who killed my sister. I knew it ... and so I listened to the man who confessed to killing her. I listened to the recording in the courtroom. I saw him break down. I saw him cry and say, yes, that he killed her, and he took her life, and then, the judge ... threw out his confession, and then he let him go free. How does that happen? How does somebody who confessed to taking a human life, how do they get away with that?” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 699).

Marilyn’s testimony demonstrates how the criminal court system has failed to uphold justice for victims and families. The Inquiry also hears from a family member who offers her perspective of how a systemic bias against Indigenous sex workers compromises any realization of justice:

“There was no justice for my sister-in-law. He [the perpetrator] didn’t even – he wasn’t even charged. She was the fourth one to die in this man’s company. And they were all First Nation women except one, and that’s how he was charged was the last one wasn’t from the street, she wasn’t a streetwalker” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 664).

These testimonies suggest that lifestyle choices erase violence against them. The erasure of violence links back to Sherene Razack’s *Gendering Disposability* (2016), which describes how sexualized violence is key to the disposability of Indigenous women, and especially Indigenous sex workers, where the colonial power continues to control their bodies. This will be elaborated on later in this section.

Sherene Razack (2016) identifies how prostitution is a place/practice where no form of law offers protection because it incorporates aspects of the law and assumed contractual agreements, as well as dehumanization which refers to the use of a body, or the persons desire notwithstanding and the use of a thing (i.e. disposability) (Razack, 2016, p. 305). The last

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

testimony from the family member, where they describe how the perpetrator was charged for the murder of the woman who was not a streetwalker, suggests that lifestyle choices effectively erase any violence against them. The testimony of Marilyn W. also shows that, despite the perpetrators' confessions, they are still not held accountable.

Razack's (2016) *Gendering Disposability* is key to how forms of accountability are structured, depending on who commits the violence and whom the violence is inflicted upon. Razack (2016) notes how gendering disposability is linked to the slave narrative. Employing McKittrick's 'slave geographies' is pertinent to the discussion of how forms of accountability vary depending on whom the violence is inflicted upon. McKittrick's slave geographies examine sites of unprotected female flesh that are sexually and violently accessible, producing white femininities and masculinities. The auction block, as was used to display and scrutinize black women's sexual bodies, in response to the need to reproduce the slave population, was a place where buyers could poke and prod the nude body to show how black femininity was profitable, vulnerable, and sexually available. Razack (2016) employs McKittrick's slave geographies to identify how the auction block is analogous to the everyday dynamics of the prostitution stroll, where Indigenous bodies are displayed and available for sexualized violence. Perpetrators are absolved of moral and legal responsibility because they commit violence on bodies that are considered to be contractually 'owned. (Razack, 2016, p. 294). The disposability is a key operation in upholding the necropolitics of Indigenous women because of how race and coloniality facilitate violence and death to occur.

The testimonies above illustrate how the biopolitics of a healthy citizen ultimately cascade in reinforcing the invisibility of Indigenous women. Here, we can mobilize Melissa Wright's concept of a *public woman* to understand how social norms operate as a necropolitical

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

agent of power that systematically sustains the conditions for inadequate state intervention.

Wright (2011) reminds us of how the *public woman* refers to a negative interpretation of prostitution that contaminates these women by their activities (Wright, 2011, p. 713). Therefore, as Wright (2011) shows in the context of women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, the lack of investigations and convictions should not be attributed to gendered politics surrounding “getting what they asked for”. This is shown by the police when they say that the dead women and girls were ‘hookers’, or heroin-users and suggests that these women are responsible for their deaths; thereby, weakening public sympathy for the victims and subsiding the pressure to protect them (Wright, 2011, p. 715). This theoretical understanding is analogous to the Inquiry's findings, where justice is elusive or absent because there appears to be nothing wrong with the violence. The testimonies provided by Marilyn, Pamela, Robyn Bourgeois, and Diane show how the state is an agent of power that systematically erases violence against Indigenous women because of how lifestyle choices are not only considered to contaminate their activities but also contaminate and thus lessen the importance of the violence itself.

While the biopolitics of a healthy citizen shapes the state's control over life, the Inquiry notes that these failed systems foster resistance. For example, Diane L. offers an account of her own act of courage and defiance against a system that refused to acknowledge her sister's humanity. She explains that she finally got up and put her hands in the air, and when the judge acknowledged her and asked who she was, she responds by saying,

“Tina, who you guys are referring to her as ‘this hooker’, ‘that prostitute’... you never ever once used her name. She does have a name. I am her sister...And doesn't matter if you can charge me, you do whatever you want with me, but I would ask you to please have respect. Her cousin's here, my cousin, we're here, we're family. She is loved regardless of what she did for a living. That was her survival mechanism” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 665-666).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Similar to Sharna's action in the context of healthcare, Diane's actions in court signify a form of resistance against a system that has failed her by demanding acknowledgment within a system that refuses to acknowledge her sister's humanity. This agency, even in such circumstances, reflects the complex power dynamics and resistance within necropolitical frameworks.

This section provides evidence from the Inquiry (2019) showing how the state intentionally neglects or creates the invisibility of Indigenous women through the biopolitics of health, particularly healthy lifestyles. The findings from the Inquiry (2019) also show how Indigenous women are undeserving of police protection due to racist stigmas, stereotypes, and lifestyle choices. In understanding the biopolitical function of a healthy citizen, this analysis has shown how colonial and biopolitical logics are embedded in how these powers operate as agents of the state. Lastly, this theme has focused on how the Canadian justice system undermines violence against Indigenous women by focusing on negative depictions of the victim, instead of the violence itself, which is understood through lifestyle choices. As shown by Wright (2011) and Razack (2016), the state is an agent of power that produces and reproduces violence and death among Indigenous women. The biopolitics of a healthy citizen is linked to the next section of the analysis, where insufficient service delivery is met with how Indigenous women ultimately become trapped in these death-like worlds because of how the state brings Indigenous women within close proximity to death.

Theme # 2: Death worlds

As the previous section of the discussion has shown, the biopolitics of a healthy citizen examines how services are delivered to those who adhere to society's healthy social norms. This section will establish how organized abandonment and the biopolitics defining a healthy citizen ultimately trap Indigenous women in these "death worlds". The concept of death worlds can be

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

conceptualized by looking at how specific populations are designed for life and death by examining how the state brings Indigenous women into proximity to death.

This idea shows Indigenous women are excluded from social functioning by looking at how state-based structural violence imposes the conditions of ‘gradual wounding’ that make it possible for an increased risk to the exposure of vulnerabilities that lead to violence or death. As outlined in their study (Mayblin et al., 2020), gradual wounding refers to conditions of impoverishment and endangerment so severe that these populations are primarily preoccupied with survival. This is evidenced by the Inquiry’s findings, which report that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis have lower life expectancy than Canada’s non-Indigenous populations, according to a 2017 Statistics Canada study (Inquiry, 2019, p. 423). They are also more likely to experience higher levels of poverty (see Inquiry, 2019, p. 520), food insecurity (see Inquiry, 2019, p. 523), and housing insecurity (see Inquiry, 2019, p. 537). In the context of this research, the notion of impoverishment and endangerment refers to how marginalized groups are in close proximity to experiencing violence and death through state-based structural violence.

This theme will specifically focus on how Indigenous women underreport the violence they experience to the police, which forces them to endure the violence that they encounter. This relates to the previous discussion in the analysis, where the Inquiry has shown how police responses are tailored in a way that Indigenous women repeatedly fall into the category of those who are undeserving of adequate police protection or responses. As a result of insufficient responses, the Inquiry highlights that Indigenous women are forced to endure violence and willingly do not report it to the police, which forces them to be trapped in the cycle of violence. In addition, the child-welfare system is a state-based institution that is designed to eradicate Indigenous women from social functioning. These specific areas will receive further discussion

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

within the analysis to conclude how responses from the police system and the operation of the child-welfare system bring Indigenous women to close proximities of violence and death, which effectively places Indigenous women within a state of living in a death world.

2.1 Underreporting of violence to police

In looking at police responses from the previous section, we have an understanding of how the findings within the Inquiry highlight how Indigenous women repeatedly fall into the category of people who are undeserving of police protection due to racist stigmas, stereotypes, and lifestyle choices, which continues to keep Indigenous women within a state of precarity (Inquiry, 2019, p. 510, 627, 628-634, 648-654, 663, 665, 703, 705, 706). Considering how the state insufficiently responds, the Inquiry highlights how families and survivors spoke about their reasons for not reporting violence to the police (Inquiry, 2019, pp. 628-229, 632-634), which places Indigenous women within a state of living in a death-world, as they are forced to live with the persistence of violence.

In the case of Bernice C's daughter, the RCMP did not take the statement when her parents tried to report her missing. the police could have questioned the man who was last seen with her daughter; however, the delay in doing so and his murder mean that those answers may never be found. This example identifies one of the potentially many reasons that Indigenous women willingly do not report violence to the police, and in doing so, places them in a condition of living in a death-world, as their concerns for violence are truly unaccounted for and continue to wrap them into a persistent cycle of violence. The reluctance to report violence to police is not surprising, since it has been well documented within the Inquiry that the police fail to take violence against Indigenous women seriously. This has not only been recognized in previous discussions, but it was highlighted throughout the review of the literature, in particular the study

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

conducted by Murphy-Oikonen et al. (2022) examining women's experiences with unfounded sexual assault (i.e. not believed by the police).

In contrast, Martin and Walia (2019) outline how a failure of the police forces to take violence against Indigenous women seriously contributes to ongoing violence. The literature provides insight into how the state's failure to intervene is evidently how the state is complicit in violence against Indigenous women, where it is not simply a failure to act, but a failure or unwillingness to protect them. Where the literature and Inquiry provides insights into the reasons for not reporting violence to the police and its connection to reinforcing violence, this analysis will specifically examine how underreporting violence to the police, due to previous negative interactions or stigmatization, is part of a much larger structural process that continuously reinforces violence against Indigenous women.

In looking at the reluctance to report violence to the police, the Inquiry hears from Marlene J., who describes why she did not report to the police after being beaten up, thrown out of a car, and run over. She stated to the Inquiry, "I didn't report to the police because I know they're not going to do nothing and they're going to ask me who is this guy, do you know who he was or where he is...I don't remember him, I was drunk, too. I know the car he was driving. So, I can't remember his name" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 628). Marlene's testimony identifies how previous negative interactions with the police effectively place Indigenous women within a death-world, as previous interactions shape their reluctance to report an experience of violence to the police, thus bringing them closer to violence of another kind. As previous discussions allude to in the context of health, with the case example of Sharna, the imposition of state-based violence is indirect in the sense that Indigenous women are forced into situations that lead them to endanger themselves. This is precisely the nature of structural violence. For example, the

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

epidemic in Haiti, as Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2017) describe in their research, is an example of a space where the taken for granted makes structural violence so apparent, as those who are able to access resources and services do not see or experience the pervasiveness of structural violence (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 51). While this will receive further attention in the following discussion of organized abandonment, we are able to understand how the invisibility or silent characteristics of structural violence contribute to Indigenous women becoming confined to these death-worlds.

The Inquiry further hears from Jennisha Wilson and Michele G., who speak to their lack of willingness to report violence to the police. For example, Jennisha Wilson describes how prior negative experiences with the police make Indigenous women reluctant to report violence or trafficking because they are often blamed, or not seen as a victim, or causing the violence onto themselves (Inquiry, 2019, p. 629). Furthermore, Michele G. recounts a similar sentiment about her reason for not reporting the physical abuse that she suffered. She explains to the Inquiry: “In the beginning I used to call the police, but then I didn’t bother anymore. It didn’t seem to serve any purpose. Except once when he broke my nose they made him leave. Usually they said I had to leave with my six kids, which was so frustrating” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 629). The testimonies highlighted above exemplify the result of ‘gradual wounding’ that makes it possible for populations that are marked for death to experience the effects of state-based structural violence. Referring back to the testimonies highlighted earlier, we can apply this notion of gradual wounding, where aspects of everyday life, like the reluctance to report violence to the police to live free from violence, as described by Jennisha and Michele, is a form of physical and psychological wounding that affects at the level of the body, where specific bodies are marked for experiencing persistent violence.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The Inquiry highlights a testimony from Lanna Moon Perrin who describes how she and other women involved in the sex trade are reluctant to report to the police for fear of being ridiculed, enduring racist or sexist commentary and harassment, and of possible arrest. She explains to the Inquiry: “I mean, it would be nice to be able to report a bad date to a police officer without getting – being given the attitude, ‘well, you know, a girl could run faster with their dress up than a guy can with their pants down’, you know, I have heard from a police officer before” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 633). Lanna’s testimony identifies how the reluctance to report violence is an example identified by the Inquiry, where we see how the state brings Indigenous women in close proximity to death, as reporting violence seems to offer no response or attention. They are forced to endure these experiences of violence that effectively place them into these death-worlds. Lanna Moon Perrin also refers to the fear and mistrust that stop Indigenous women who experience violence in the context of the sex industry. In her testimony to the Inquiry, she says:

“If I were to negotiate something like one act for money, you know, something for something, and I didn’t get my money, you know? So, I would like to be able to go to the police and, you know, I would like to say, you know, “I was robbed.” You know, “I was assaulted.” You know, these different things and be taken seriously. Sex workers who were – who would say something like that now would – I don’t even think – I can’t even think of someone who would even go to the cops, honestly, if they were hurt like that. Like, I sure the heck wouldn’t. And so, I guess to be able to see police that might take us seriously, that we’re allowed that protection too” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 663).

The persistent wounding shapes these death worlds. In the context of asylum seekers, Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi (2020) remind us of how the conditions of endangerment and impoverishment exist in the simple aspects of everyday life that are triggers for experiencing anxiety and stress. The stresses of everyday life described in this study, as well as the persistent experiences of violence experienced by Indigenous women, represent the lived realities of a

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

much larger structural process. When Indigenous women underreport violence to police, it further implicates Indigenous women, as it not only reinforces violence but also shows how the state heavily relies on negative stigmatizations rather than focusing on the violence itself.

The analysis of Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2017) is pertinent to how we understand structural violence as invisible and silent, since the suffering of populations that are more remote, either geographically, culturally, or socially, is less affected (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 52). To understand this, we can refer to how conditions of endangerment and impoverishment become more tolerable for marginalized populations. Referring back to the testimonies highlighted earlier, the fact that Marlene, Jennisha, Michele, and Lanna express their reluctance to report violence to the police is a result that was shaped by their previous experiences, where police responses repeatedly told them that they are simply not worth it, as highlighted in the previous section. The negative responses from the police send the message that they are not worth it and can be understood in terms of how the state is part of a larger function that renders marginalized and racialized groups vulnerable to experiencing violence and death within these death-worlds. Negative stigmatizations result in not only a lack of intervention but ultimately a lack of civic engagement, like underreporting violence, which confines Indigenous women within a death world with even fewer state support interventions.

2.2 Child welfare System

The child welfare system is a state-run institution that systematically excludes Indigenous women from vulnerable conditions that inevitably result in ongoing experiences of violence and death. The ongoing apprehension of Indigenous children by the state is structurally designed to eradicate Indigenous women. The Inquiry hears from many Indigenous women, who recount

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

their experiences in the child welfare system. In this state, the child welfare system has adversely affected the child's physical and mental well-being (see Inquiry, 2019, pp. 361-363, 379-384, 421, 435-436, 555-557).

This section will examine how the state-based child welfare system is intentionally designed to render Indigenous women to these death worlds. As this analysis will show, the child-welfare system brings Indigenous women to close proximities to death through forms of impoverishment and endangerment. This analysis will begin by highlighting examples from the Inquiry that discuss how the child-welfare system is considered to be a modern form of a residential school due to its connection to child apprehension. Furthermore, this analysis examines how the child-welfare system is intricately linked to the conditions of state-enforced impoverishment that make access to food, shelter, and the social safety net difficult. Lastly, this analysis will highlight Angel's case study to demonstrate that gradual wounding is a state-induced condition that silently promotes entry into a death world.

The National Inquiry has emphasized how colonial practices, like the residential schools and Sixties Scoop, as well as ongoing apprehension of Indigenous children into the foster care system, are to blame for the lack of safety among Indigenous women (Inquiry, 2019, p. 514). For instance, Michele G. connected the violence and abuse she experienced through her childhood while in foster care after she was removed from her mother during the Sixties Scoop. Michele G. says,

“I’m the proud daughter of the late Beverly G., And today I dedicate my testimony to my mom, and I will speak for both of us about how the system stole our relationship.... I was apprehended in 1963 during the Sixties Scoop, taken from my mother’s arms right out of the hospital.... The foster care system failed to protect me...Forty years later, the system continues to fail Indigenous girls and women” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 514).

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Michele's testimony above highlights how the child welfare system has failed to protect her and many Indigenous women and girls. The Inquiry hears from witnesses who noted that the Sixties Scoop and the ongoing crisis of child apprehension are commonly viewed as the continuation of the assimilative school system in which many Indigenous peoples were swept away (Inquiry, 2019, p. 361). Additionally, witnesses from the Inquiry draw connections between the child-welfare system and residential schools:

“We have another residential school system starting with child welfare. How many children do we have in care right now? Our children are maybe not being taken away and put in schools, but they're put – being put in foster homes.... Is that not the same? I mean, we just got our children back. And now, they're being taken away again to be raised by – and I'm sorry to say, non-Native families, they need to be placed with Native families. Native foster homes. Once again, we're being stripped away of our culture, our language, our family, our roots. They're doing it to us all over again, but in a different way” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 361).

This analysis will incorporate testimonies and evidence from the Inquiry to show how the child-welfare system confines Indigenous women to these death worlds, through forms of impoverishment and endangerment.

The Inquiry highlights how forms of trauma, and lack of institutional will, are not only manifestations of colonial violence, but how state-based institutions, like the child-welfare system, are designed to exclude Indigenous women from forms of suffering and death, which secures their entrapment into these death-worlds. For example, Danielle E. recounts the violence and abuse her sister, Laney E., experienced while in foster care. Danielle reflects on her sister's efforts to create safety for herself in a world where it was otherwise unavailable: “I don't believe my sister in her entire life ever felt safe, that the only safety that she had was what she could create when she was able to get out of care” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 555). The Inquiry reports that in many cases, siblings were separated and never saw each other again. Danielle E. shares in her testimony that, while they were separated at 10 years old, they promised each other that, no

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

matter what, when they grew up, they would find each other, and they did. (Inquiry, 2019, p. 363). The ways in which the child-welfare system separates children from families not only disrupts and dispossesses families and children but also places Indigenous women in precarious circumstances, thereby securing their entrapment in these death-like worlds.

The National Inquiry reports how the child-welfare system is responsible for the loss of familial bonds between Indigenous families and children and is ultimately responsible for impeding safety into adulthood. An example of this is elucidated through Juanita D.'s testimony, who recalls her experience living in a foster home:

“I think my very first foster home that I went to – I don’t have a lot of recollections, like the recollections that I do have are of trauma. So, you know, I know that I suffered from forms of torture. And so, with that, that means that I was confined while I was in a foster home. So, that meant that the door was locked. I had no human contact. I was fed food from under the door. I remember I was on the third floor, or whatever. There were windows below me, and then the ground. And, I jumped out of that window, and I took off and I wanted to see my mom. I didn’t have, like, visitations with my mom at all. I didn’t have any visitation with my family And, I don’t ever remember, like, having any bonding. I never had, like, that bonding or that love provided to me, like children should have. I also didn’t have any counselling services or connection to culture provided to me. And, I never got to see any of my family either during that time.” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 362).

The Inquiry also draws connections of how the participation in the child-welfare system impedes their safety into adulthood and elevates experiences of poverty, homelessness, or addiction. This is considered to be prevalent or heightened for young Indigenous girls and youth in foster care or those who have ‘aged out of care’ (Inquiry, 2019, p. 555). For instance, Fialka Jack talked about her struggle to find housing after aging out of care:

“A month after aging out of care, my social worker moved me to the Downtown core of Vancouver into an SRO [single room occupancy]. And until that day, I didn’t know what the word SRO stands for. And it was horrifying to see, so fresh into my adulthood, to see that this is where people were living. Like, I couldn’t imagine how people could live happily in those types of places, and it was horrifying and it, to be honest – I did some things that I promised I would never do, and I regret it. But like, from there, I’ve grown and to be honest, I don’t think social workers should be putting their children into SROs. I think, like, looking for housing and teaching us how to look for housing, should be an

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

important piece. Because you shouldn't have to worry about homelessness every second of your life after aging out of care. And that is something that at almost 25, I still fear, every day. And I live in a house, I live in South Van, I live with a lot of people, people that love me. But I have been homeless twice since aging out of care. I was homeless for a year; I lived in downtown Vancouver, I lived in Stanley Park. Like, I slept in Stanley Park. That's how bad it was, aging out of care" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 555-556).

Indigenous youth who age out of care not only struggle with finding housing, as described by Fialka Jack, but the struggle of finding housing is further exacerbated when completing high school, pursuing post-secondary education, or finding employment, making finding housing impossible. This is emphasized by Erin Pavan, "They're not graduating high school; I think that by age 19, like 32% of youth aging out of care will have a high school diploma, compared to 84% of the general population. They're also less likely to have a job. They're going to make less money. A lot of them are relying on income assistance right off the bat, 40% will go right into income assistance" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 556-557). Erin Pavan's testimony further highlights how the income assistance in British Columbia had been increased; however it is not nearly enough to live off to pay rent or buy food. Pavan explains the following to the Inquiry:

"So they're going into extreme poverty right off the bat, with no high school diploma, not enough supportive people in their lives. Obviously, by definition, anyone who's been through care is going to have trauma. So, they've got trauma; they're more likely to have issues with their mental health, with substance use, more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system, become young parents. They're more likely to die young. Of the 1,000 youth who age out of care in BC every year, three to four will be dead before they turn 25. So I think you can really see the connection, right, between the missing and murdered young women and the care system" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 557).

The testimonies highlighted from the Inquiry suggest that the child-welfare system consistently destroys the lives of Indigenous children through conditions, like poverty and homelessness, that bring Indigenous women to close proximities in experiencing premature death.

The testimonies presented from the Inquiry, as shown through Michele G., Danielle E., Juanita D., Fialka Jack, and Erin Pavan, demonstrate how the child-welfare system not only

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

dispossesses children from their families but also exemplifies how the state-based system secures their entrapment into these death worlds that are enforced by the physical, social, and psychological wounding of Indigenous women. In the context of asylum seekers, the majority of people limited themselves to one or two meals per day to save money, explaining that ‘if we have three meals, then the money we receive will finish quickly’ (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 114). Additionally, many interviewees explained that they are often hungry and must eat very filling, but cheap, foods like rice and pasta. These accounts of hunger are indicative of stated enforced impoverishment and leads to the wounding of these specific populations, and more broadly affects those who are marginalized. Ultimately, these are state-enforced conditions that make the life of an asylum seeker difficult, so that more asylum seekers are not ‘pulled’ to the UK by the promise of a better life (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 120). In the same vein, the state-based child-welfare system is designed to place Indigenous women in a state of wounding that begins with experiencing forms of suffering related to everyday life. This is consistent with Pavan’s testimony at the Inquiry, where the increase in income assistance, as shown in British Columbia, is not enough to pay rent or buy food. The inability to sustain shelter or purchase food represents how the suffering related to the everyday signifies the state-enforced impoverishment that leads to the gradual wounding of Indigenous women. Ultimately, state-enforced impoverishment elevates the risk of experiencing further endangerment and even death.

The example of Angel exemplifies how gradual wounding is made possible through state-based structural violence that silently promotes the entrance of death-worlds, starting as young as infancy (Inquiry, 2019, p. 558-560). Angel suffered from various forms of trauma throughout her life, including her exposure to traumatic childhood events that were unaddressed. The involvement of Child and Family Services (CFS) began in 1999 at the age of 17 months due to

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

her mother's inability to care for Angel. By the age of 17, Angel was placed in 46 different homes where she experienced sexual assault and exploitation during her time in foster care. Angel's family lived in poverty created by colonialism. Despite the intense trauma that Angel experienced, there were no appropriate support systems in place, which resulted in further isolation from family and community. According to the Inquiry, the institutions that were responsible for helping Angel had failed her because they did not follow basic standards in Angel's case, like assessments, case planning, service provision, and evaluation. Furthermore, CFS did not plan to ensure Angel's safety despite the signs of sexual abuse, substance abuse, and mental health concerns.

According to Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2017), structural violence is described as “embedded in ubiquitous social structures normalized by stable institutions” (p. 47). These structures are violent because they result in inevitable deaths, illnesses, and injuries by reproducing violence among marginalized people and communities. Padilla & Madera (2021) show the processes of othering sustain the conditions for violence and death to occur; whereas, in previous discussions related to health, scholars, such as Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2017), demonstrate the pervasive nature of structural violence. For example, they show how Cholera became the leading infectious killer of young adults in Haiti during the international humanitarian response to the January 2010 earthquake. The epidemic in Haiti represents a facet of why structural violence is difficult to describe because, where physical violence shows, structural violence is invisible, and can sometimes be silent (Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2017, p. 53). In this circumstance, these diseases disproportionately affect poor people because the investments in prevention, like sanitation systems and vaccines, remain largely absent or unavailable to young adults in Haiti. This example is pertinent to the Inquiry's case of Angel

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

because of the lack of support systems available to her. When the state managed to intervene, it consistently failed to protect her in ways that continued her exposure to violence, as she did not have access to the services and resources that should have been available to her otherwise. As a result, the gradual wounding of Angel manifests through state-based structural violence that denies refuge or social services. In examining how structural violence and gradual wounding interact with one another, we can understand how marginalized populations tend to experience violence and death disproportionately.

Testimonies from the Inquiry shows how the state-based child-welfare system is inherently designed to exclude Indigenous women to forms of suffering and death, which secures their entrapment into these death-worlds. Examples of this include reinforcing the conditions of poverty and homelessness, which bring them to close proximities of death. To further exemplify this, Angel's case was discussed to show how the systems and processes in her case revolved around cycling through a system that consistently placed her in the face of vulnerabilities. This is indicative of how CFS placed Angel in homes where she was exposed to abuse, and despite knowing Angel's mother's substance abuse, she was repeatedly put back into her care. This increased the cycle of apprehension and placements with CFS. Angel's case represents an example of how Indigenous women experience gradual wounding, thereby enforcing their entrapment in these death-worlds.

Taken together, these testimonies show that what is often described as "structural violence" is also a form of necropolitical governance, where the state actively organizes the conditions under which Indigenous women and girls are made to live, suffer, and die. The child-welfare system does not simply fail to protect them; it produces and manages their exposure to poverty, homelessness, hunger, abuse, and premature death as normalized outcomes of care.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

These are the death-worlds that Indigenous women are forced to inhabit, in which survival is made contingent, precarious, and uncertain

Theme #3: Organized Abandonment

Gilmore's (2008) concept of organized abandonment refers to the specific and direct ways the state systemically withholds support and services. It is an intentional disinvestment of often racialized communities, leading to the gradual disappearance of safe housing, reliable jobs, clean water, and a social safety net. Organized abandonment helps to identify the shifting nature of structural racism across institutions, as it seeks to understand how structural racism operates and why it persists (Riley et al., 2024, p. 1). Organized abandonment is foundational in understanding the creation of death worlds. For Indigenous communities in Canada, organized abandonment heightens the conditions for violence and death to occur due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, like adequate housing, services, and education, that makes basic life survival nearly impossible.

This section of the analysis will reference the Inquiry's observation that the housing crisis and barriers to education and training exemplify how state disinvestment (i.e., organized abandonment) facilitates an environment for these necropolitical processes. Drawing on testimonies from the Inquiry, this section of the analysis will discuss how organized abandonment and forgotten places keep Indigenous women out of civic engagement by placing them in a position of having to make ends meet.

3.1 Housing Insecurity

The National Inquiry highlights how intentional disinvestment occurs within various Indigenous communities, including northern and remote communities, which are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis (Inquiry, 2019, pp. 478-483, 526-529, 537-543,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

545-550, 556-557). For example, the Inquiry highlights that 52% of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat live in crowded homes, compared to 9% of the Canadian population. It also found that one-third of Inuit live in homes that need major repair, while only 6% of non-Indigenous people in Canada do (Inquiry, 2019, p. 478). While the Inquiry argues that it is remote for many northern and remote communities, I show how the housing and food crisis in Inuit Nunangat and other Indigenous communities are indicative of the state's intentional disinvestment. This provides further insights into, not simply looking at how the housing crisis contributes to heightened experiences of violence, as the Inquiry argues, but also how the state is complicit in upholding these conditions.

The Inquiry highlights how the housing crisis is a key contributor to increasing vulnerabilities, which thereby elevates an experience of violence and death. Witnesses throughout the Inquiry described overcrowded, unsafe, and unaffordable housing as a catalyst for further issues (Inquiry, 2019, pp. 478, 537-543). For example, Tim Argetsinger, executive political advisor with ITK, explains that poor or inadequate housing conditions create additional opportunities for violence and other threats to safety. He explains that safety and security are compromised by insufficient housing because of the stress that is often more prevalent in households that are crowded, as well as those who cannot leave or seek alternative housing if they are experiencing violence (Inquiry, 2019, p. 478). The housing crisis experienced by Inuit populations is an operation of organized abandonment because of how these spaces, not only operate in producing vulnerabilities that are linked to violence but are also in communities that the state has intentionally abandoned. Here, we can employ Gilmore's (2008) concept of 'forgotten places', which refers to abandoned communities by the state that leave its residents vulnerable to poor health and state captivity. For Gilmore, these 'forgotten places' are spaces that not only speak to an absence or lack but are also planned concentrations or sinks of hazardous

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

materials and destructive practices, which are, in turn, sources of vulnerabilities to premature death.

Using evidence from the Inquiry, we can apply the concept of ‘forgotten places’ to the housing crisis in Inuit Nunangat, given its association with reproducing vulnerabilities (Inquiry, 2019, pp. 537-545). As ITK points out to the National Inquiry, “This clearly shows the inequity between Inuit and others about housing suitability and gives concrete evidence to what most Inuit already know anecdotally: that Inuit face a housing crisis which needs to be addressed.” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 538). This is reflective of the testimonies heard by the National Inquiry, where families referred to the lack of housing and shelters for Inuit women seeking refuge from abuse and violence at home.

We can understand how Gilmore’s organized abandonment takes its form, as leaving one’s community or home for many Indigenous women is difficult to the point that they are forced to endure the vulnerabilities and violence that stems from the housing crisis. Jennisha Wilson explains to the Inquiry that it is precisely in moments of transition, where Indigenous women are at risk of ending up in precarious spaces that expose them to violence. In addition, the decision to move or relocate is driven by the desire to escape ongoing violence, which, for some, requires leaving a remote community for urban centres (Inquiry, 2019, p. 551). For example, the Inquiry hears from Monique F.H., who is a survivor and advocate with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. In her testimony to the National Inquiry, she says: “I’m a mother and a grandmother. I’m also a survivor of violence, many forms of violence” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 551). She speaks about her effort at the age of 13 to escape the sexual abuse she was experiencing at home; she ran away and lived on the streets – a move that was only to be met with further sexual abuse. She goes on to further explain,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

“Well, because of the sexual abuse that I went through and not feeling like anybody would help me ... I left. And I didn’t want to look back. I wanted to just escape from all of that pain and all of that stuff... I just wanted to run and get away from it, and it just took me to a deeper level of sexual violence. You know, many years – many of those years being on the street, I was raped several times” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 551).

Monique’s testimony is indicative of how populations within these “forgotten places” who lack social and economic mobility cannot move away and act within and against the constraints of the state’s changing participation in the landscape. For example, Riley et al. (2024) highlight how populations that cannot leave spaces of gentrification are forced to endure the conditions of disinvestment and adapt to the changing landscape of society. In the circumstances where Indigenous women leave their community to flee from violence or seek a better life, it forces Indigenous women to navigate unsurvivable conditions, which leads them into darker spaces in which violence and murder are not monitored.

The Inquiry identifies that the housing crisis is not only affecting Inuit in Inuit Nunagat, but also many southern and urban communities. For example, in his testimony, Lance S. spoke about the condition of housing on reserves in Saskatchewan and how these conditions impact the health and well-being of community members:

“The poverty line that’s out there, you know, the housing that’s out on the reserves, the water that’s out there – you know, there’s a lot of things that us First Nations people on reserves, we still live like that today, that we lived 30 to 40 years ago, we still live that today. We still live in those old houses. Those old houses that are on these reserves are still being used. People, the Elders are getting sick from all that stuff” (Inquiry, 2019, p. 538).

The testimony highlighted above illustrates how ‘forgotten places’ become a catalyst for communities affected by the housing crisis to experience further vulnerabilities. The Inquiry further hears from Minnie K. (p. 538), Rebecca M. (p. 539), and Michele G. (p. 540), who all speak to how the housing crisis, in various ways, impairs the overall safety, well-being, and security of Indigenous women.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The intentional disinvestment of communities is a significant contributor to the social invisibility of populations. The invisibility of Indigenous women can be understood in terms of how they lose symbolic support for their existence. This can be linked to previous discussions of healthcare, where care is made absent or difficult due to societal notions of health. This is emphasized by Biehl (2005), who discusses how bureaucratic procedures render categories of people socially invisible as they are left to the most extreme living conditions.

The Inquiry identifies one of the issues in securing housing is poverty resulting from low-paying employment and barriers to education (Inquiry, 2019, p. 479). For example, Laura M. describes the experience of her aunt Betsy, who was murdered. She explains how poverty remains a significant barrier for women who want to leave their community to seek out new opportunities or who need to escape from violence. She emphasizes that Indigenous women, like her aunt, did not have the opportunity because they lacked the economic means to do so (Inquiry, 2019, p. 479). Laura's example illustrates how her economic circumstances denied her access. Here, we can refer to Biel's "zones of abandonment," which are the 'zones' or 'spaces' where the poorest and sickest are left to die. As a way to understand how conditions of state disinvestment shed light on this idea of 'letting die', Biel provides insight into how 'letting die' is fixed not only on those who lose symbolic support for their existence, but also on how social destinies of the poorest and sickest are organized. Here, Biel's analysis is analogous to how the housing crisis is a result of zones that are abandoned, which operate to sustain the social invisibility of these communities, making them vulnerable to violence and death.

3.2 Barriers to Education and Training

The Inquiry highlights that fostering education, training, and access to employment is a means of challenging the economic, social, and political marginalization within colonial

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

structures that contribute to violence against Indigenous women (Inquiry, 2019, pp. 545-550, 556-557). Testimonies from the National Inquiry attest to how barriers to accessing education, training, and employment play a role in the violence experienced by Indigenous women, especially for those who live in rural and remote areas, since access to institutions and education is a barrier. As a result, the safety of Indigenous women is routinely compromised because educational opportunities and training programs are located further away. This section will discuss how barriers to accessing education, training, and employment, as noted by the Inquiry, reflect the state's disinvestment in communities.

Barriers to accessing education, employment, and training are embedded in the colonial project, much like how Indigenous women were socially disempowered through disenfranchisement. As discussed in the review of the literature, Indigenous women are placed in positions of living in poverty due to barriers related to housing, employment, poor health, and access to social support (Wabie, 2000; Stark, 2009; Wesley, 2012; de Finney, 2017), which have directly impacted the lives, roles, and responsibilities of Indigenous women. While these barriers have been constructed by colonialism, as the Inquiry notes, this analysis will dig deeper into how barriers to education and employment result from organized abandonment.

The Inquiry reports that the absence of adequate resources and services for educational attainment includes a lack of understanding and awareness about job training. For example, Mealia Sheutiapik highlights her experiences of her inability to find work after completing her coursework:

“Even though I hand out my resume, I was not accepted. It took how many years to find another job, a normal job, like – and then after almost 18 years, I went back to Inuit Broadcasting and I worked as an editor. I went back to acting, and then I started editing. And I was there for almost four years. But, something triggered me again, and I just went right back to the drugs, the alcohol and drugs. And I got laid off. And it was not easy to find another job after getting laid

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

off. And getting laid off, that led me to drinking again, and that took over me again, that drinking" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 549).

For Mealia, the lack of programs or assistance in guiding students who have completed a form of education poses a barrier, as she is not equipped with the knowledge or tools to seek employment. Mealia's testimony highlights that the lack of support within communities is an operation of how specific populations are designed to experience a 'social' death that stems from personal circumstances that increase the risks for violence and premature death.

The Inquiry finds that access to education and training is a factor that is known to decrease the likelihood of being exposed to violence. Survivors and family members of lost loved ones describe that the barriers they or their loved ones faced in accessing education, training, and employment play a role in how violence is experienced. For example, Chief Roddy S. talks about the challenges of living in a remote community in British Columbia that pose a challenge in accessing education and employment:

"So something has to be done in the communities. And there's no jobs. And I never, ever had to depend on welfare. I worked all my life. Back then it was nice going, and everybody was working. Now it's really tough. And I feel for the people, my kids... So we had to move our kids off the reserve in order to get educated. And they're feeling sorry because they've lost their language and their tradition a bit..." (Inquiry, 2019, p. 546).

Chief Roddy S.'s testimony highlights the lack of educational opportunities on reserves, which forces his children to leave their communities to access education and employment. Chief Roddy's testimony is indicative of 'forgotten places' as noted by Gilmore (2008), where we are reminded of how the quality of having been forgotten is not merely about absence or lack but is a planned concentration or sink (Gilmore, 2008, p. 37). For example, Gilmore (2008) describes 'forgotten places' in terms of where prisoners come from and where prisons are built (Gilmore, 2008, p. 32). According to Gilmore (2008), the people and locations that are vulnerable to

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

organized abandonment are accompanied by the globalization's large-scale movements of capital and labour, and, as such, are subject to other processes that accumulate in and as forgotten places. As such, organized abandonment and forgotten places keep Indigenous women out of civic engagement, where they are occupied with trying to make ends meet.

Forgotten places are also intimately shaped by the geographical space. Gilmore's earlier works (2002) more specifically point to how racism is a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the political environment (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16). As such, the process of abstraction is ultimately responsible for how racism configures a hierarchy of human and inhuman persons that form a category of 'human being' (Gilmore, 2002). The violence of abstraction is an integral concept that refers to the production of fetishes, in which states, races, and normative views fit into and take up space in the world.

Abstraction is the way complex lived realities are stripped of their specificity and reduced to simplified categories that can be managed, sorted, and controlled by the state. In this process, entire communities are reduced to problems, risks, or burdens. These abstractions then get mapped onto space where some neighbourhoods are rendered disposable or dangerous, while others are seen as worthy of investment and protection. In this way, abstraction is not just an idea but a material practice that organizes where violence, neglect, and premature death are allowed to accumulate.

The Inquiry's testimonies are abstractions because they show us how race is integrated in the ways that Indigenous women experience heightened experiences of violence and death. Gilmore (2002) offers the example of prisons, which represent a consequence of state failure that is part of the project of state-building. According to Gilmore (2002), prisons are geographical

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

solutions to social and economic crises because of their political organization. Gilmore contends that racism is a limiting force that is increasingly monetized and profit-driven, where it is politically distanced. Those who are unable to seek relief from those costs are subsequently driven into categories of human and inhuman persons. Where Indigenous communities experience poor housing or inadequate access to education and training suggests that Indigenous communities are considered to be ‘forgotten places’, which in turn become spaces for vulnerabilities to thrive. It shows a pattern among individuals deprived of participation in civil, social, and economic society.

The distinct risks for violence, as described by Pertice Moffitt, explain that while education can enhance the social and economic security of Indigenous women and girls, accessing education outside of the community creates additional risks to experiencing violence (Inquiry, 2019, p. 547). In sharing the story of her daughter, Connie L. talked about when Jarita was a student, she travelled approximately 50 kilometres each day from her home community of Onion Lake to Lloydminster. At the time of her death, Jarita was unable to get a ride home from Lloydminster and rented a hotel room for the night, where she was murdered by a stranger, who was charged but never convicted. Her mother explains to the National Inquiry that a scholarship at Lakeland College was established in Jarita’s memory. However, it is also a reminder of the loss of the accomplishments and possibilities that Jarita could have achieved had she been able to complete her education free from violence (Inquiry, 2019, p. 549). Jarita’s need to travel 50 kilometres each day for education reflects a racialized pattern of state disinvestment, in which Indigenous communities are treated as “forgotten places” and denied adequate educational infrastructure. The risks she faced were not incidental but produced by the way schooling,

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

transportation, and safety are spatially organized so that Indigenous women and girls must move through dangerous spaces to access basic opportunities.

Jarita was not the only one who was unable to complete her education free from violence. The Inquiry heard from Lisa, B.J., who spoke about how the violence in her sister's life was directly connected to her inability to receive an education:

"She was young, you know?... She could have been prevented from – from a lot of things. They could have, you know, she could have finished her school, and she could have been anything that she wanted to be... And she – she picked that life because when she tried to reach out to the system, and the system didn't want to be there for her, and to – to knowledge any of the concerns that she tried to – to talk about" (Inquiry, 2019, p. 548-549).

The experience of Lisa B.J.'s sister reflects that access to education is scarce within some Indigenous communities, and the pursuit of educational attainment is associated with its distinct risks that elevate the experiences of violence and death. The examples of Jarita and Lisa highlighted by the Inquiry not only reflect a lack of access to education and training opportunities but also signify how inadequate infrastructure is associated with the disinvestment of communities considered *unwanted*. The severely under-resourced spaces are the essence of how organized abandonment operates to eradicate marginalized groups, as the absence of improvement in these conditions is indicative of the longitudinal trend where gradual injury is inflicted to sustain and uphold these necropolitical processes.

The theme of organized abandonment has shown how the absence of adequate services and resources is an operation of intentional disinvestment by the state within communities and facilitates an environment for these necropolitical processes. This theme shows how the housing crisis and barriers to education and training, as examples provided by the inquiry, indicate state disinvestment. Gilmore's (2008) 'forgotten places' and Biehl's (2001) 'zones of abandonment'

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

indicate how marginalized groups are forced to navigate these spaces of social and economic deprivation and how these spaces harness these vulnerabilities to thrive.

Through the concepts of healthy citizen, death worlds, and organized abandonment, these findings and analyses demonstrate that the violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as documented in the National Inquiry, is not simply the result of individual prejudice or institutional “failures,” but is structured through necropolitical forms of governance. By examining the healthcare system, police responses, the Canadian justice system, and the child-welfare system, this analysis has shown how the state not only withholds life-sustaining services but also actively produces the conditions under which Indigenous women are exposed to ongoing harm, premature death, and social erasure. The Inquiry identifies rights violations and systemic discrimination; a necropolitical lens reveals how these are not aberrations, but central to how state power is organized.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis set out to answer a difficult but crucial question: How are violence and death inherent to state-based operations in Canada? Through a necropolitical reading of the National Inquiry's Final Report, this research has demonstrated that the Canadian state has not only failed in protecting but is also active in producing and maintaining the conditions of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

This research examined how colonialism and discourse render Indigenous women vulnerable to violence and death. Using a necropolitical framework and qualitative thematic analysis of the National Inquiry's Final Report (2019), it revealed how Indigenous women are marked for exposure to multiple vulnerabilities. Three interrelated themes emerged from the analysis: the biopolitics of the "healthy citizen," which frames care as conditional and stigmatized; the circulation of Indigenous women into "death worlds" where survival becomes precarious; and the organized abandonment of entire communities through infrastructural disinvestment. Together, these themes show that state violence is not incidental but structurally embedded into the very design of public institutions that are tasked with caring and protecting. This research seeks to go beyond socio-economic factors that lead to violence to explain how they are deeply entrenched within a larger structural process. The necropolitical analysis shows how these structural processes aim to target specific populations by producing and sustaining the conditions that make them vulnerable to systemic harms.

The findings of this research are significant because, in a so-called era of reconciliation, it is important to remember that Canada is still a settler colonial country that seeks to control, remove, and eradicate Indigenous peoples. By adopting a theoretical lens of necropolitics, this analysis shows that settler colonial governance continues to operate through the management

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

of Indigenous life and the normalization of Indigenous death. This thesis reorients us to consider recognizing and acknowledging that even though settler colonialism has shifted towards a liberal politics of recognition, there is a need to consider that Indigenous women and girls continue to experience high levels of state-inflicted violence. The contribution of necropolitics is significant to the literature as it situates the state's decision-making and approach to governing and regulating Indigenous life. That is, instead of assuming that poverty, housing insecurity, and other poor socio-economic factors indicate Canada's failure to act due to negligence, these factors are, in fact, produced and maintained through state policy choices, institutional practices, and ongoing disinvestment.

This research urges all levels of government to recognize how these hidden dynamics are part of the ongoing colonial project. It highlights the state's critical role in reimagining the safety of Indigenous women and taking accountability. While the National Inquiry demonstrates that justice is either elusive or absent, it holds the settler-colonial state as a solution. This research concludes that solutions must shift from being state-based to community-based because the same institutions tasked with protection are implicated in producing the conditions of harm.

The findings of this research indicate that solutions must extend beyond state-based approaches to include community-based initiatives. Decolonization, as Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, must be material and structural and not a metaphor, contributing to change precisely by interrupting the settler state's capacity to manage Indigenous life and death through policy, policing, welfare governance, and managed scarcity. It refers to the literal repatriation of Indigenous land and life, rather than serving as a metaphor for social justice or reform. The application of a necropolitical lens to the Inquiry's findings demonstrates that ensuring the safety of Indigenous women requires dismantling colonial systems that perpetuate disposability. This

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

process necessitates land return, the restoration of sovereignty, and the centring of Indigenous women and communities through grassroots initiatives. In practical terms, decolonization contributes to change by strengthening Indigenous jurisdiction and decision-making authority over the conditions that most directly shape safety such as land, housing, child and family well-being, health services, and community infrastructure. This conclusion insists that the path forward must prioritize Indigenous agency and leadership, ensuring that responses to violence are not state-imposed but emerge from those most affected. The lived experiences are central to understanding and transforming the pervasive character of colonial violence (see Chartrand and Foshay, 2022).

Examining violence against Indigenous women through a necropolitical lens underscores that resilience and resistance are not passive endurance but an active refusal of colonial death-worlds. Necropolitics frames Indigenous decolonization, resistance, and resilience by exposing how settler colonial states exert power over Indigenous life and death, while also revealing how Indigenous communities resist these “death-worlds” through resilient practices that actively assert life and futurity beyond mere survival. Ultimately, a necropolitical reading of the Inquiry’s Final Report demonstrates that the safety of Indigenous women is inseparable from sovereignty, land, and justice.

To better understand the implications of the results shown in this research, where the state is ineffective in addressing concerns for violence against Indigenous women, future research should examine how Indigenous communities resist and reimagine justice beyond the state. If state institutions continue to uphold structures of violence, it is in community-led, land-based, and survivor-centred approaches that genuine safety and sovereignty reside. The analysis

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

presented here argues that the 231 calls for justice cannot be found within the same institutions that manufacture violence.

References

- Alcoff, L. (1992). The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique*, pp. 20, 5–32.
- Amnesty International. (2004). *Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada*. Report.
<https://www.amnesty.ca/sites/amnesty/files/amr200032004enstolensisters.pdf>
- Anderson, K. (2000). *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*. Ontario: Women's Issues. Publishing Program.
- Anderson, K. (2016). Stitching through Silence: Walking With Our Sisters, Honoring the Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada. *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 14(1), 84–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759756.2016.1142765>
- Barnes, R., & Josefowitz, N. (2019). Indian residential schools in Canada: Persistent impacts on Aboriginal students' psychological development and functioning. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie canadienne*, 60(2), 65–76. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000154>
- bell hooks. 1988. Feminist scholarship: ethical issues. In *Talking Back: thinking feminist thinking black*. Toronto: Between the lines (p. 42-48)
- Berlant, L. (2007). Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency). *Critical Inquiry*, 33(4), 754–780. <https://doi.org/10.1086/521568>
- Bhandar, B. (2018). *Colonial lives of property: law, land, and racial ownership regimes*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822371571>
- Biehl, J. (2001). Vita: LIFE IN A ZONE OF SOCIAL ABANDONMENT. *Social Text*, 19(3), 131–149. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-19-3_68-131

- Bingham, A.J. (2023). From data management to actionable findings: A five-phase qualitative data analysis process. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231183620>
- Bombay, M., K., & Anisman, H. (2011). The impact of stressors on second generation Indian residential school survivors. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 48(4), 367–391.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461511410240>
- Boyce. (2016). Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014. Statistics Canada.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brennan, S. (2011). Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11439-eng.pdf>
- Burrage, Momper, S. L., & Gone, J. P. (2022). Beyond trauma: Decolonizing understandings of loss and healing in the Indian Residential School system of Canada. *Journal of Social Issues*, 78(1), 27–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12455>
- Butler, J. (2006). *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and violence*. Verso. <https://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/uploads/media/butler-judith-precarious-life.pdf>
- Canadians Make Reconciliation With Indigenous Peoples a Reality. Indigenous Relations Press. British Columbia. Print.
- Chartrand, V. (2019). “Unsettled Times: Indigenous Incarceration and the Links between Colonialism and the Penitentiary in Canada.” *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 67-89, doi:10.3138/cjccj.2018-0029.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Chartrand, V. (2022). “Unearthing justices: Mapping 500+ Indigenous grassroots initiatives for the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit+ people”, *Decolonization of Criminology and Justice*, Volume 4, Issue 1, 7-30.

Chartrand, V., & Foshay, S. (2022). “Mobilizing Against Colonial Violence: Centering

Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89–91. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.89-91>

de Finney, S. (2017). Indigenous girls’ _resilience in settler states: honouring body and land sovereignty. *Agenda* 31 (2), 10–21.

de Finney, S. (2022). Rekinning the homeland: Rurality, gender-based genocide, and Indigenous sovereignty in colonial Canada. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 95, 475–481.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.09.026>

de Finney, S., Palacios, L., Mucina, M., Chadwick, A. (2018). Refusing band-aids: unsettling “care” _under the carceral settler state. *CYC-Online* 235 (September). <https://cyc-net.org/cyc-online/sep2018.pdf>.

de Finney. (2017). Indigenous girls' resilience in settler states: Honouring body and land sovereignty. *Agenda (Durban)*, 31(2), 10–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2017.1366179>

De Vries, M. (2008). *Missing Sarah : a memoir of loss*. Penguin, an imprint of Penguin Canada.

Deer, S., 2009. Decolonizing Rape Law: A Native Feminist Synthesis of Safety and Sovereignty. *Wicazo Sa Review*. Fall, 149–167. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.0.0037>

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

- Foucault, M. (1978). *Right of Death and Power over Life in the History of Sexuality Part five* (Vol. 1). <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/08/06/michel-foucault-right-of-death-and-power-over-life/>
- Gilmore, R. W. (2002). Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography. *The Professional Geographer*, 54(1), 15–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-0124.00310>
- Gilmore, W.R. (2008). “Forgotten Places and Seeds of Grassroots Planning” in *Engaging contradictions: theory, politics, and methods of activist scholarship* (C. R. Hale, Ed.). University of California Press.
- Good, M. (2018). Dehumanization, stereotyping, and Indigenous women. In K. Anderson, M. Campbell, & C. Belcourt (Eds.), *Keetsahnak. Our missing and murdered Indigenous sisters*. University of Alberta Press.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Hesse-Biber, S. and Leavy, P. *Approaches to Qualitative Research. A Reader in Theory and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press (p. 21–32).
- Hansen, G.J., & Dim, E.E. (2019). Canada’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and the Imperative for a More Inclusive Perspective. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2019.10.1.2>
- Heidinger, L. (2022). Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada. *Juristat*, 1–39.
- Hill, D. M., & National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2003). *Traditional medicine in contemporary contexts protecting and respecting indigenous knowledge and medicine*. National Aboriginal Health Organization.

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks1/gibson_chrc/2010-08-06/1/10119477

Ho, K. H. M., Chiang, V. C. L., & Leung, D. (2017). Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis: the “possibility” beyond “actuality” in thematic analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 73(7), 1757–1766. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13255>

hooks, bell. (2015). Feminist Scholarship: Ethical Issues. In *Talking Back* (2nd ed., pp. 42–48). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743134-7>

Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The Status of Method: Flexibility, Consistency, and Coherence. *Qualitative Research: QR*, 3(3), 345–357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794103033004>

Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(4), 12–17. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2013.03.20.4.12.e326>

Indigenous Women-Led Initiatives for MMIWG2S+ People”, *The Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research*, Volume 11, 129-150.

Jiwani, Y., & Young, M. L. (2006). Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31(4), 895–. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2006v31n4a1825>

Joseph, B. (2018). *21 Things You May Not Know About The Indian Act*. https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/605cd79fd808cc0bde08da55/61e65b3614f3867d6dde02d1_21%20Things%20You%20May%20Not%20Know%20About%20the%20Indian.pdf

Kagedan, L.A. (2020). “Chapter 3: Erasing a People: Indigenous People and Indigenous Residential Schools.” In L.A. Kagedan, *The Politics of Othering in the United States and*

- Canada (pp. 27-43). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52444-9_3
- Lawrence, B. (2004). "Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous. Nationhood. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Lawrence, B., & Dua, E. (2005). Decolonizing Antiracism. *Social Justice (San Francisco, Calif.)*, 32(4 (102)), 120–143.
- Luoma, C. (2021). Closing the cultural rights gap in transitional justice: Developments from Canada's National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 39(1), 30–52.
<https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/23817/1/FullText.pdf><https://doi.org/10.1177/0924051921992747>
- MacDonald, D.B., & Hudson, G. (2012). "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada". *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 45(2), 427–449.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S000842391200039X>
- Marchinko. (2018). Subverting Colonial Choreographies of Memory: Drag the Red and the March for Tina Fontaine. *Canadian Theatre Review*, pp. 176, 19–25.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/ctr.176.003>
- Martin, & Walia. (2019). Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (excerpt). *BC Studies*, pp. 201, 7–12.3
- Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Data Analysis. *Sociology (Oxford)*, 37(3), 413–431.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030373002>

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

- Mayblin, L., Wake, M., & Kazemi, M. (2020). Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present. *Sociology (Oxford)*, 54(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519862124>
- Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>
- McGruder, M. (2022). Missing and Murdered: Finding Solution to Address the Epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada and Classifying It as "Canadian Genocide". *American Indian Law Review*, 46(1), 115-154.
<https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1740&context=ailr>
- McDiarmid. (2019). *Highway of Tears: A true story of racism, indifference, and the pursuit of justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls*. Doubleday Canada.
- Meghan, R. (2013). *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada*. Human Rights Watch, USA, ISBN: 1-56432-985-2
- Million, D. (2013). (Un)Making the Biopolitical Citizen in Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights. The University of Arizona Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183gz4d.9>
- Monchalin, L., Marques, O., Reasons, C., & Arora, P. (2019). Homicide and Indigenous peoples in North America: A structural analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 46, 212–218.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2019.01.011>
- Morgensen, S. L. (2011). The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1(1), 52–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648801>

- Morton. (2016). Hitchhiking and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Billboards on the Highway of Tears. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 41(3), 299–326. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs28261>
- Murphy-Oikonen, Chambers, L., McQueen, K., Hiebert, A., & Miller, A. (2022). Sexual Assault: Indigenous Women's Experiences of Not Being Believed by the Police. *Violence Against Women*, 28(5), 1237–1258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012211013903>
- National Inquiry. (2019). The National Inquiry's Final Report into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Report. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 22(3), 67–68. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs-2019-103145>
- Padilla, M., & Rodríguez-Madera, S. (2021). Embodiment, Gender Transitioning, and Necropolitics among Transwomen in Puerto Rico. *Current Anthropology*, 62(S23), S26–S37. <https://doi.org/10.1086/711621>
- Palacios, L. C. (2016). Killing Abstractions: Indigenous Women and Black Trans Girls Challenging Media Necropower in White Settler States. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 2(2), 35–60. <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.2.2.0035>
- Palmater, P. (2016). Shining Light on the Dark Places: Addressing Police Racism and Sexualized Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls in the National Inquiry. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), 253–284. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.28.2.253>
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, second edition. Sage.
- Perreault, S. (2011). Violent victimization of Aboriginal people in the Canadian provinces. Statistics Canada. Report. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11415-eng.pdf>

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Presley. (2020). Embodied Liminality and Gendered State Violence: Artist Expressions in the MMIW Movement. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(7), 91–109.

Proudfoot, K. (2023). Inductive/Deductive Hybrid Thematic Analysis in Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 17(3), 308–326.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15586898221126816>

Ratcliffe, J. W. (1983). Notions of Validity in Qualitative Research Methodology. *Knowledge* (Beverly Hills, Calif.), 5(2), 147–167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107554708300500201>

Razack, S. (2002). “Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice.” In S. Razack (Ed.), *Race, space and the law: Unmapping a white settler society* (pp. 91–99). Between the Lines. Toronto.

Razack. (2016). Gendering Disposability. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), 285–307. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.28.2.285>

Riger, S., & Sigurvinsdottir, R. (2016). Jason, L., & Glenwick, D. (Eds.). *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. Oxford University Press.

Riley, T., Schleimer, J. P., & Jahn, J. L. (2024). Organized abandonment under racial capitalism: Measuring accountable actors of structural racism for public health research and action. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 343, 116576–116576.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116576>

Rylko-Bauer, B., & Farmer, P. (2016). Structural Violence, Poverty, and Social Suffering. In L. M. Burton & D. Brady (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Science of Poverty*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199914050.013.4>

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Saldana, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (3rd ed.) London, UK.

DOI:[10.1108/QROM-08-2016-1408](https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-08-2016-1408)

Simpson, L. (2013) 'Dancing the world into being: A conversation with Idle No More's Leanne Simpson', available at: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/dancing-the-world-into-being-a-conversation-with-idle-no-more-leanne-simpson>

Smith, A. (1999). Sexual violence and American Indian genocide: Remembering Conquest: Feminist/womanist perspectives on religion, colonization, and sexual violence. *Journal of Religion & Abuse*, 1(2), 31–52.

Smith, A. (2003). Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples. *Hypatia*, 18(2), 70–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2003.tb00802.x>

Stark, J. (2013). Unequal Communities: Exploring the Relationship Between Colonialism, Patriarchy and the Marginalization of Aboriginal Women. p. 45–54.

Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17, 1372–1380.
doi:10.1177/1049732307307031

Strega, S., Janzen, C., Morgan, J., Brown, L., Thomas, R., & Carrière, J. (2014). Never Innocent Victims: Street Sex Workers in Canadian Print Media. *Violence Against Women*, 20(1), 6–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801213520576>

Strega, S. (2005). The View from the Postrstructural Margins: Epistemology and Methodology Reconsidered. In L. Brown and S. Strega (Eds.) *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & anti-oppressive approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press/Women's Press (p.199–235). <https://www.mobt3ath.com/uplode/book/book-61013.pdf>

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

- Taylor, G. W., & Ussher, J. M. (2001). Making Sense of S&M: A Discourse Analytic Account. *Sexualities*, 4(3), 293–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346001004003002>
- Tisdell, E. J., & Merriam, S. B. (2015). Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation. In *Qualitative Research*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Tsang, E. Y. (2020). Gay Sex Workers in China's Medical Care System: The Queer Body with Necropolitics and Stigma. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(21), Article 8188. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17218188>
- Tuck, E., & Wayne Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization is not a metaphor*. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1 (1). pp. 1-40. <https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf>
- Tucker, A. (2016). "Media and the Perpetuation of Western Bias". Mount Royal University. https://www.mtroyal.ca/nonprofit/InstituteforCommunityProsperity/_pdfs/icp_angie_studentreport.pdf
- Tuckett, A. G. (2005). Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher's experience. *Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession*, 19(1-2), pp. 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.19.1-2.75>
- Van Manen, M. (2014). Phenomenology of Practice. In *Phenomenology of Practice* (1st ed., pp. 15–25). Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315422657-1>
- Vilchis-Díaz, R. (2021). The North American Racialization Apparatus: The Management of Undesirable Lives in the United States. In A. Estévez (Ed.), *Necropower in North America* (pp. 63–84). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73659-0_4

THE INVISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

Wabie, B. M. (1998). Aboriginal women and community development: consistency across time.

Canadian Theses Division, National Library of Canada. <https://www.nlc->

[bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp03/MQ40490.pdf?oclc_number=1006917248](https://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp03/MQ40490.pdf?oclc_number=1006917248)

Wesley, M. (2012). Marginalized: The Aboriginal women's experience in federal corrections.

Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Report.

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mrgnlzd/index-en.aspx>

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide*

Research, 8(4), 387–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>

Wright, M. W. (2011). Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the

Mexico-U.S. Border. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 36(3), 707–731.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/657496>